

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - India 2026

Social Entrepreneurship for Inclusive Growth
Inspirational Social Entrepreneurs



Introduction

About Jubilant Bhartia Foundation

www.jubilantbhartiafoundation.com

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation (JBF), established in 2007, is the not-for-profit organisation of the Jubilant Bhartia Group, driving the Group's social development initiatives across health, education, livelihoods, rural development and social entrepreneurship. With a pan-India presence, JBF reaches over 2 million beneficiaries through community-focused interventions, while advancing social innovation and entrepreneurship through its BHARAT IMPACT platform and strategic collaborations with institutions and ecosystem partners.



S S Bhartia & H S Bhartia

About the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship

www.schwabfound.org

In partnership with the World Economic Forum, the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship is the foremost global community of pioneering social innovators driving systemic change. It was co-founded by Klaus Schwab, Founder of the World Economic Forum, and Hilde Schwab, Chairperson of the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship. Since 1998, the Schwab Foundation has supported the world's leading social innovators to create a more just, equitable, and sustainable world. The Schwab Foundation provides unparalleled platforms regionally and globally to highlight and advance leading models of sustainable social innovation.



Prof. Klaus Schwab & Hilde Schwab

The Importance of Social Entrepreneurship

Social entrepreneurs drive social innovation and transformation in various fields, including education, health, environment and enterprise development. They pursue poverty alleviation goals with entrepreneurial zeal, business methods and the courage to innovate and overcome traditional practices. Social entrepreneurship has become a global movement. Companies are increasingly seeing social entrepreneurs and their organizations as ideal partners to reach new client groups at the base of the pyramid. They find that working with social entrepreneurs is a pragmatic and effective way to demonstrate their corporate citizenship.

Schwab Foundation Social Entrepreneurs are invited to actively participate in the regional and annual meetings of the World Economic Forum, where they have access to a network of global leaders in politics, business, media, and academia. They engage in Forum initiatives, the discussions shaping the future agendas of industries, and serve as experts in the Forum's Global Agenda Councils. They benefit from pro-bono consulting services, legal advice and stipends to world-class executive education courses through the partners of the Foundation. Social Entrepreneurs also explore best practices through peer exchanges within the Schwab Foundation community.

The Social Entrepreneur of the Year

Schwab Foundation has been selecting social entrepreneurs in India since year 2001. Jubilant Bhartia Foundation joined hands with the Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship in 2010 to bring together country's most coveted awards for Social Entrepreneurship. The Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and the Jubilant Bhartia Foundation are dedicated to promoting social innovation in India. In recognizing social entrepreneurs who address the needs of under-served communities in both scalable and sustainable ways, we aim to make inclusive growth in the country a reality.

Foreword

Schwab Foundation for Social Entrepreneurship and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation are dedicated to promoting social innovation in India through the annual Social Entrepreneur of the Year (SEOY) India Awards. In recognizing social entrepreneurs who address the needs of under-served communities in both scalable and sustainable ways, we hope to promote and showcase the success stories.

Schwab Foundation, a sister organization of the World Economic Forum, manages a global community of social entrepreneurs and engages it in shaping global, regional and industry agendas that improve the state of the world in close collaboration with the other stakeholder communities of the World Economic Forum.

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation, a not for profit organisation of Jubilant Bhartia Group, is committed to contribute towards inclusive growth. The foundation's activities include various community development work, health care, cultural & sports, environment preservation initiatives, vocational training, women empowerment, educational activities and promotion of Social Entrepreneurship.

Schwab Foundation has been selecting social entrepreneurs in India since year 2001 and this year marks the ninth year of partnership between Schwab Foundation and Jubilant Bhartia Foundation to bring together country's most coveted awards for Social Entrepreneurship.

This year we received over 200 applications and selected three finalists after a multiple rounds of rigorous assessment. The five finalists are:

1. **Dr. Neha Verma of Intelehealth, Maharashtra**
2. **Nidhi Pant of S4S Technologies, Maharashtra**
3. **Nuneseno Chase of YouthNet, Nagaland**
4. **Vinay Kumar Reddy Vadde of Sickle Innovations Pvt. Ltd., Telangana**
5. **Vineet Saraiwala of Atypical Advantage, Jharkhand**

Our national jury consists of an independent panel of eminent leaders from Business, Media and Civil Society. We are grateful for the jury's insights and contributions to the selection process. All finalists exude business acumen, operational excellence and most importantly an unwavering social commitment.

We would like to acknowledge with deep appreciation the contributions of our media partner Mint, HT Media Ltd and CNBC-TV18 and all other media involved in bringing due recognition to social entrepreneurs and their work and most importantly all the social entrepreneurs who have made this journey very exciting.



Shyam S Bhartia

Director, Jubilant Bhartia Foundation
Chairman & Founder,
Jubilant Bhartia Group



Hilde Schwab

Co-Founder & Chairperson
Schwab Foundation for Social
Entrepreneurship

Selection Criteria

We select late-stage social enterprises that have demonstrated large-scale systemic change and impact. In particular, we assess based on the following criteria:

- **Market-based:** leverages market forces, strategic partnerships, and business practices wherever possible, e.g. charges fees for products or services or for some subset of them.
- **Tech-enabled:** Uses technology to create, communicate, deliver, or monitor the adoption of its products or services.
- **Demonstrated Impact:** beyond proof of concept; has a monitoring and evaluation system in place; can provide compelling impact metrics
- **Scalability/ Potential to scale:** has the potential to be successfully expanded nationally or internationally, either by branch expansion or via replication partners.
- **Candidate as an Ambassador:** able to interact on a peer-to-peer level with top business and political leaders and willing to contribute time and expertise to building the global community.

Chief Guest



Shri NK Singh

Former Member, Rajya Sabha
Former Chairman, 15th Finance Commission of India
Government of India

Jury Members



Ms. Shobhana Bhartia
*Chairperson & Editorial
Director,
HT Media Ltd*



Dr. François Bonnici
*Director, Schwab Foundation
for Social Entrepreneurship
Member of the Executive
Committee, World Economic
Forum*



Ms. Aashti Bhartia
*Director, Jubilant Ingrevia
Limited
Non Executive Director,
Jubilant FoodWorks
Limited*



Ms. Geetanjali Kirloskar
*Chairperson and Managing
Director,
Kirloskar Systems Limited*



Mr. Harish Arnezath
*Regional Director,
Stanford Seed, India*



Mr. Rajiv Memani
*Regional Managing Partner,
Africa India Region Chairman,
Growth Markets Council*



Piyush Tiwari
*SaveLIFE Foundation
Winner SEOY 2025*



Mr. Girish Aivalli
*CEO, Impact Investor
Council (IIC)*

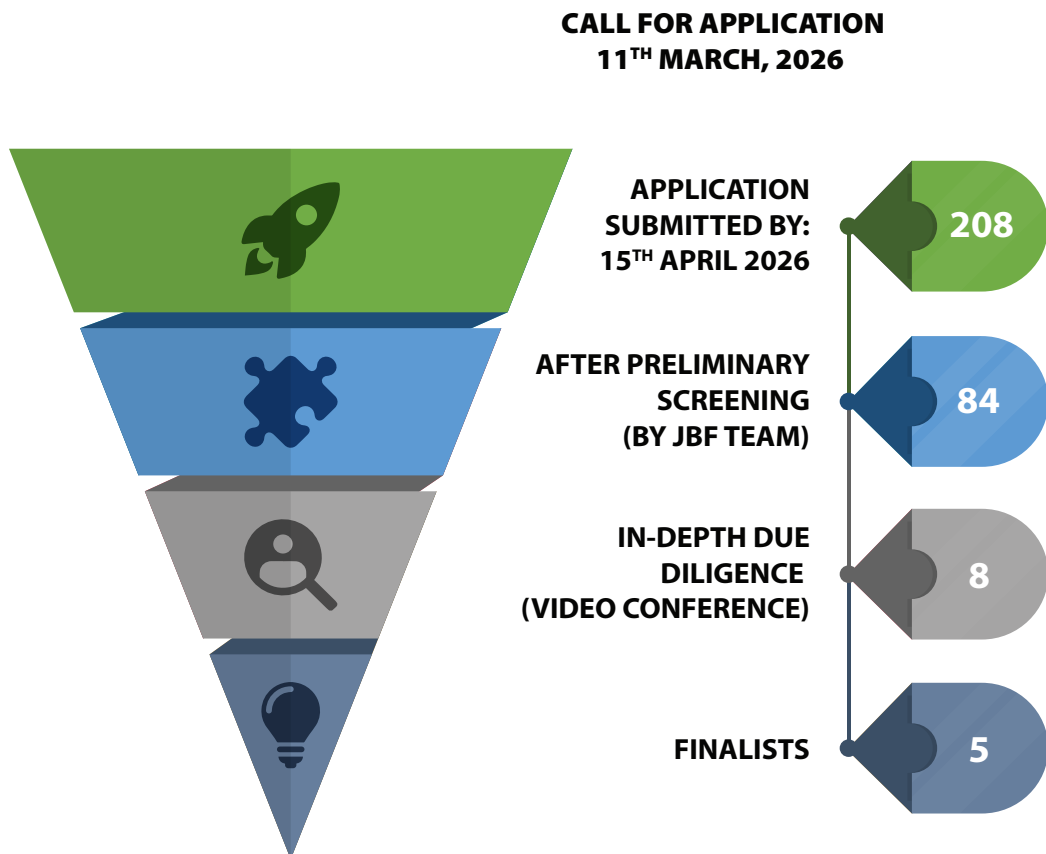


Indian Social Entrepreneurs

Application Process

Application Funnel

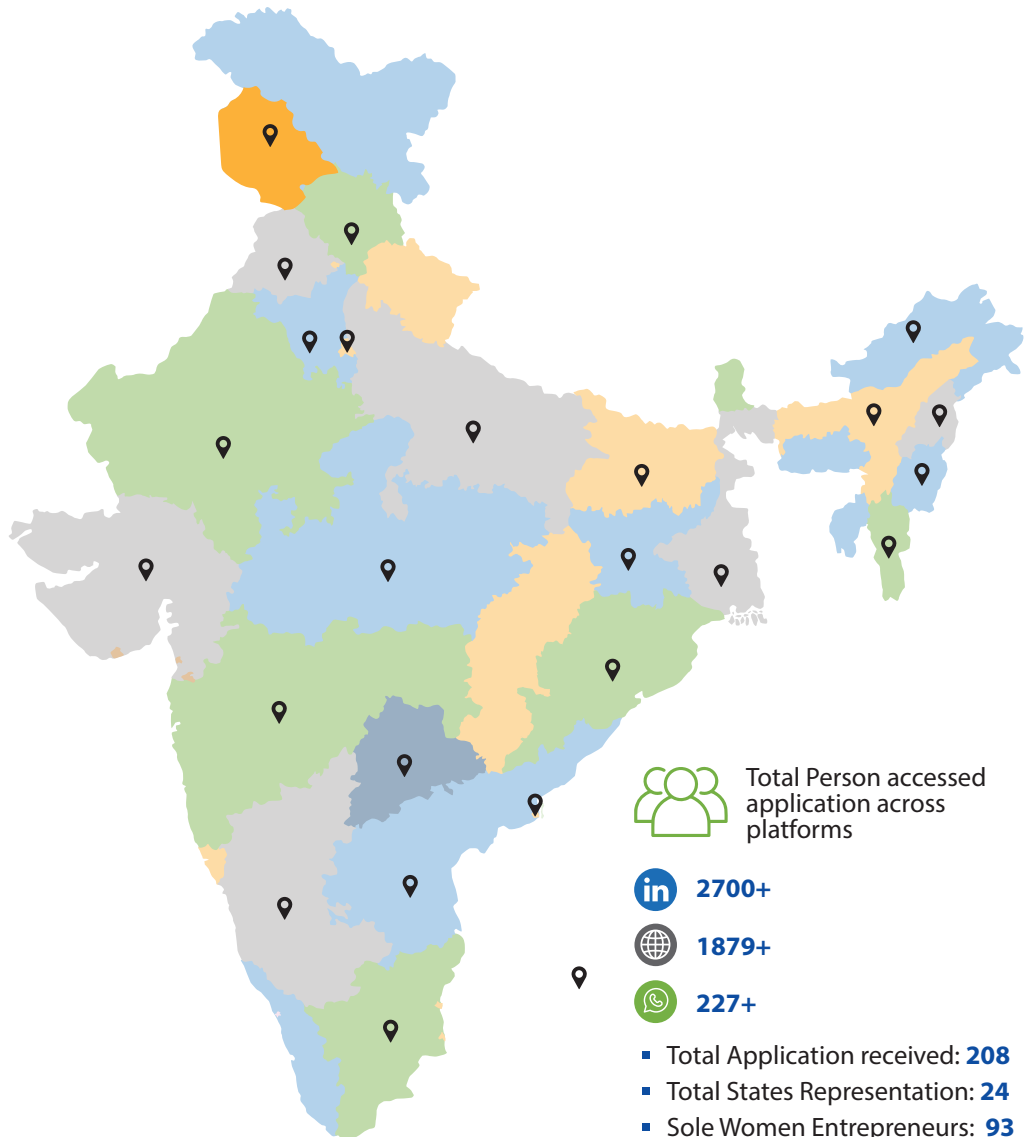
Call for Application 11th March, 2026



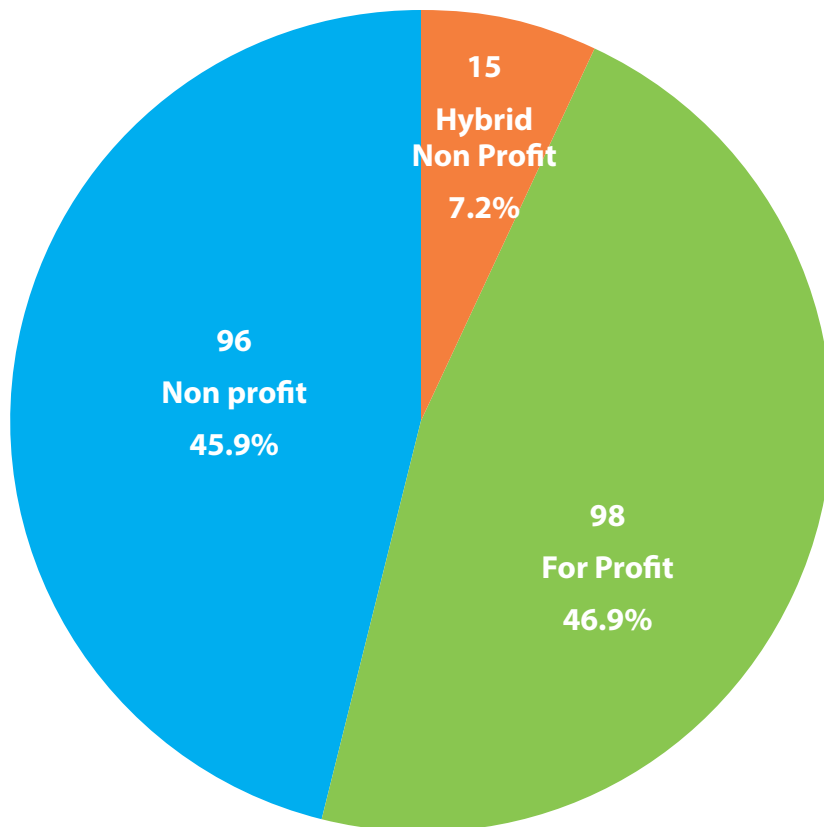
Conducted a day long video conference with Founder, Leadership, Donors, Partners and Beneficiaries with each organisation

Gala Event at ITC Maurya, Delhi, on 21st August 2026

Geographical Outreach of Applicants



Type of Organisation



Women Entrepreneurs



44.7%
**Female
Applicant**

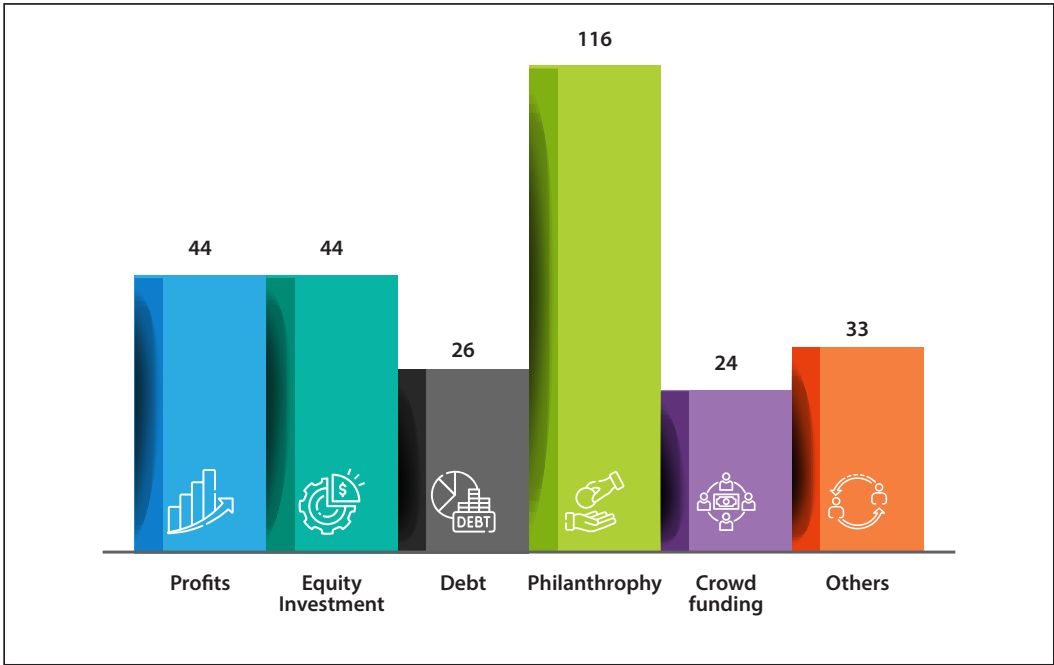
Leading with Digital:
**Organisations maximizing
outreach through
tech innovation**



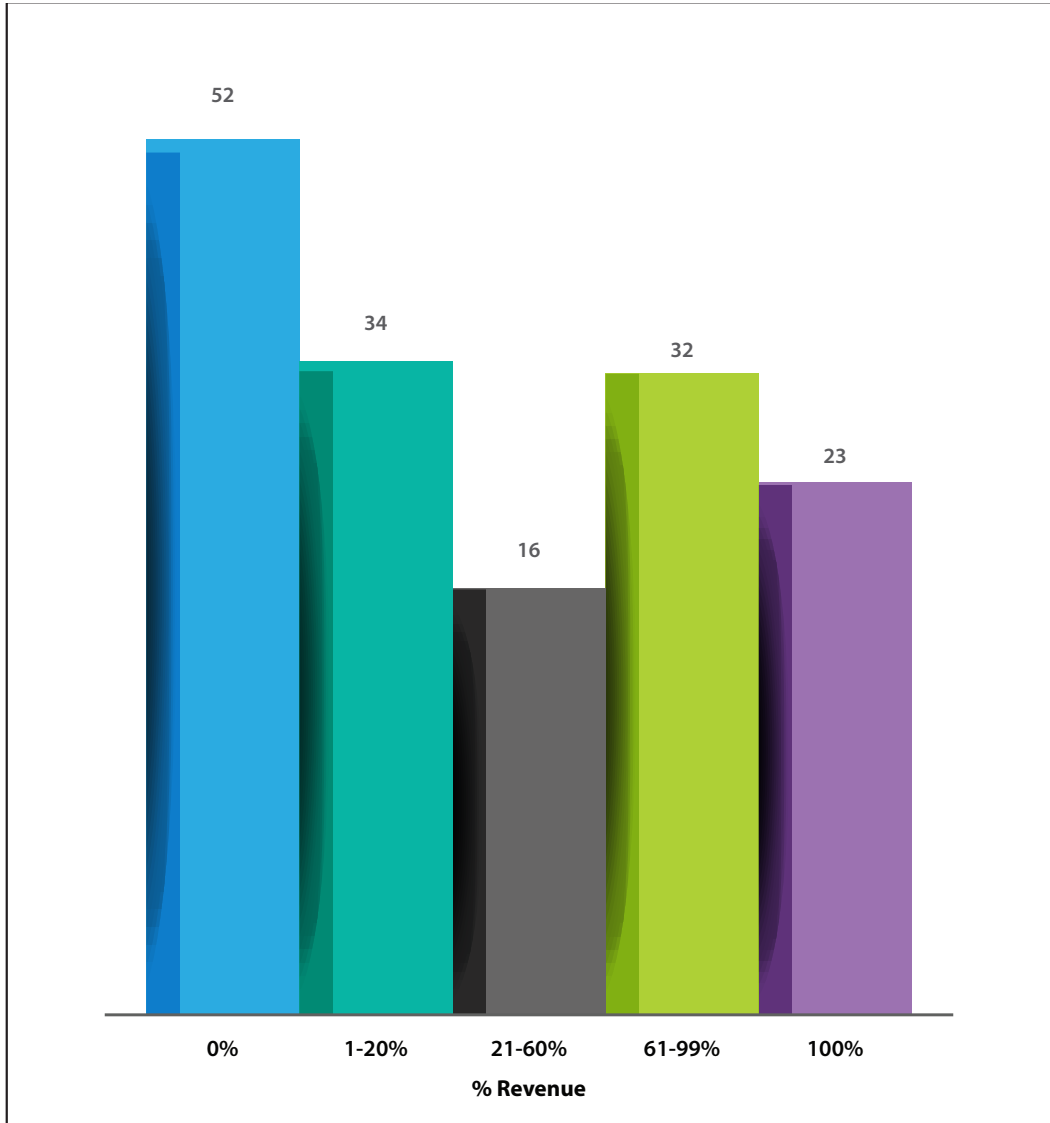
55.3%



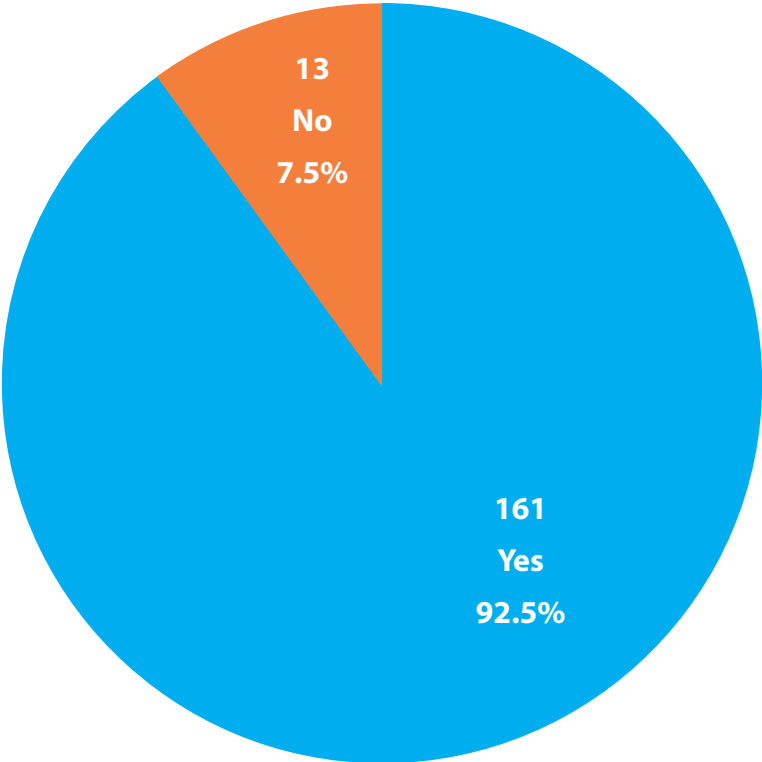
Primary Source of Capital / Funding



% of Revenue Earned from their own Business



Companies leveraging Technology





Semi Finalists - Social Entrepreneur of the Year India 2026



Azeez Gupta
Co-Founder
Rocket Learning



Mukteshwari K Bosco
Founder & CEO,
Healing Fields Foundation

Rocket Learning is transforming early childhood education by strengthening India's Anganwadi system through technology-enabled engagement with frontline workers and parents. Working in partnership with governments, the organisation has reached over 3 million children, 250,000+ Anganwadi workers, and 2 million+ parents and caregivers across India. Through its hybrid online-offline model, Rocket Learning aims to improve the lifelong learning outcomes of 75 million children under six by 2030. Its leadership has been recognised through Forbes 30 Under 30, Bloomberg New Economy Catalysts, and the Gates Foundation Goalkeepers.

Healing Fields Foundation is transforming community healthcare by training rural women as health entrepreneurs who improve health awareness, access to care, and preventive health practices in underserved communities. The organisation has reached over 6.25 million people across 6,700+ villages in 10 states and trained 6,000+ Health Change Agents. Its community-led model simultaneously improves health outcomes and women's livelihoods, with founder Mukteshwari Bosco recognised as an Ashoka Fellow and recipient of the 2022 Roux Prize.



Dr. Neha Verma
Co-Founder & CEO,
Intellehealth



Nidhi Pant
Co-Founder,
Science For Society Techno
Services Pvt Ltd

Inlehealth is a digital health organisation expanding access to quality healthcare through AI-enabled telemedicine and community-based care. The organisation has enabled over 20 million teleconsultations, reached 9.1 million patients, supported 33,000+ health workers, and engaged 12,000+ doctors across underserved communities. Working across 14 states and 3 countries, Intellehealth is strengthening public health systems and demonstrating how technology can make healthcare more accessible, affordable, and equitable at scale.

S4S Technologies is a climate-tech enterprise tackling post-harvest losses through renewable energy-powered food processing and women-led entrepreneurship. The organisation has impacted over 700,000 farmers across 15 countries, enabled 10,000+ women entrepreneurs, connected 10,000+ women farmers to finance and markets, and deployed 10,000+ solar dehydration units. By combining climate innovation, market access, and livelihood creation, S4S has built one of the world's largest women-led solar food processing ecosystems, helping reduce food waste, strengthen farmer incomes, and create sustainable rural value chains.



Nuneseno Chase

Director & Chief
Functionary,
YouthNet



Ketan Deshpande

Founder Chairman & CEO,
Friends Union For
Energising Lives (FUEL)

YouthNet is a Nagaland-based organisation creating sustainable livelihoods and entrepreneurship opportunities for young people across Northeast India. Since 2005, it has reached over 250,000 beneficiaries, enabled 16,000+ livelihood opportunities, and supported 2,000+ entrepreneurs through skills development, incubation, and ecosystem-building initiatives. Working closely with governments, institutions, and industry partners, YouthNet has emerged as one of Northeast India's leading youth development organisations, strengthening entrepreneurship, employability, and economic resilience across the region.

FUEL (Friends Union for Energising Lives) is a youth-focused organisation working to bridge the gap between aspirations and opportunities through career guidance, employability training, entrepreneurship development, and access to education. Since its inception, FUEL has reached millions of young people across India through career counselling, scholarships, skill development, and workforce readiness programmes. Working with educational institutions, corporates, and government partners, it is helping young Indians make informed career choices and build pathways to meaningful livelihoods.



Vineet Saraiwala

Founder & CEO,
Atypical Advantage

Vineet Saraiwala is an Indian social entrepreneur, disability inclusion advocate, and the Founder and Chief Executive Officer of Atypical Advantage, India's leading livelihood platform for persons with disabilities. An alumnus of the Indian Institute of Management Bangalore, he combines strong business acumen with a deep commitment to social change. Living with retinitis pigmentosa, a progressive visual impairment, Saraiwala has transformed his personal experiences of exclusion into a mission to create equal opportunities for persons with disabilities.



Vinay Kr Reddy Vadde

Co-Founder & CTO,
Sickie Innovations Pvt Ltd

Vinay Kumar Reddy Vadde is a technology-driven entrepreneur and Co-founder & CTO of Sickie Innovations Pvt. Ltd., leading the development of AI-powered, farmer-centric solutions that improve post-harvest management and mechanisation. Under his leadership, Sickie has received the Mint AI Tech4Good Gold Award (2025), National Entrepreneurship Award (2019), FICCI's Most Innovative Startup (2018), and recognition among the PMO's Most Innovative Startups (2022) for its pioneering contributions to agricultural innovation.

Profiles

Finalists 2025

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Finalists - Social Entrepreneur of the Year India 2026



Dr. Neha Verma

Intellehealth

www.intellehealth.org

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2026

Intellehealth is a digital health organisation working to expand access to quality primary healthcare for underserved populations through scalable telemedicine solutions. Founded in 2016, the organisation partners with governments, NGOs, healthcare institutions, and development agencies to strengthen public health systems through an integrated “brick-and-click” model combining frontline health workers, telemedicine, and digital health technologies. Intellehealth has enabled over 20 million teleconsultations, reached 9.1 million patients, supported 33,000+ healthcare workers, and engaged a network of 12,000+ doctors, demonstrating how technology can improve healthcare access, affordability, and outcomes at scale.

Sector

Healthcare

Background

More than 4.5 billion people globally lack access to essential healthcare services, with rural and underserved communities facing the greatest barriers. In India, shortages of healthcare professionals, long travel distances, inadequate infrastructure, and high out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure often delay diagnosis and treatment. These challenges disproportionately affect women, children, and low-income populations. Intellehealth was established to address these gaps by bringing quality healthcare closer to communities through technology-enabled primary care.

Innovation & Activities

Intellehealth has developed a scalable digital health model that combines telemedicine, artificial intelligence, and community-based healthcare delivery. At the centre of its approach is Ayu, an AI-enabled clinical decision support platform that assists frontline health workers in patient assessment, triage, and treatment pathways using evidence-based protocols. Designed for low-resource settings, the platform improves the quality, consistency, and efficiency of care.

Its integrated “brick-and-click” model connects patients with qualified doctors through teleconsultations while equipping frontline health workers with digital tools and clinical guidance. Today, Intellehealth supports approximately 25% of India’s public health facilities, has integrated 300+ clinical protocols, engaged over 40,000 medical students, and undertaken digital health capacity-building initiatives across 11 countries. Operating across 14 Indian states and three countries, the organisation demonstrates how AI, telemedicine, and public health systems can be combined to strengthen healthcare delivery and improve health outcomes at scale.

About the Entrepreneur

Dr. Neha Verma is the CEO and Co-Founder of Intellehealth and a recognised leader in digital health and public health innovation. She holds a PhD in Health Informatics from the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine and has dedicated her career to advancing healthcare access through technology. Under her leadership, Intellehealth has evolved into a globally recognised digital public health platform that demonstrates the transformative potential of artificial intelligence and telemedicine in improving healthcare access, affordability, and equity.



Nidhi Pant

Science For Society Techno Services Pvt. Ltd (S4S)

www.s4stechnologies.com

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2026

S4S Technologies is a climate-tech enterprise addressing post-harvest losses, food waste, and rural poverty through decentralised, renewable energy-powered food processing. Founded in 2011, the organisation combines technology, women-led entrepreneurship, and market access to create sustainable livelihoods. Its patented Solar Conduction Dryer technology enables farmers and women entrepreneurs to convert agricultural surplus into value-added food products while reducing losses and improving incomes. Today, S4S has impacted over 700,000 farmers across 15 countries, enabled 10,000+ women entrepreneurs, connected 10,000+ women farmers to finance and markets, and deployed 10,000+ solar dehydration units.

Sector

Climate Technology

Background

Globally, nearly one-third of food produced is lost or wasted before reaching consumers, resulting in significant economic and environmental costs. In India, post-harvest losses disproportionately affect smallholder farmers who often lack access to processing infrastructure, storage facilities, market linkages, and affordable technologies. Women also face barriers in accessing entrepreneurship opportunities, finance, and markets. S4S was established to address these interconnected challenges through climate-smart technologies and entrepreneurship-led solutions.

Innovation & Activities

S4S has built a decentralised food processing ecosystem integrating renewable energy technologies, women-led entrepreneurship, financing, and market access into a scalable and commercially viable model. At the centre of its innovation is the patented Solar Conduction Dryer, which enables high-quality processing of fruits and vegetables using renewable energy while preserving nutritional value.

The organisation works with women entrepreneurs who operate processing units, aggregate produce from farmers, and supply food ingredients to leading food and beverage companies. S4S has deployed over 10,000 solar dehydration units, built a network of 12,000+ market linkage partners and industry buyers, and connected 10,000+ women farmers to finance and markets. Its ecosystem helps avoid approximately 37,000 tonnes of carbon emissions annually while supplying nutrition-rich food products to over 1 million consumers. Through this model, S4S is demonstrating how climate innovation can simultaneously address food security, livelihood creation, and women's economic empowerment.

About the Entrepreneur

Nidhi Pant is the Co-Founder of S4S Technologies and leads the organisation's business strategy, partnerships, fundraising, and women entrepreneurship initiatives. A Chemical Engineering graduate from the Institute of Chemical Technology (ICT), Mumbai, she has helped scale S4S into a globally recognised climate-tech enterprise. Under her leadership, S4S received the Earthshot Prize 2023 and Zayed Sustainability Prize 2022, while Nidhi has been recognised as a Forbes 30 Under 30 honouree and a UN Young Champion of the Earth.



Nuneseno Chase

YouthNet

www.youthnet.org.in

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2026

YouthNet is a livelihoods and entrepreneurship organisation headquartered in Nagaland, working to create sustainable economic opportunities for young people across Northeast India. Established in 2005, the organisation has pioneered an integrated approach combining employability, entrepreneurship, enterprise incubation, and ecosystem building. Over the years, YouthNet has reached more than 250,000 beneficiaries, enabled over 16,000 livelihood opportunities, supported 2,000+ entrepreneurs, and educated and sensitised 70,000+ youth.

Sector

Livelihoods

Background

Northeast India continues to face challenges relating to youth unemployment, outward migration, limited private-sector opportunities, and restricted access to markets and finance. These challenges are particularly acute in Nagaland, where many young people struggle to find meaningful employment or support for building enterprises. Women, indigenous communities, persons with disabilities, and first-generation entrepreneurs face additional barriers. YouthNet was established to create opportunities that enable young people to build livelihoods and enterprises within the region.

Innovation & Activities

YouthNet has developed a comprehensive ecosystem that supports individuals across the entrepreneurship and livelihood journey, from career awareness and skill

development to business incubation, financing, and market access. The organisation works closely with government agencies, educational institutions, industry partners, and development organisations to create opportunities tailored to local realities.

Its entrepreneurship platform provides training, mentoring, incubation, investment-readiness support, and market linkages to emerging enterprises. Through partnerships with programmes such as the Startup India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS) and MeitY GENESIS, YouthNet has strengthened the startup ecosystem across Northeast India. Beyond entrepreneurship, the organisation works extensively on employability, leadership development, and community engagement. By combining ecosystem building with direct support to entrepreneurs and job seekers, YouthNet has become one of the region's leading institutions focused on livelihoods and youth enterprise development.

About the Entrepreneur

Nuneseno Chase is the Director and Chief Functionary of YouthNet and a leading advocate for youth entrepreneurship in Northeast India. Motivated by a desire to contribute to the development of her home region, she returned to Nagaland after corporate experience and international exposure. She holds an MBA in Rural Development and Entrepreneurship and has completed executive education programmes at the London School of Economics (LSE) and INSEAD. Under her leadership, YouthNet has become one of Northeast India's most influential entrepreneurship and livelihood organisations.



Vinay Kumar Reddy Vadde

Sickle Innovations Pvt. Ltd.

www.sickle.in

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2026

Sickle Innovations is an agri-tech enterprise building a comprehensive ecosystem that automates farm operations and strengthens agricultural value chains. Founded in 2014, the organisation develops farmer-centric technologies spanning harvesting, crop protection, grading, sorting, and post-harvest management. Sickle has impacted over 4 lakh farmers, processed more than 70,000 tonnes of fruits, enabled over ₹300 crore in additional farmer income, and unlocked ₹50 crore in post-harvest value through technology-driven solutions.

Sector

Agriculture Technology (Agri-Tech)

Background

India produces more than 100 million tonnes of fruits annually, yet substantial losses occur due to inefficiencies in harvesting, grading, sorting, and post-harvest handling. Smallholder farmers often lack access to mechanisation, scientific quality assessment, and market-linked infrastructure, resulting in lower incomes and reduced competitiveness. Labour shortages, rising costs, and inconsistent quality standards further compound these challenges. Sickle was established to address these barriers through practical and affordable technology solutions.

Innovation & Activities

Sickle has developed a portfolio of affordable technologies across farm mechanisation, crop protection, AI-powered grading, sorting, and post-harvest management. The organisation has deployed

more than 3 lakh harvesting devices, delivered over 5,000 crop protection solutions, and installed 100+ AI-powered grading and sorting systems that bring scientific quality assessment closer to farms.

Its AI-enabled systems use computer vision and automation to improve quality standardisation, reduce subjectivity in pricing, and strengthen trust between farmers, traders, and buyers. These technologies have processed more than 70,000 tonnes of horticultural produce, helping improve price realisation and reduce losses. Developed through extensive farmer engagement, Sickle's innovations are designed to be affordable, practical, and easy to adopt. By combining indigenous engineering, automation, and artificial intelligence, the organisation is building more transparent and resilient agricultural value chains while creating measurable economic benefits for farmers.

About the Entrepreneur

Vinay Kumar Reddy Vadde is the Co-Founder and CTO of Sickle Innovations and a technology-driven entrepreneur focused on solving agricultural challenges through engineering and innovation. An alumnus of IISc Bengaluru and NITK Surathkal, he has led the development of technologies spanning mechanisation, artificial intelligence, computer vision, and post-harvest management. Under his leadership, Sickle has received recognitions including the Mint AI Tech4Good Gold Award (2025), National Entrepreneurship Award (2019), FICCI Most Innovative Startup (2018), and recognition among the Prime Minister's Office Most Innovative Startups (2022).



Vineet Saraiwala

Atypical Advantage

www.atypicaladvantage.in

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India- 2026

Atypical Advantage is one of India's leading inclusion platforms for persons with disabilities, working to bridge the gap between talent and opportunity through a technology-enabled ecosystem. The organisation connects persons with disabilities to employment, entrepreneurship, freelancing, skilling, and artistic opportunities while helping organisations build more inclusive workplaces. It has onboarded over 50,000 candidates with disabilities, generated 5,000+ livelihood opportunities, facilitated 1,500+ job placements, and enabled over ₹2 crore in earnings.

Sector

Inclusion

Background

India is home to more than 26 million persons with disabilities, yet workforce participation among this population remains significantly lower than the national average. Many continue to face barriers in education, skilling, accessibility, and employment. Limited employer awareness, inaccessible workplaces, and inadequate support systems often result in economic exclusion and underemployment. Atypical Advantage was established to create pathways for persons with disabilities to access meaningful opportunities and achieve financial independence.

Innovation & Activities

Atypical Advantage has built a comprehensive ecosystem integrating employment, skilling, freelancing, entrepreneurship, arts, and accessibility services. The

organisation works closely with employers, educational institutions, non-profits, and ecosystem partners to create opportunities while promoting workplace inclusion and accessibility.

Working with over 500 corporate partners and 800 NGOs, the platform facilitates inclusive hiring and supports organisations in creating disability-inclusive workplaces. Beyond employment, the organisation has created opportunities for artists, freelancers, entrepreneurs, and professionals with disabilities to showcase their abilities and access markets. Through awareness and sensitisation initiatives, Atypical Advantage has reached more than 1.5 lakh employees, helping shift perceptions around disability and inclusion. By combining technology, employer engagement, and ecosystem partnerships, the organisation is driving long-term systems change while creating sustainable livelihood opportunities.

About the Entrepreneur

Vineet Saraiwala is the Founder and CEO of Atypical Advantage and a leading advocate for disability inclusion in India. Drawing from his own lived experience with visual impairment, he transformed a personal challenge into a movement focused on opportunity and inclusion. An alumnus of IIM Bengaluru, he has consistently championed the idea that persons with disabilities should be recognised for their talent and potential. Under his leadership, Atypical Advantage has emerged as one of India's leading inclusion platforms and continues to work towards creating one million livelihood opportunities for persons with disabilities by 2035.

17TH OF TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

Join the Legacy of Social Innovators!



**17TH SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR
OF THE YEAR AWARD, INDIA - 2026**



Social Entrepreneur of the Year - India



Piyush Tewari

SaveLIFE Foundation

www.savelifefoundation.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year-2025

SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF) is a non-profit organisation addressing India's road safety crisis through a data-driven approach that combines safer infrastructure, enforcement, trauma care, emergency response, and policy reform. Founded in 2008, the organisation developed the Zero-Fatality Solution (ZFS), a model designed to reduce road crash deaths on high-risk corridors. Operating across 36 highways and 21 districts in 16 states, SaveLIFE has achieved an average 32% reduction in fatalities, with declines of up to 67% on some corridors. In FY 2024-25 alone, its interventions benefited over 163 million commuters.

Focus

Healthcare

Background:

India records approximately 175,000 road crash deaths and 500,000 serious injuries annually, making road crashes one of the country's leading public health challenges. Vulnerable road users account for a majority of these fatalities, while weak enforcement, delayed trauma care, and fragmented governance continue to undermine road safety outcomes. SaveLIFE Foundation was established to address these systemic challenges through scalable interventions and policy reform.

Innovation & Activities

SaveLIFE Foundation's flagship Zero-Fatality Solution integrates road engineering, enforcement, trauma care, emergency response, and community engagement into

a single implementation framework. The model uses AI-powered crash analytics, forensic crash investigations, GIS-based hotspot mapping, and field assessments to identify risks and implement targeted interventions. It has transformed some of India's most dangerous road corridors, including sections of NH-48 and the Mumbai-Pune Expressway.

Beyond corridor interventions, SaveLIFE has strengthened India's broader road safety ecosystem through technology, advocacy, and capacity building. The organisation has developed digital public goods such as Surakshak, a crash investigation training platform, and Rakshak, a first-responder training initiative. Its work has catalysed significant public investment in road safety infrastructure and emergency medical systems, demonstrating how data, policy, and implementation can work together to save lives at scale.

About the Entrepreneur

Piyush Tewari is the Founder and CEO of SaveLIFE Foundation. A former private equity professional and graduate of Harvard University's Master in Public Administration programme, he founded the organisation after losing his cousin in a preventable road crash. Under his leadership, SaveLIFE helped secure India's landmark Good Samaritan Law and contributed to the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act. His work has earned the Skoll Award for Social Innovation (2024), the Elevate Prize (2023), and recognition as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum. In 2026, he was appointed to the Government of India's National Road Safety Board (NRSB).



Akshay Saxena

Avanti Fellows

www.avantifellows.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year India - 2024

To ensure equitable access to STEM careers for economically disadvantaged students, Avanti Fellows began its mission in 2010, targeting 50 million students in grades 9-12 from government-run high schools across India. Avanti Fellows offers free, at-home learning programs providing access to online resources and career guidance to help students explore and pursue STEM careers. Their high-intensity tutoring programs, focus on the top 10% of academically exceptional students with strong potential for qualifying for STEM education and careers. Remarkably, many students have managed to elevate their families out of intergenerational poverty within a few years.

Focus

Education.

Background

Over 10 million economically disadvantaged students graduate each year from India's government high schools. Yet, fewer than 1% of these graduates gain admission to top-tier STEM undergraduate programmes annually, systematically denying them a key opportunity to uplift their families from intergenerational poverty. Girls are particularly disadvantaged. Avanti Fellows addresses these issues. They collaborate with nine major government school systems and support over 30,000 students annually with intensive tutoring. Additionally, their programmes have provided over 1.5 million students with free materials, assessments, and test preparation support.

Innovation & Activities

Traditional methods relying on low-scale, physical tutoring are often outsourced to commercial tutoring centres. These approaches rarely scale beyond a few hundred students. In contrast, Avanti Fellows is unique in its ability to create high-scale at-home learning programmes in collaboration with state governments.

Avanti Fellows runs 2 major programmes. The NEEV programme targets 16 million students in grades 9 and 10 in government schools across India, focusing on at-home learning models to enhance Math and Science achievement. The goal is to increase the number of government school students pursuing Science in Grade 11 and STEM careers. Their second programme is The Test

Preparation Initiative. They work with states to develop free-access portals offering academic materials while collaborating with the education departments to align in-school teaching with college access pathways.

In 2024, it is estimated that over 850 Avanti Fellows students will qualify for elite engineering programmes such as IITs, NITs, and state engineering colleges, with over 250 of these being girls. Over the past decade, more than 3,700 Avanti Fellows students have gained admission to these prestigious institutions, marking a significant transition from poverty to India's academic and social elite.

Technology is fundamental to Avanti Fellows. Their programmes are predominantly delivered online using open-source tools compatible with WhatsApp. Their software, comprising a suite of independent web applications, offers key features such as large-scale assessments mirroring national competitive exams, interactive video lessons with embedded quiz questions, Online live classes, and automated communication via WhatsApp.

Avanti Fellows also has an ICT Application for teachers. They are also exploring machine learning and language models, such as ChatGPT, to pilot virtual tutoring and personalised assignments. Collaborations with research groups at Harvard, MIT, and Oxford are underway to incorporate A/B testing, rapid prototyping, and experimentation.

By 2030, Avanti Fellows aims to establish nationwide, state-sponsored programmes that identify high-potential students to provide them with career guidance

About the Entrepreneur

Akshay Saxena is an IIT Bombay graduate and Harvard Business School alumnus. He joined as a management consultant at the Boston Consulting Group after IIT. He played a key role in launching HeartFlow, a multi-billion-dollar medical device company in California, before focusing on Avanti Fellows full-time in 2013. His journey with Avanti Fellows began in 2006 at IIT Bombay where he interacted with many students from low-income backgrounds who struggled to adjust to IIT Bombay. The disparity between the IIT student body and the broader population was stark and became a personal motivator for Akshay.



Dr. Shuchin Bajaj

Ujala Cygnus Healthcare Services

Headquartered in: New Delhi

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2023

Ujala Cygnus through its chain of low-budget-and-patient-friendly-tertiary-care hospitals is enabling access to high-quality integrated healthcare infrastructure and services for underserved communities in tier 2 & 3 cities of India. It works with a mission of 'Building trust by saving and caring for lives with dignity, affordability and quality', Ujala is bringing the revolution of super-speciality tertiary health care to the untouched and un-served communities at the convenience of their home town and at a basic cost. Ujala Cygnus is also mobilising the community on various facets of health awareness through medical camps for rural outreach.

Focus

Healthcare (Medical Services)

Background:

India's health care landscape is unique. It has 742 districts, out of which, less than 300 districts have access to high-quality healthcare facilities, most of which are out of reach of the financially challenged community. This leaves a vast swathe of our population amounting to almost 600 million dependent on either poorly equipped government medical facilities or extremely expensive and unaccountable private players. Out of this huge population, about 260 million Indians, significant proportion of whom are rural residents in North India from disadvantaged groups, are surviving with the burden of disease, estimated at around US\$30 billion constituting 5% of GDP. These are Ujala's direct potential beneficiaries.

Innovation & Activities

Ujala Cygnus has built low-cost, high-quality critical care super speciality hospitals in 18 districts of India. These hospitals are built to address the emergency critical medical care needs of the marginalised and poor sections of society. These hospitals charge 40% less than any private hospital chain in India.

For below poverty line patients, they provide general ward shared facilities at 35% discount compared to private patients. Apart from this, the organisation also

provides healthcare services to Ayushman Bharat PMJAY beneficiaries, the reimbursement rates for which are amongst the lowest in the world. It is a fire able offence in the organisation to turn back a patient due to financial reasons.

Ujala partnered with Sehat Foundation and, has set up 'Sehat Clinics' which at the block level, act as a central point for delivery of primary healthcare activities at villages. Each clinic has a doctor, nursing staff, pharmacy, digital x-ray, ECG and day care facility. Ujala also holds daily Sehat Chaupals, Village Health Meets, across the rural landscape around their hospital locations, reaching out to 2000+ new patients every day, in addition to the thousands of patients walking into the hospitals.

The organisation is investing in robust digital solutions like telemedicine, tele-consultancy, and diagnostics services. Ujala Cygnus Healthcare Services runs a health application 'Medpho' which offers affordable health care services from the comfort of one's home.

With a belief that a sick community cannot drive a fast-growing economy, Ujala Cygnus has benefitted 39,31,051 individuals since inception. Till date, Ujala Cygnus treated 3,42,656 inpatients, 4,59,891 outpatients and undertook 61,516 surgeries. It has also reached out to around 55,000 community medical practitioners across Uttar Pradesh, J&K, Uttarakhand, Haryana & Delhi. Ujala Cygnus envisions expanding to the farthest corners of North India and institutionalising at least 30 units of medical excellence till 2025.

About the Entrepreneur

Dr. Shuchin Bajaj has completed his MBBS from PGIMS, Rohtak and his Doctorate in Internal Medicines (MD) from Dr S N Medical College, Jodhpur. He was the recipient of the British Government's 2015 Chevening Gurukul Fellowship for Leadership and Excellence award at King's College London. He was also an Aspire Fellow who completed his Elite Seed Transformation Program conducted by the Stanford Global Business School. Dr. Bajaj was selected for freeship to the 'Innovating Health for Tomorrow' Fellowship at INSEAD, France in 2017 and his project for Ambulance services was the top of the class of 40 high ranked professionals from around the world.



Aniket Doegar

Haqdarshak Empowerment Solutions Private Limited

www.haqdarshak.com

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2022

Haqdarshak (HQ) is a Private Limited organization formed to address the information and access gap related to the various government schemes at the last mile through tech-enabled intervention. They have digitized information on schemes in 11 vernacular regional languages for the same and have made it available to intended beneficiaries through their various B2C channels and an agent-led model. All their products and services are available in 24 states of India.

Focus

Social Protection, Financial Inclusion, Livelihood

Background

More than 800 million Indian citizens are eligible for some form of welfare services including social security, direct cash benefits and documentation services with a Government budget of US\$210 billion annually. However, citizens-particularly tribals, daily wage earners, marginal farmers, unorganized workers and micro businesses - are hardly aware of these welfare entitlements or find it difficult to consume publicly available complicated, confusing information. As a result, there is massive under-utilization of funds in India.

Innovations & Activities

The heart of all HQ's innovative methods lies in their app based technology platform. They ensure that citizens apply for their entitlements with the proper documentation. The Yojana Card platform, envisions enabling frictionless access to social security and financial services through a single channel. It will also provide additional livelihood opportunities for their agents to earn through financial inclusion services such as cash-in/ cash-out and remittances. It will enable corporations to extend welfare and wage benefits to an extended ecosystem of workers in their supply chain and in communities surrounding their establishments.

Haqdarshak is present in 24 states in India and it has trained over 40,600 agents so far, submitted around 63,50,000 application and provided benefits worth Rs 18,840 crore+ to 65,25,000 citizens and around 80,000 micro businesses.

Since during Covid a lockdown was imposed which completely restricted the movement of the Haqdarshaks, HQ channelized all its focus towards launching more services and businesses for MSMEs and NGOs. For the community they launched a multilingual helpline and developed videos and collaterals to disseminate COVID related information.

Haqdarshak is a Private Limited organization. 98% of our revenue is from B2B Business (Corporates / Philanthropies/ CSR funds etc.). Its primary basis is the number of Government welfare applications facilitated, and the number of agent cadre trained. 80% of the costs in B2B are primarily the resources salary and Cadre Incentive. The top investors of Haqdarshak are Acumen Fund Inc. 9.81%, Deepak Mehta 4.72%, Impact India Investment Partners LLC 2.96%.

HQs future plans aims at integration of the Yojana Card, expanding B2B partnerships to set up 200+ brick and mortar Yojana Kendras across the country, partnering with major gig economy companies to increase reach, offer end to end application through the Haqdarshak technology platform by government integrations, Focus on climate change - specific schemes, Reach out to 100 million individuals in the next 5 years.

About the Entrepreneur

Aniket Doegar, did B.A. in Commerce (Hons.), from Shri Ram College of Commerce, Delhi University. Even though he had a commerce background, Aniket always had an inclination towards Public Policies. His interest motivated him to join Teach For India (TFI) fellowship under which he was working with rural communities in Pune. And hence the idea of Haqdarshak took birth.



Pranshu Singhal

Karo Sambhav

www.karosambhav.com

Social Entrepreneur of the Year -2021

Karo Sambhav is a social enterprise, with an aim to make recycling a way of life in India. It collaborates with producers (brands, enterprises, global manufacturers), strategic alliances and governments on 'Circular Economy' and 'Extended Producer Responsibility' (EPR) frameworks and helps them close their material loop through responsible recycling. It desires to revolutionize waste management in India and proposes to do so by bringing all stakeholders on one single transparent platform. From robust EPR plans to staying compliant throughout, from running awareness campaigns to setting up collection channels, collecting waste and sending it for responsible recycling, Karo Sambhav makes sure to deliver a comprehensive and accountable EPR service

Focus

Waste Management

Background

India is currently the 4th largest e-waste generator in the world. 19% of the e-waste that is collected in India is by the informal sector. Despite e-waste management guidelines in place by the government, only 2% of the country's electronics are being recycled. Lack of proper collection and logistics infrastructure, limited awareness of consumers on the impact of improper disposal of waste streams, lack of standards for collection and dismantling and treatment also deter recycling and proper collection.

Innovation & Activities

Karo Sambhav is helping organisations complete their material loop by helping them in responsible recycling. A critical aspect of Karo Sambhav is its engagement with the informal sector (waste pickers, waste aggregators). It has helped increase the average incomes of these informal sector players, built capacities and created livelihoods. Karo Sambhav's technology platform gives it an edge in terms of transparency and traceability. It's one of its kind mobile and web app allows all stakeholders to be on a single platform.

Karo Sambhav has collected and enabled recycling of over 23,000 MT of e-waste and plastics waste in the past four years and has prevented 21,100 MT of CO2 emissions. It has engaged with over 3,000 schools, over 500 bulk consumers, more than 5,000 informal workers in over 60 cities across 29 States of India. A total of 30 lakh individuals have been sensitized through more than 2,300 workshops. It has indirectly created over 200 jobs/businesses and transacted with the informal sector worth Rs 62 crores in the past four years.

Karo Sambhav utilised the COVID-19 period to recalibrate and strengthen its capacity building initiatives with the informal sector. For e.g.: It co-planned the waste procurement milestones for the year, provided basic finance trainings on GST filing etc. It continued its consumer awareness activities by changing campaign formats and going digital. It also extended the employee health insurance plans to not just employees, but to consultants as well. Karo Sambhav plans to rapidly expand its operations by - increasing waste collection footprint to over 200 cities, redesigning its current technology platform as a product that can be used by other social organisations, developing solutions to engage over 20 million individual consumers among others.

About the Entrepreneur

Pranshu is an Ashoka and Aspen fellow. Solving systemic problems always fascinated him. It was his passion for green living that translated into his interest to study Environmental Management and Policy in Sweden. Pranshu went on to work for Nokia's sustainability program across many different countries and continents. At Nokia, Pranshu recorded the most successful and large scale e-waste recycling campaign from a producer or manufacturing company in India. He was instrumental in influencing the telecommunications industry and others on the importance of responsible e-waste management.



Ashraf Patel

Pravah & ComMutiny Youth Collective (CYC)

www.pravahindia.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2020

Pravah has been facilitating the development of a generation of empathetic, sensitive youth change makers in India. It is doing so, through psycho-social interventions, helping them build more inclusive identities Et societies, thus bringing about revolutionary changes. ComMutiny - The Youth Collective: Incubated by Pravah in collaboration with some of the best youth engaging organizations in the country acts as a vibrant national community of practice that promotes youth-centric spaces through joint programming and public engagement on contemporary issues.

Focus

Youth Development

Background

The social conflicts, the violent narrative of hate and polarization require principled leadership at all levels in society at scale. In the world all over as well as in India, young people are not always seen as stakeholders in their own development or leaders of social change. The demographic dividend lens looks at youth as assets to be invested in for economic benefit while multiplier lens means creating conditions and spaces where the young can multiply their own potential and hence their leadership. This is a subtle but important difference that brings out the need for policy to foreground agency, ownership and co-leadership with, for and by the young.

Innovation & Activities

Taking into cognizance of the fact that mostly the social conflicts including gender based violence, social exclusion, environmental degradation, sanitation and health have deep roots in individual and collective mind-sets, Pravah and CYC emphasize on the psycho-social approach to youth work. The '5th Space' framework is an innovation that has influenced inside-out youth leadership journeys and games on Constitutional values. The 5th Space is a space that exists beyond and between the 4 legitimate spaces occupied by young people i.e. Family, Friends, Education/Career and Recreation. More often than not, the rules these 4 spaces are not set by young people. As a response, young people often co-create a 5th Space which they can govern and call their own, where they experience love, learning, ownership, freedom and social hope through personal and social change experiments. The 5th Space views youth as leaders of today, not of the future and rejects the instrumentalization of youth

for purely political, economic or development gains. It focuses on transforming young people, as well as on transforming society through them.

Pravah and CYC have nurtured over 1200 youth organizations across the country and nurtured 6.8 lakh young leaders in the past twenty seven years. They have produced over 50 different designs of self to society journeys. Some of the best youth work practitioners are alumni of their flagship programs. They have made over 150 video resources. "A Class of Rowdies" is one among many of their award winning films and has had over 1 Crore views. Their estimated extensive outreach through on-ground and social media campaigns is over 65 lakhs. They have successfully impacted issues like education, sexual and reproductive health, environmental sustainability, constitutional literacy, social inclusion (changing community perspectives, social conflicts), gender based violence and employability. They have also contributed to Government adolescent and youth policy and programs.

In the times of COVID-19 crisis, ComMutiny members across 17 states reached 30,000 vulnerable households with relief supplies. Pravah Et CYC have developed blended curricula with online and on ground components focusing on wellbeing, resilience and constitutional values. In partnership with UNICEF ROSA, they developed an appreciative enquiry tool to assess the impact of COVID-19 on the lives of adolescents in 8 South Asian countries.

Pravah Et CYC are registered as society and a trust respectively and are supported by international funding organizations like MISEREOR, UNFPA and UNICEF etc. CSR funds come from organizations like Castro! and HCL etc. Their growth model is called 'Scale with Soul' where the idea is to promote shared principles, values and practices through capacity building and collectivization. With Societal Platform they aim to build a digital platform for scale.

About the Entrepreneur

Ashraf Patel, a Management Professional from XLRI is deeply connected with issues of social inclusion. She comes from a mixed religion background at home and imbibed another different culture through her convent education. She is a strong advocate against discrimination and is a flag bearer of 'constructive' activism and youth leadership. She values deep dialogue, interdependence and building collaborative eco-systems as a key to co creating social hope.



Shanti Raghavan and Dipesh Sutariya

EnAble India

www.enableindia.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2019

EnAble India (EI) is rapidly building an ecosystem for skilling, employment and entrepreneurship for persons with disabilities (PwDs) through technological innovations, breakthroughs in skill training, new workplace solutions and behaviour change tools. EI has created a robust business case for employing PwDs in formal and informal sectors across India, by changing the mindset of 810 companies to be disability inclusive. That's not all, they have also built 12+ frameworks to train persons with disability to be employable and leaders to be includable, and capable of leading change.

Focus

Disability, Livelihoods and Entrepreneurship Development

Background

India is home to an estimated 70 million persons with disabilities (PwDs). A staggering 73.6% of the working-age PwD population do not have livelihoods and are financially dependent. The International Labour Organization believes that excluding PwDs from India's economy could have created a 5-7% gap in India's GDP.

EnAble India is working to close this gap.

Innovation & Activities

In the last 25 years, Shanti, Dipesh and their teams have cumulatively transformed the lives of nearly 500,000 individuals with disabilities and their families, community leaders and employers, across 35 states and union territories. Working across 21 disabilities listed in The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act of 2016 (RPWD Act), and more, all EI trainees perform and receive salaries at par with their peers without disability. Through collaborations with 234 partner organizations, EnAble India is set to transform 1 million PwDs into confident taxpayers, active citizens, and nation builders.

EI is developing a model to unlock the potential of the Purple Economy, purple being emblematic of disability inclusion. This is to tap into the spending power of people with disabilities across the globe, which is estimated at 8 trillion dollars and 13 trillion dollars including their friends and family. Leveraging the needs of persons with disabilities will lead to job creation not only for the disability community but for all.

This will be done by building and sustaining digital, social, and human capital for the sector.

Social capital involves working with a rapidly growing network of partners to impact the lives of 100,000 persons with disability across the country, through Swashakti 100k Mission. Digital capital entails a team of highly skilled personnel which will build a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the disability sector. DPI is a set of online systems and services provided by the government, public and private sectors to help people gain digital access to various goods & services. By plugging in the needs and information of persons with disability at the core, EI aims to ensure persons with disability are active and participating members of the economy. *Human Capital* is a response to the urgent and unmet need for qualified and proficient disability professionals in the sector, which EI aims to address by developing systems and processes and creating frameworks and technology that will accelerate the sector's growth.

About the Entrepreneurs

As trained engineers, Shanti and Dipesh had more than 15 years of corporate sector experience before they set up EnAble India. Both had flourishing careers in the US, when Shanti's brother, Hari, was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa (RPT), a rare genetic degenerative disease that eventually deprived him of his vision.

Shanti and Dipesh became deeply involved in helping him become independent and build a future. As part of his rehabilitation, they invited him to the United States and accompanied him in activities like swimming, kayaking, snorkelling, tandem cycling and, many others. They also taught him computer skills that helped him win a gold medal in the MBA program of a reputed Indian institute. Today Shanti's brother is a senior leader in a multi-national company.

The experience propelled Shanti to set up EnAble India in 1999 upon their return to the country. By 2005, Shanti quit her job in an IT firm to begin working full-time in EI. Dipesh joined the venture as a full-time director in 2009.



Late Prema Gopalan

Swayam Shikshan Prayog

www.sspindia.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year – 2018

Swayam Shikshan Prayog (SSP) is revitalizing rural economies by putting women in charge. Working in areas affected by global climate change, it is facilitating women farmers, entrepreneurs and grassroots business leaders to solve the economic challenges of their communities through small businesses & agriculture value chains.

Prema and her team have built vibrant eco-systems to enable 350,000 women to succeed in remote and ailing markets. The SSP model comprises four ventures: a ; a resilience fund for women-led businesses; a rural school of entrepreneurship and leadership for women; and a market aggregator that provides warehousing, branding, marketing and distribution services to last-mile business women. In addition, it has catalysed the government, investors, financial institutions and Indian and global corporations to partner directly with grassroots women business leaders.

Focus

Grassroots Women's Entrepreneurship, Rural Livelihoods

Background

The Marathwada region, where SSP was launched in 1993, is no stranger to disasters - natural (the Latur earthquake) or climate-change induced. Drought ridden persistently, in 2015, the region experienced rainfall deficit of 53%, and the subsequent years have seen cycles of floods and droughts. In 2014, Marathwada reported 565 farmer suicides, the highest ever in in 1085 in 2023. Compounding was the absence of livelihood opportunities available outside of agriculture. The region witness's grossly underserved markets and per capita incomes that are the lowest in Maharashtra - Poor health indicators further debilitate this region.

Innovation and Activities

Over two decades, these factors have severally impacted the economic and social resilience of small and marginal farmers in 2300 climate-threatened villages across 6 states of India. To address this, SSP has supported 72000 women in drought and flood-affected villages to set up enterprises in climate-resilient agriculture, clean energy, sanitation, basic health services, and nutrition. They women farmers have transitioned from self-employment to diversify their ventures, aggregate into value chains and mentor thousands of others to get on the path of entrepreneurship. Significantly in a region where women

are not recognised as farmers, 200,000 women have claimed their identities as farmers. Have land deeds in their name. As a result of training and mentoring support by SSP, 5000 women are recognized locally as climate resilience leaders and 5000 are playing a role in local governance. From 2012 year to 2024 family incomes have increased by 45%- 55% among the 200,000 number of farming households that SSP works with. The impact of the women's effort is visible in 256,000 acres of arid land has been converted for organic farming and cultivation of diverse food crops.

SSP's grassroots women entrepreneurs are taking their communities forward as part of their business success. As SSP partners with the government and corporates to scale its model, it is demonstrating that investing in rural women entrepreneurs can be a solid strategy for transforming India.

The Entrepreneur

Born in Pune, Prema schooled all over India. After her master's degree in social work, she travelled across the country to meet NGOs across nine States. This was a deep immersion for her in the issues of women and poverty. With a post graduate and an MPhil in social work, Prema co-founded SPARC- Society for Promotion of Area Resource Centers - a globally-regarded NGO working with urban poor in Mumbai. After working for years with issues of urban communities, Prema got an up-close view of rural realities and grassroots women in 1993 in the aftermath of the Latur earthquake. This triggered her to change course and launch her work with rural communities. In a career spanning over three decades, Prema constantly innovated and strategized to bring women from the margins to the mainstream. Her experience in seeding disaster resilience through a market based approach, has gained wide recognition, both with the Indian Government and global organizations. She has advised international institutions such as the World Bank, the UNDP and Huairou Commission on implementing programs that advance women's leadership and strategies, and is recognized as a global facilitator on peer learning methods. Prema is an Ashoka Fellow and a Synergos Fellow, women Transforming India Nitiayog 2021. In addition, she and SSP have received more than 16 global and national awards.

Prema Gopalan passed away in March 2022, having contributed significantly to achieve her vision of women as the leaders of development.



Urvashi Sahni

Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF)

www.studyhallfoundation.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year – 2017

Study Hall Educational Foundation (SHEF) has shaped and scaled a model of education that includes, empowers and builds leaders among India's most disadvantaged girls. SHEF runs a network of schools, based on two critical innovations. The first is 'feminist pedagogy' or a gender - empowering method of education. Delivered through 'critical dialogue: it enables girls and boys to go beyond academics, understand and build the agency needed to transform their worlds. SHEF's second innovation is the Universe of Care practice. Recognizing that care itself is a vehicle for empowerment, SHEF creates classrooms where teachers and learner are held in relationships of respect, trust and empathy; where teacher and student are equal and learning is conducted through dialogue; where art, music, sport are integral to schooling.

Focus

Education

Background

Of the 15 million child brides in the world, more than one-third are in India. Of Indian women aged 20 to 24, 47.5% were married by the age of 18 and of these 16% bore children straight after marriage. Statistics report that child brides are more likely to be abused sexually and physically than unmarried girls. For most girls the world over, child marriage means the end of education and the beginning of child-bearing².

Poverty adds to the casualty of girls dropping out of education. With the feminisation of labour, the dropout rates of girls have increased, and the gross enrolment ration for women in higher education has dropped. Required to shoulder the burden of household chores, do farm labour, and earn for their families, girls and young women are unable to stay in the education net. In 2014, the national dropout rate for girls from grades 1 to 10 was 46.7 % as recorded by the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Innovation and Activities

Feminist pedagogy and the Universe of Care practice, have been co-created by teachers and girls from the margins. The two have been integrated into mainstream

curriculum and classrooms, to transform once-excluded students into active learners, leaders and citizens. Girls from these classrooms have completed their schooling, delayed their marriage, gone to college, and become teachers and professionals in business and the social sectors.

To ensure that women from ultra poor communities have the resources to keep their daughters in schools, Urvashi Sahni has spun off Didi's - a catering and tailoring venture that has captured the Lucknow market for corporate meals and has doubled the incomes of its women employees.

Aided by technology, policy push and partnerships with the state governments of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, SHEF has scaled its model of education to 900 government schools, trained 5000 government teachers and impacted a total of 5,03,080 children directly and 2,70,000 girls indirectly in the hotbeds of poverty and gender discrimination. More than 1412 videos of transformative classroom sessions, created by SHEF are being accessed and practised across remote rural government and private schools of India.

The Entrepreneur

Urvashi's lived experience with entrepreneurship on the one hand, and subordination within an arranged marriage on the other, has shaped the social entrepreneur that she is today. Her work on feminist pedagogy has been recognized around the world. She is an Ashoka Fellow, an honorary member of the Clinton Global Initiative and a non-resident fellow at the Centre for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution in the USA. She received the Tech Laureate Award by the Tech Museum of Innovations (on behalf of Digital Study Hall).

Urvashi is currently an honorary member of the Chief Ministers Advisory Council in Rajasthan (education sub-group). In 2015 she won an award from the Government of UP for her pioneering work on inclusive education.

Urvashi has authored a book, 'Reaching for the Sky, which chronicles her journey of creating Prerna. The book has been published by Brookings Institution Press and was released in September 2017 in Washington DC.



Neichute Doulo

Entrepreneurs Associates (EA)

www.eanagaland.com

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2016

Entrepreneurs Associates (EA) was set up in 2001 to counter insurgency, a broken economy and the landscape of despair among the Naga people. It aimed to do so by building the spirit of self reliance and entrepreneurship into the psyche of an apathetic Naga youth.

Over 20 years, EA has successfully launched the first generations of Naga and Manipuri entrepreneurs; built up vibrant local markets; catalysed local production; generated local jobs; activated financial institutions and steered government will to demonstrate that entrepreneurship can be the route to peace building.

Focus

Enterprise development and Livelihoods

Background

Isolated from the mainland, India's northeast is the setting for a multitude of conflicts - from separatist movements, to inter-community, communal and inter-ethnic conflicts to territorial disputes. Right from Independence, this region has witnessed some of the bloodiest conflicts - in Assam, Manipur and Nagaland. Further, the efforts to homogenize the region under the 'northeast' tag without appreciating sensitivities around tribal loyalties, religion, language and regional culture have resulted in a local aversion to such a construct and in many cases escalated the violence.

Innovation and Activities

For Neichute and his team, an entrepreneur is one who solves problems. Thus, EA set up North-East India's first incubator, accelerator and eco-system builder for local entrepreneurs. Over two decades, the venture has directly impacted 60,000 individuals across Nagaland and Manipur by putting them on the path of wealth and value creation.

EA trains first-time entrepreneurs from the agriculture and non-agriculture sectors. It then lays out a broad safety net for them. It offers credit, intense hand holding, business acceleration programs, and in certain cases, stands as guarantor for bank loans. In the absence of

financial institutions for early-stage entrepreneurs, EA has set up EATACOL - a thrift and credit society - and an NBFC through which loans of upwards of two lakhs are provided to local businesses. These financing mechanisms have enabled EA to place 'big bets' on its entrepreneurs and encourage them to grow into small and medium enterprises.

Over two decades, EA has harnessed 1150 faith based organizations, national banks and private banks, the North-East Development Finance Corporation, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission and the University of Nagaland to infuse capital of upto INR 150 crores with 100% recovery. From 2000 to 2008, Neichute and his team ran crowd funding programs that generated INR 20 crores from local citizens in building the culture and environment of entrepreneurship in Nagaland. EA's action on the ground has steered government policies in favorable directions. In a state where entrepreneurship was alien, the government of Nagaland declared the years 2010-2012 as the 'Year of the Entrepreneur'. Schools, university and college campuses are turning into active trainings grounds for new generations of entrepreneurs. As EA scales to Burma, the model holds out new possibilities of peace-building in regions around the world that are experiencing civil and political conflict.

The Entrepreneur

Entrepreneurs Associated is a brainchild of Neichute Doulo's dream of empowering the youth of Nagaland to break out of the shackles of a politically unstable region and rise as an economically empowered and confident people. Seeds for EA were sown way back in 1992, when Neichute, class XII student, and some of his peers challenged how the Naga society viewed enterprise development and 'menial jobs' by demonstrating the dignity of labour amongst the youths. They set up 'Beacon of Hope'; an informal group where more than 40 youth practiced dignity of labor through small jobs like selling newspapers and ice creams, waiting on tables, serving as porters and daily wagers to demonstrate possible alternatives to government jobs.



Late Poonam Bir Kasturi

Daily Dump

www.dailydump.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year – 2015

According to government estimates, homes generate 75% of all organic wastes produced in urban India. Daily Dump targets to manage this waste right where it is generated - within families.

Calling herself "compostwali" Poonam Bir Kasturi, founder of Daily Dump, has fused design thinking, traditional pottery and the science of composting to develop more than 50 aesthetic products and services that enable urban Indians to compost their waste at home and be part of the solution to India's monumental trash nightmare.

Focus

Waste Management

Background

According to government estimates, Urban India generates 188,500 tons per day (68.8 million tons per year) of municipal solid waste (MSW) at a per capita waste generation rate of 500 grams/person/day. This is an estimate for only 366 cities included in urban India. Assuming that 40% of this waste is organic kitchen waste, 75,400 tons is the amount of organic waste thrown out everyday mixed with other waste to create a toxic mess.

Innovation and Activities

Its flagship product is the terracotta pots known as 'Khambas'. They fit into small apartments and come in different versions to match the family size and volumes of kitchen waste generated. With no foul smell emanating and easy maintenance, the pot converts kitchen waste into compost over two months. Larger apartment blocks and residential colonies are buying into Daily Dump's community waste management product called the 'AAGA' to do collective composting. Thus, the Khamba and the Aagas are transforming the relationship of families with their waste, urging them to shrug off apathy, re-shape their behaviours and make segregation an unobtrusive part of their daily lives.

The growing demand of the 'Khamba' is tripling the incomes of the potter communities that manufacture them. The enhanced product differentiation and value has spurred potter entrepreneurs across India to recast their traditional vocation into a new technology. Daily Dump has also catalyzed new networks of 'waste evangelists' or urban compost entrepreneurs across 17 cities. They retail Daily Dump products and related 'green' services, making way for ethical and conscious consumer behaviours, strengthening circular economies and reducing the solid waste footprint of waste generators.

With over 25,000 committed users, including families, businesses and other institutions, Daily Dump's products have directly impacted more than

2 lakh individuals. The humble terracotta pots has created impact at multiple levels - keeping more than 20,000 tons of organic waste out of landfills per day, contributing to safer working conditions for informal waste collectors, sustaining a dying craft and increasing incomes of potter communities.

The Entrepreneur

Daily Dump has converged Poonam's three passions - design, waste and craft. One of India's foremost design thinkers, Poonam likes to practice design with a small'd'. Human centered design thinking permeates all aspects of her life, shaping her interaction with the environment and the solutions she innovates. A serial entrepreneur, Poonam co founded Industree Foundation - a leading craft based NGO with 2 colleagues. She then set up Playnspeak - a proprietorship concern to make products for the home and was also part of the founding faculty of the Srishti School of Art, Design and Technology in Bangalore. Her experience with teaching and working in both industrial and craft sectors inform her work at DOD.



Dr. H Sudarshan

Karuna Trust

www.karunatrust.com

Social Entrepreneur of the Year -2014

Karuna Trust is transforming dysfunctional government primary healthcare centers (PHCs) into professional hubs of 'last mile' healthcare service delivery.

It has pioneered a Public Private Partnership (PPP) model that brings the government, the village community and the social venture together to deliver high quality primary healthcare to rural India. The government invests in upgrading infrastructure and pays for the efficient running of the PHCs; Karuna Trust brings in healthcare management systems and disruptive health innovations to the centers; village health councils hold their PHCs accountable for reporting higher health outcomes and functioning as zero corruption zones.

Focus

Health

Background

Primary health care is back bone of Indian Healthcare delivery system. It acts as connecting link between community and healthcare delivery system. India spends around 4.1% of GDP on health (2013). However, only 1.1 % of GDP is spent on public health (Human development report 2010). This is much below the WHO recommendation of expenditure of at least 5% of GDP for the public health.

Various studies have highlighted the poor quality of health care delivery in India, especially in the rural areas, with respect to all the aspects of health delivery system, namely, structure, processes and outcome. Rural health care facilities suffer from a chronic problem of absenteeism of the staff at all the levels and lack of proper infrastructure (Banerjee et al., 2004). The quality of clinical care delivered to the patients is perceived to be low in both aspects, technical and interpersonal (Das and Hammer, 2007 a). There is a considerable gap between the 'what the doctors know and how they treat the patients. Doctors tend to spend less time with the patient, don't delve deep into the history and clinical picture and they tend to 'overprescribe' (Das and Hammer, 2007 b). The health care delivery

infrastructure in India is far short of the requirements. There are only 1.03 beds per 1000 population in India as compared to the world average of 7.3 beds per 1000 population (Health care industry report, ISI Analytics, 2010). Moreover, 75 % of the health care infrastructure and manpower is concentrated in urban areas where only 27 % of the population resides (Patil et al., 2002). Therefore there is a considerable underperformance in primary health care services, especially in rural and remote areas.

Innovation and Activities

Karuna Trust has revitalized 67 PHCs across 7 states, half of which reach remote corners of North-East India. With ISO certification, trained medical and administrative teams, zero-absenteeism of doctors, upgraded infrastructure, tele-medicine, mobile medical units, efficient supply chain of essential medicines and a citizens help desk, PHCs run by Karuna Trust have raised the bar for primary healthcare service in India. They have served more than one million patients and reported health outcomes that are amongst the highest in the country.

The Entrepreneur

In 1986, Dr Sudarshan founded Karuna Trust in response to the alarming incidences of leprosy in the Yelandur Taluk of Karnataka. He and his health team worked tirelessly to control the disease and have successfully brought down the incidence of leprosy from 21.4 per 1000 people to less than 0.28, almost eradicating it. For more than three decades, Dr. Sudarshan has been pushing the boundaries of rural health systems making them responsive and accountable to the poorest and most marginalized communities.

His dedication has won Dr. Sudarshan critical acclaim and several awards. Significant among them are the Right to Livelihood Award (1994) and the Padma Shri (2000).



Chetna Gala Sinha

Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank and Mann Deshi Foundation

www.mannadeshifoundation.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year – 2013

Mann Deshi Foundation, established in 1996 by Chetna Gala Sinha, is a pioneering organization dedicated to empowering women in rural India. It is headquartered in Mhaswad, a drought-prone region in Mann Taluka, the heartland of the nomadic shepherd tribe. Focused on women empowerment and fostering sustainable community development, Mann Deshi operates primarily in Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Silvassa. With a mission to impact one million women by 2024, the foundation has already reached over 950,000 women through a diverse array of programmes, including business schools, chambers of commerce, and a community radio station. Mann Deshi equips rural women entrepreneurs with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to enhance their personal and professional lives.

Focus

Financial Inclusion, Entrepreneurship, Agriculture, Sports, Healthcare, Water Conservation, Community Radio

Background

Chetna, the Founder and Chairperson of Mann Deshi Bank and Mann Deshi Foundation, has been instrumental in redefining the landscape of rural women's empowerment in India. In 1997, Chetna established the Mann Deshi Mahila Sahakari Bank, India's first financial institution designed specifically for and by rural women. The bank has facilitated loans totaling over ₹ 780 million, continuously innovating to introduce financial products tailored to the needs of female micro-entrepreneurs. Under her leadership, Mann Deshi Bank pioneered the first pension scheme for women in the informal economy, underscoring her unwavering commitment to enhancing the financial well-being of rural women.

Innovation and Activities

Chetna Sinha's impact extends beyond financial services, embracing holistic community development. In 2006, she established India's first business school for rural women, making education a cornerstone of empowerment. Her initiatives continued with the launch of a toll-free helpline in 2013 and the founding of India's first Chambers of

Commerce for women micro-entrepreneurs, fostering a supportive and inclusive business ecosystem.

Mann Deshi Foundation, under Chetna's guidance, operates an array of programs, including a community radio station, a healthcare-for-all initiative, a sports-for-development program, a climate-smart agriculture initiative and a confidence-building initiative for young girls. These programs are designed to address the diverse needs of the communities Mann Deshi serves, promoting sustainable development and social change.

Mann Deshi Foundation is renowned for its exceptional work in supporting communities, especially during times of crisis. The foundation gained recognition for organizing the largest cattle camp in the state of Maharashtra during the severe droughts of 2012, providing essential support to 7,000 farmers and 15,000 animals for 18 long months. This effort was followed by the construction of 17 check dams under the water conservation project, significantly improving the region's resilience to drought.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Mann Deshi further demonstrated its commitment to community welfare by running two hospitals under a public-private partnership model, supporting over 8,000 patients. The foundation also played a crucial role in addressing vaccine inequity by vaccinating over 25,000 women in rural areas.

The Entrepreneur

Chetna Sinha's remarkable journey is marked by numerous accolades, reflecting her leadership and impact on rural women's empowerment. A Yale Fellow, Ashoka Fellow, and Schwab Fellow, Chetna co-chaired the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2018 and led the Financial Inclusion segment at the W20 Summit in Argentina the same year. She was honored with the Nari Shakti Puraskar, India's highest civilian award for women, and has been an active member of the BRICS Women's Business Alliance and the G7 Gender Equality Advisory Council. In 2024, she was invited to speak at the 68th Commission on the Status of Women at the United Nations General Assembly, where she highlighted the courage and resilience of ordinary women. Chetna's leadership continues to inspire and drive Mann Deshi's mission to empower rural women, with the organization poised to reach its goal of impacting one million women by 2024.



Anshu Gupta

Goonj

www.goonj.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year – 2012

Goonj had demonstrated that 'cloth' can be a powerful development resource for India's last-mile communities. Goonj collects, sorts, repurposes and redistributes the excess and under-used resources of urban households to the rural and urban poor, where 'material poverty' is the deepest.

Focus

Clothing for Development

Background

There always existed a rural-urban divide in terms of economic and social development. But this divide has also been widening in the recent past. Ratio of urban to rural income which was just about 1.6 in 1951 and continued to remain within reasonable limit during the first three decades of development planning to reach 2.1 in 1980-1981, worsened during the last two decades to record a level close to 4.5. While large and medium cities are experiencing unprecedented economic prosperity, the rural areas have been experiencing economic stagnation. While the share of agriculture in the national income declined from about 30 per cent to almost half, the share of population dependent on agriculture remains almost the same over the last two decades. With the withdrawal of the State from critical support services for agriculture, global competition and higher risk of commercial cultivation, farmers especially those with small holdings, have been experiencing unmitigated misery. The reports of rampant farmers' suicide from various States, is only one of the symptoms of the current rural distress.

Innovation and Activities

Village and slum communities, in exchange of cloth and material, conduct self-organized local development and infrastructure building programs, leading to more than 500 infrastructure projects every year - such as the setting

up of schools, concrete roads, bridges, wells, irrigation canals and toilets across 1500 villages. The 'Cloth for Work' approach spurs behaviour change on both the demand and supply sides: marginal communities begin to believe in their own capacity for catalyzing change and urban India learns to contribute (rather than dispense) material, based on what the poor need.

Every year, Goonj collects, reproduces and transports 1000 tonnes of materials to ultra poor communities in 21 states through a country-wide network of 250 grassroots NGOs, 200 engaged business houses, 100 schools and 500+ volunteers, at the cumulative cost of 97 paise per kg of material. Goonj's sanitary napkins program, created by remnants of waste cloth, has opened up a new field of development intervention in female reproductive health, with more than 2 million sanitary napkins distributed to first-time rural women users.

Through its non-monetary and non-market model, Goonj is thus creating 'cloth and material rich' communities where the meagre resources of poor families can be freed up for urgent expenditures (rather than for the purchase of cloth), and village and slum infrastructure can be less dependent on outside funding.

The Entrepreneur

Popularly known as the Clothing Man, Anshu has an educational background in mass communications and economics. Starting as a freelance journalist, Anshu left a corporate job in 1998 and founded GOONJ with a mission to make clothing a matter of concern and to bring it among the list of subjects for the development sector. An Ashoka Fellow and the Global Ambassador of Ashoka, Anshu is creating a mass movement for recycling and reuse of tonnes of waste material by channelising it from the cities to the villages, as a resource for rural development.



Neelam Chhiber

Industree Crafts Foundation

www.industreecrafts.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2011

Industree prepares low-income artisans to become owners and entrepreneurs in grassroots community enterprises, linking them with market access to India's booming retail sector.

Focus

Rural Development, Enterprise Development, Culture/Handicrafts

Background

India, a country with a 5000 year legacy, has about 40 million people working in its vibrant creative sector. However, most of these people live in absolute poverty due to a lack of working capital, market access and design and/or production knowledge. Most are still searching for the enabling mechanisms to transform artisanship into sustainable development and livelihood. At the same time India has seen mass urban migration, bulging cities, environmental degradation and continuing poverty. Industree aims to change the way the Indian creative sector operates, freeing people from poverty while celebrating the art, legacy and culture of India's villages.

Innovation and Activities

Industree focuses on building an eco-system for India's underserved and fragmented artisanal base, which is in serious need of equitable market access, design and updated technical training, and working capital. On the market end, the multi-retail brand Mother Earth was created in 2008 through investment from Future Ventures of the Future Group, one of India's largest retailers. Eight Mother Earth stores are now operating in various cities across India. In 2011, Industree received additional funding from the Grassroots Business Fund, set up by the International Finance Corporation to increase efficiencies in its supply chain. By scaling up, Mother Earth has helped offer producers a direct market platform to the Indian retail market, ensuring steady business, consistent volume and smooth cash flow from year to year.

Industree works with the Indian government Ministry of Textiles through its various schemes, dovetailing trained artisans into market linkages. Industree incubates community enterprises and common production entities that are jointly owned by artisans and local entrepreneurs, typically unemployed or underemployed men and women. Industree leverages the Self-Help Group (SHG) model, wherein production is 100% owned by a group of producers.

For every 100 Indian rupees of revenue for Industree, producer incomes increase by 58 Indian rupees. As a result, community enterprises incubated by Industree and owned by artisanal communities often break even during their first year of operation. These artisan groups invest their working capital into the enterprises so that there is an increased sense of ownership in the operations. In fact, 13% of the shares in Mother Earth are reserved in a mutual benefit trust for producers to purchase at par. Moreover, community enterprises are encouraged to seek retail platforms in addition to Mother Earth, so they can gain more self-sustainability and independence in the long term.

To date, Industree sources products from 600 crafts based collectives and SHGs in ten Indian states, opening up the Mother Earth brand and market platform for them as well. Industree impacts 10,000 artisans currently, with 150 million Indian rupees of sales in 2011. In five years Neelam Chhiber and her team aim to directly impact more than 50,000 individual artisans by incubating their enterprises and facilitating product diversification, introducing new brands and markets.

The Entrepreneur

Neelam Chhiber, co-founder of Industree, is an industrial designer from the National Institute of Design, India. She is an alumnus of Social Impact International, the Global Social Benefit Incubator, Santa Clara University, US, and of the Harvard Executive Programme.



Rajiv Khandelwal and Krishnavtar Sharma

Aajeevika Bureau

www.aajeevika.org

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - 2010

Aajeevika Bureau provides services to seasonal migrants who leave their villages to find work in cities, factories and farms across India.

Focus

Migration, Labor, Employment

Background

The rural, seasonal migrant workers are a massive workforce with numbers that reach nearly 100 million across India. These workers drift through the economy, often at its very bottom end, remaining largely outside the reach of state services and devoid of opportunities offered by growing markets. Despite the major contributions migrant workers make to India's prosperity, they suffer neglect from employers, the government and society at large. As a large and vulnerable section of India's disorganized labour force, migrant workers have poor social security, little protection from malpractices and hazards, and dim prospects of growth and advancement.

Innovation and Activities

Aajeevika Bureau is a specialized institutional initiative for providing services, support and security to rural seasonal migrant workers. Its focus is based on the belief that rural-to-urban migration is an inevitable socio-economic reality, especially for those unable to generate a meaningful livelihood from rural resources. Despite their major contribution to the economy, rural migrant workers remain excluded from opportunities, services and protection. The work of Aajeevika Bureau is therefore aimed at improving social and livelihood opportunities for migrants while developing services and policies for their advancement.

Aajeevika Bureau works in the registration and issuance of identity cards for migrant labourers, allowing them to access banking, mobile telephone service, as well as government and citizenship entitlements. The organization offers skills training and job placements for rural youth. Through trade-based collectivization of migrant workers from the disorganized sector,

Aajeevika Bureau is able to lend greater voice to this often neglected group.

Aajeevika Bureau also enrolls migrant workers in legal services, insurance and pension plans. It facilitates links with government programmes, food security, health services, and counselling for women and children who experience the long-term absence of male family members. Additionally, Aajeevika Bureau manages migration resource centres that provide knowledge, capacity building and management support to migration initiatives in other NGOs and projects.

Aajeevika Bureau is a non-profit, charitable trust registered in Udaipur, Rajasthan, which has helped over 50,000 migrants since its founding in 2005.

The Entrepreneurs

Rajiv Khandelwal has worked in a wide range of rural development, employment and entitlement programmes and projects in Rajasthan. He has also served as a consultant to NGOs and donors while advising a number of international and government agencies. After a two year stint in East Africa in early 2000, he returned to Udaipur to establish Aajeevika Bureau in 2005.

Krishnavatar Sharma is a senior social worker in Udaipur, India. He has coordinated self-help programmes, natural resources work, employment and legal aid programmes, and has overseen capacity building programmes of development workers before joining Rajiv Khandelwal to establish Aajeevika Bureau as a specialized migration organization.



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