

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - India 2025

Social Entrepreneurship for inclusive Growth



Introduction

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. For more than twenty-five years, the Schwab Foundation has supported pioneering social innovators driving systemic change and advancing leading models of social innovation. Since 1998, it has served as a platform to advance leading models of social innovation and now encompasses almost 500 changemakers active in 190 countries.



Prof. Klaus Schwab & Hilde Schwab

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation

www.jubilantbhartiafoundation.com

Jubilant Bhartia Foundation (JBF) is a not-for-profit organisation established in 2007 by Jubilant Bhartia Group with a vision to bring progressive social change through a strategic multi-stakeholder partnership. The Foundation focuses on conceptualising and implementing the Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives for the Jubilant Bhartia Group as well as other corporate entities. The Foundation develops multi-stakeholder sustainable models to bring about 'social change' involving knowledge generation & sharing, experiential learning and entrepreneurial ecosystem. The Foundation is impacting lives of 1.8 million people in 11 states across India in the realm of Healthcare, Education, Livelihood and Social entrepreneurship.



S S Bhartia & H S Bhartia

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 three finalists are:

1. **Dr Kalpana Sankar of Hand in Hand India/Belstar Group, Chennai**
2. **Nagakarthik MP of Sauramandala Foundation, Meghalaya**
3. **Piyush Tewari of SaveLIFE Foundation, New Delhi**
4. **Sumita Ghose of Rangsutra Crafts India Limited, New Delhi**

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 Suresh Prabhakar Prabhu

Former Union Minister & Indian emissary to the G20 & G7
Government of India

Jury Members



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



Ms. Hilde Schwab
Chairperson & Co-Founder,
Schwab Foundation for
Entrepreneurship



Ms. Aashti Bhartia
Non-Executive Director
Jubilant Foodworks Ltd



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



Mr. Harish Arnezath
Regional Director,
Stanford Seed, India



Mr. Aanand Sri Ganesh
CEO, NSRCEL
IIM Bangalore



Mr. Akshay Saxena
Founder Avanti Fellows
Winner SEOY 2024



Mr. Girish Aivalli
CEO, India Impact
Investor Council

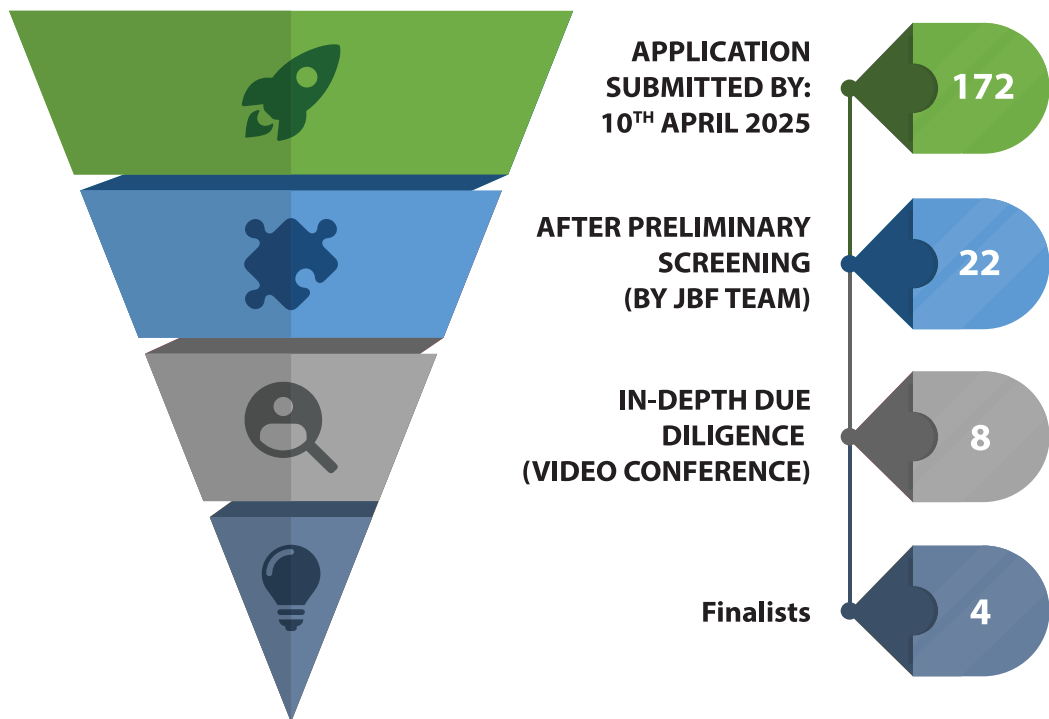


Indian Social Entrepreneurs

Application Process

Application Funnel

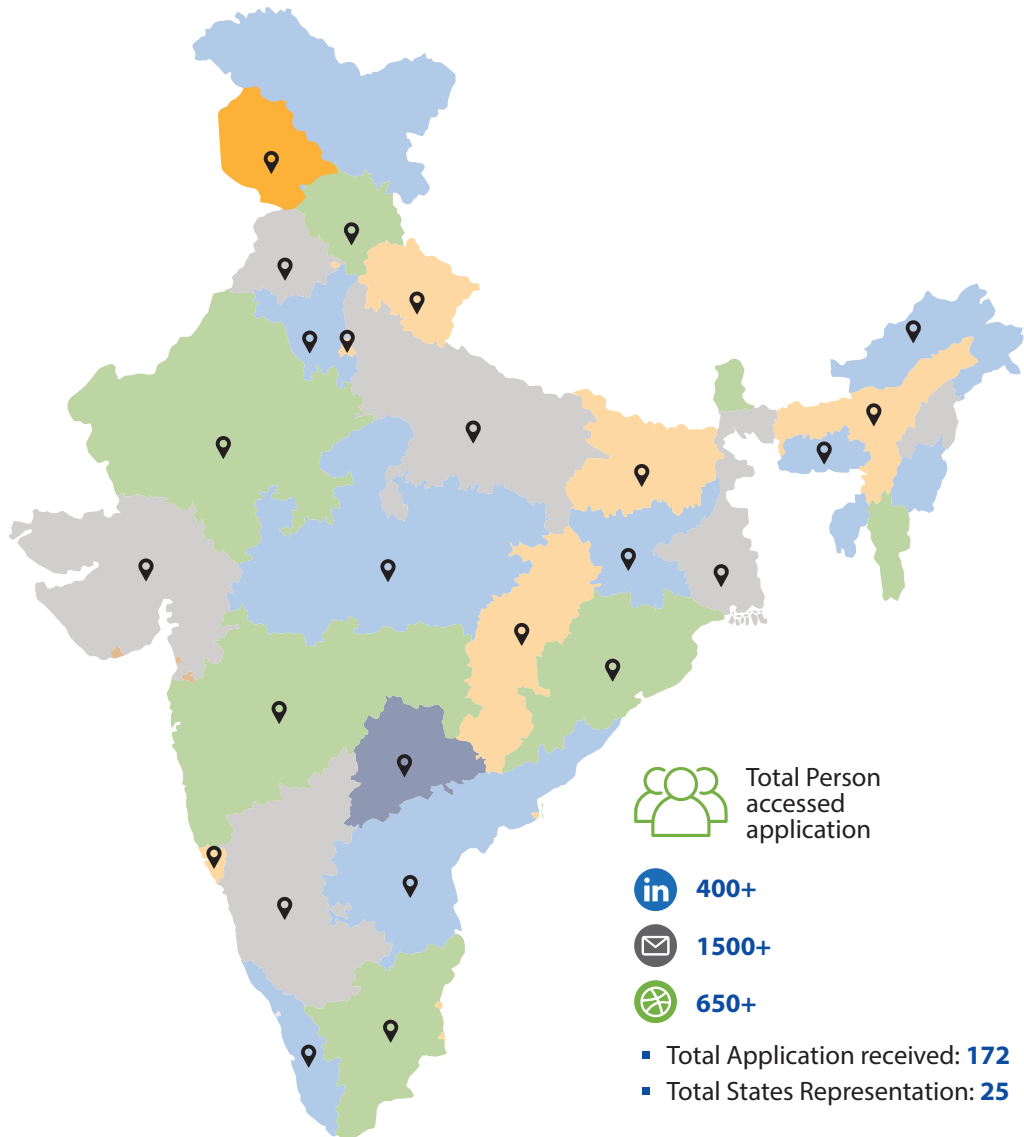
Call for Application 11th March, 2025



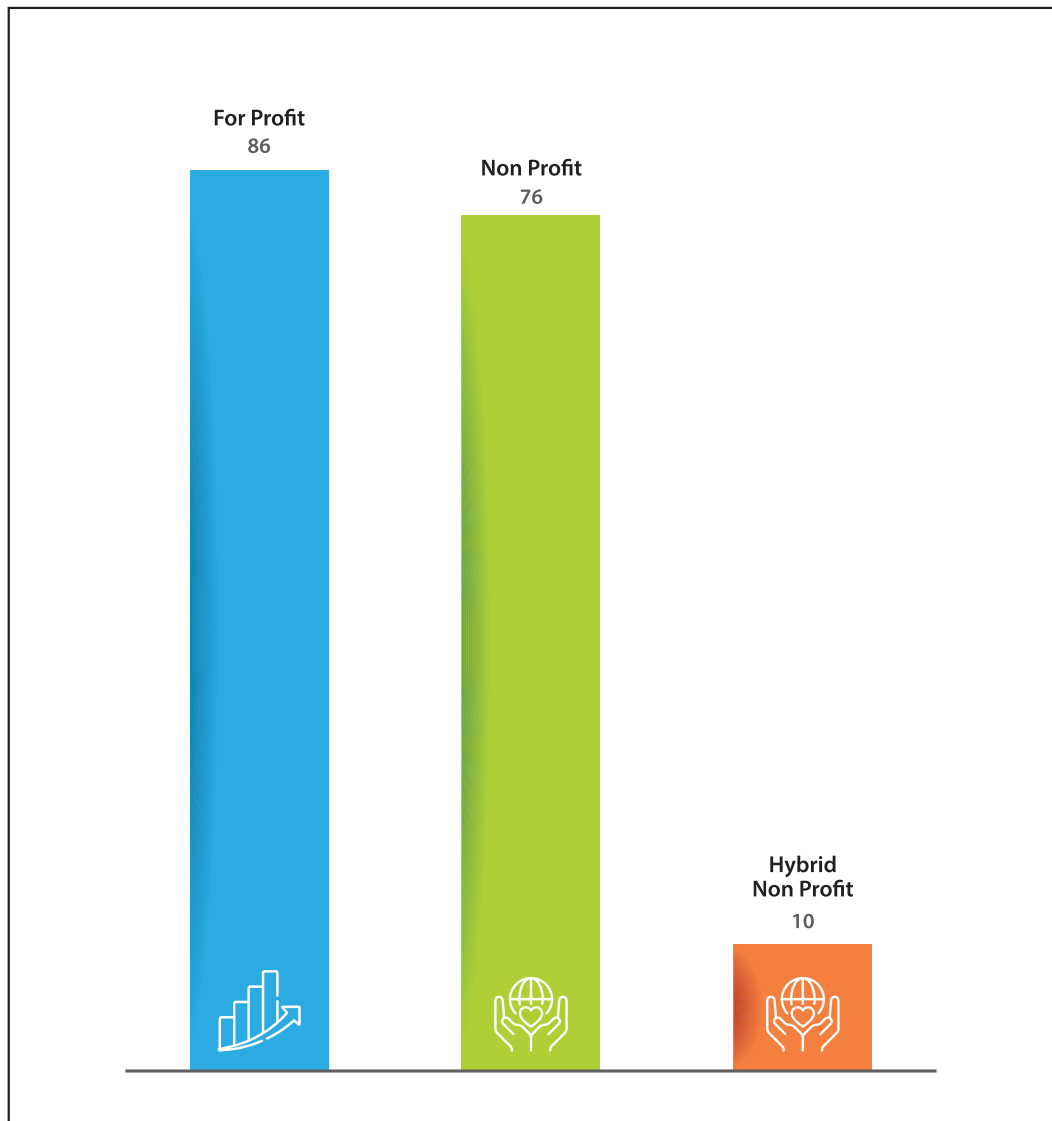
Conducted a day long video conference with Founder, Leadership, donors, Partners and Beneficiaries with each organisation

Gala Event at ITC Maurya, Delhi, on 8th August 2025

Geographical Outreach of Applicants



Type of Organisation



Women Entrepreneurs



40.5%
**Female
Applicant**

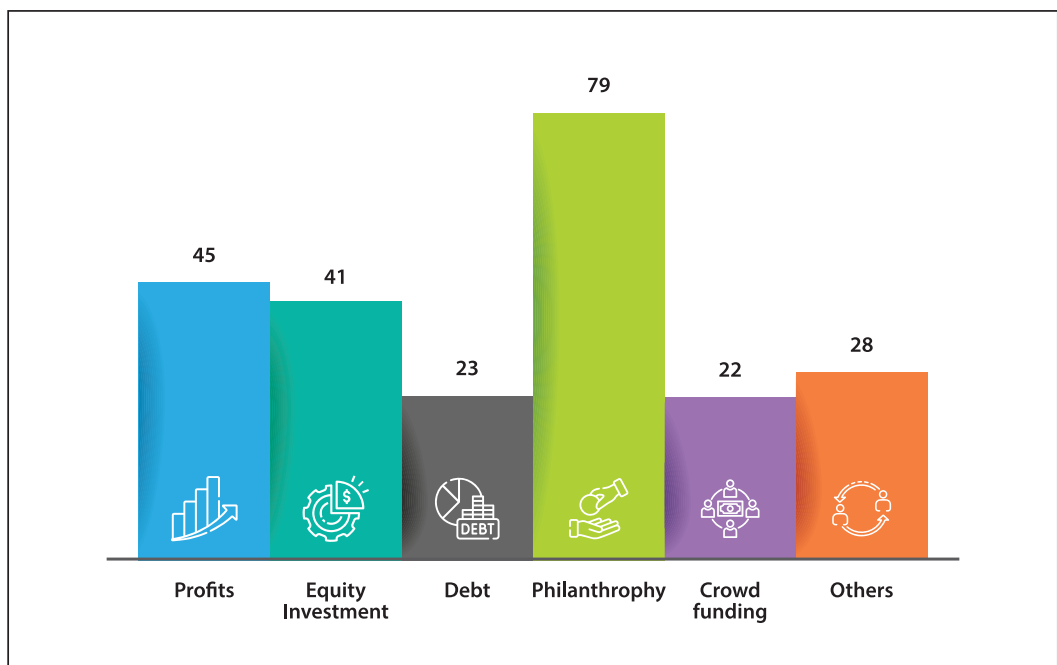
Leading with Digital:
**Organisations maximizing
outreach through
tech innovation**



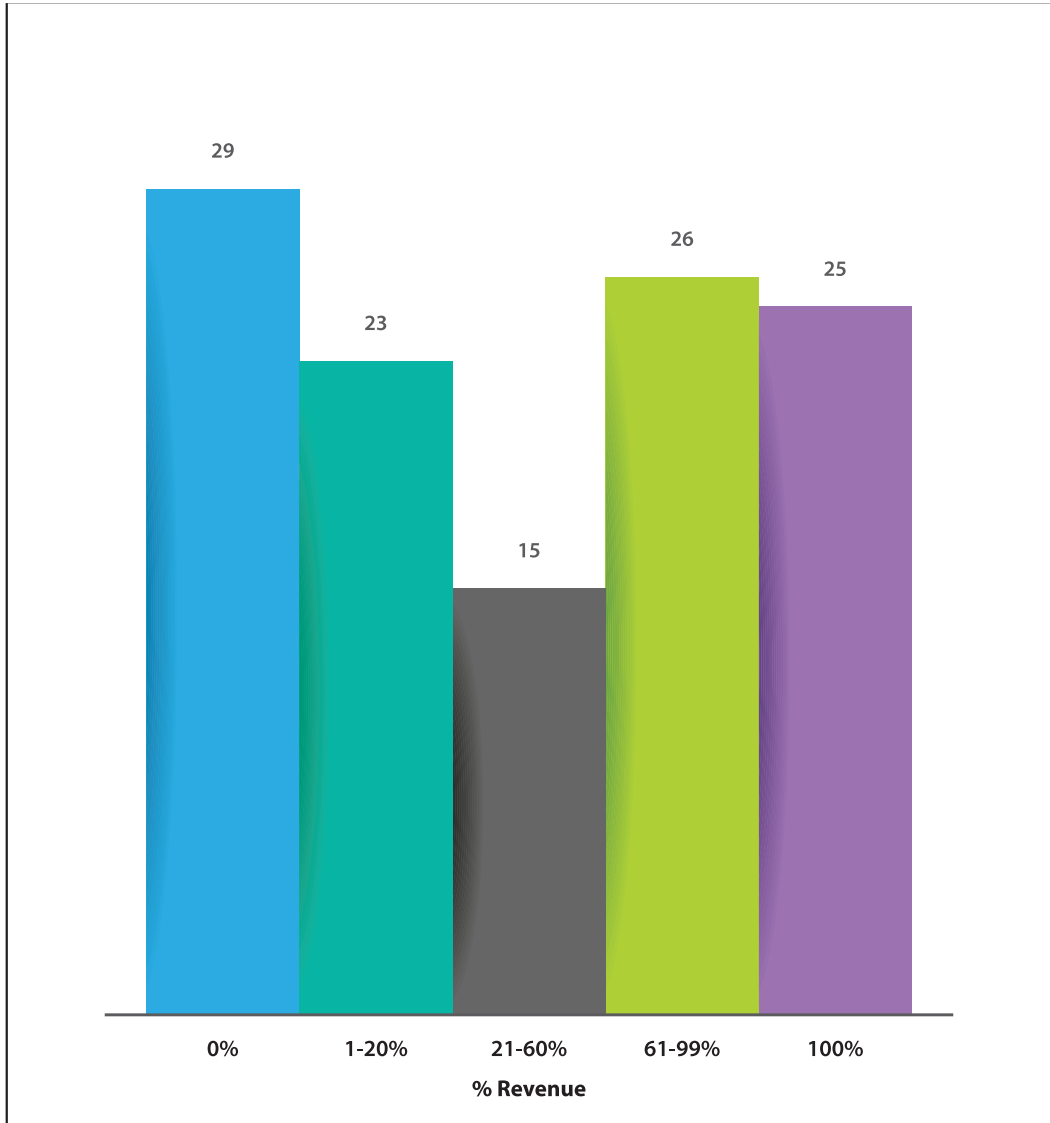
84.4%



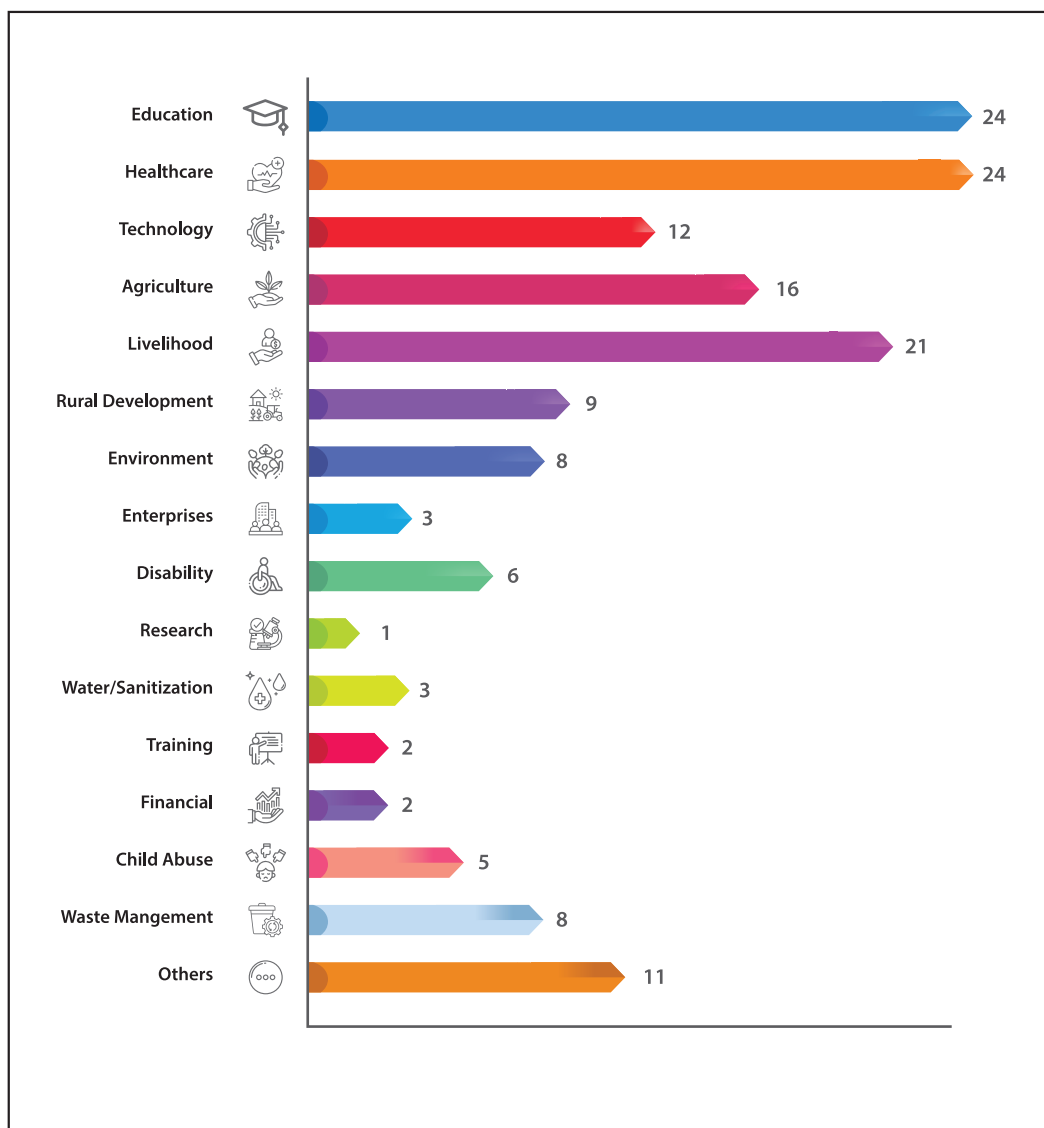
Primary Source of Capital / Funding



% of Revenue Earned from their own Business



Sectors of Intervention





Semi Finalists - Social Entrepreneur of the Year India 2025



Viraj Tyagi
CEO
eGov Foundation

Viraj Tyagi is the CEO of eGov Foundation, driving digital transformation in public service delivery through Digital Public Goods. A serial entrepreneur and co-founder of NettPositive and Finnacle, he brings deep tech and impact experience. An IIT-BHU and IIM Bangalore alumnus, he focuses on solving large-scale societal challenges.



Dr Kalpana Sankar
Founder
Hand in Hand & Belstar
Microfinance

Dr. Kalpana Sankar, a nuclear physicist turned social entrepreneur, leads Belstar Microfinance and co-founded Hand in Hand India. Her work has empowered over 10 million rural women through sustainable livelihoods. A global voice for development, she has worked with UN agencies and received top honors including the Nari Shakti Puraskar and the Princess Sabeeka Global Award.



Piyush Tewari
Founder
Save Life Foundation

After losing his cousin in a road crash, Piyush Tewari left private equity to found SaveLIFE Foundation in 2008. A Harvard MPA graduate, he led the passage of India's Good Samaritan Law and pioneered the Zero-Fatality Corridor model. His mission: transform bystander fear into action and make roads safer across India and the developing world.



Nagakarthik MP
Founder
Sauramandala Foundation

Driven by the disconnect between policy and grassroots realities, he left corporate life to work in the Himalayan belt and founded Sauramandala Foundation. For over a decade, he has built community-rooted solutions that ensure policies reflect lived experiences. His journey is a lifelong commitment to equity, impact, and empowering remote communities through meaningful, grounded interventions.



Sumita Ghose
Founder
Rangсутra Crafts India

After a personal tragedy and a Fulbright in Conflict Transformation, she founded Rangсутra to bridge rural-urban inequalities. Inspired by skilled artisans lacking work and unmet demand for handmade goods, she created a platform connecting rural craftspeople to global markets. Her journey reflects resilience, purpose, and a commitment to transforming conflict into opportunity and dignity through livelihoods.



Dr. Anjee Prakash
Founder
Learning Links Foundation

A techno-pedagogue with 30+ years of experience, she founded Learning Links Foundation in 2002 to bridge education gaps. Inspired by talented students in underserved schools, she left a senior corporate role to ensure quality learning for all. Her mission: make education a powerful social leveler, especially for girls and women, through inclusive, impactful learning experiences.



Arun Agarwal
Founder
Janitri Innovations Pvt. Ltd.

Moved by maternal health crisis in his community, he pursued Biomedical Engineering to drive change. After visiting 100+ hospitals across India, he identified critical gaps in monitoring and timely care. This journey led to founding Janitri, a health-tech startup focused on improving maternal and infant outcomes through innovative, accessible, and data-driven solutions tailored to India's healthcare realities.



Meenu Vadera
Founder
Sakha Consulting Wings
Pvt. Ltd.

A feminist social entrepreneur, she founded Sakha and Azad Foundation to empower marginalized women through non-traditional jobs and rights-based training. Inspired by her father, a freedom fighter, and shaped by the women's movement, she champions gender justice. With degrees from IRMA and LSE, her mission is to break cycles of inequality and build true autonomy for women.

Profiles

Finalists 2025

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Finalists - Social Entrepreneur of the Year India 2025



Kalpana Sankar

Hand in Hand India

www.hihindia.org

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2025

Hand in Hand India is a development organisation working to eliminate poverty through community-led, sustainable interventions. Founded in 2004, it focuses on enabling women and children to live with dignity and choice. Its five-pillar model-job creation, child labour elimination, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability-has mobilised 6.3 million women into Self-Help Groups, disbursed ₹10,000 crore in microfinance through Belstar, and created 10.8 million jobs. The organisation has transitioned 373,000 children into formal education and generated over 9,000 green jobs. Its integrated model has reached over 20 million lives and is now active in seven countries.

Focus

Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation.

Background

India's rural economy continues to face deep-rooted challenges, with limited access to credit, education, healthcare, and employment. Despite policy efforts, only 15% of rural women access formal credit and dropout rates among children remain high. Hand in Hand India addresses these gaps through a scalable, multidimensional model that combines grassroots mobilisation, financial inclusion, and strategic partnerships. Its work has been replicated internationally, demonstrating its adaptability and relevance across geographies.

Innovation & Activities

Hand in Hand India's innovation lies in its hybrid ecosystem of for-profit and non-profit entities that deliver integrated development solutions. Its Credit Plus model combines financial access with enterprise development, digital literacy, and market linkages. Technology is central to its operations, with mobile apps, AI-powered lending platforms, and real-time dashboards supporting service delivery and impact tracking. Collaborations with institutions like Harvard, IIT Madras, and LSE, along with government and corporate partners, have strengthened its reach and credibility. The organisation's impact includes 6.3 million women mobilised into SHGs, 10.8 million jobs created, ₹10,000 crore disbursed via Belstar, 373,000 children transitioned from child labour to education, over 9,000 green jobs created, and more than 20 million lives impacted directly and indirectly.

About the Entrepreneur

Dr Kalpana Sankar, Co-founder and Chairperson of Hand in Hand India and Managing Director of Belstar Microfinance, is a nuclear physicist with doctorates in Physics and Gender Studies. With over 30 years of experience, she has led transformative initiatives across India and globally. Her leadership has earned her the Nari Shakti Puraskar, Women Transforming India Award, and the Princess Sabeeka Global Award. She has served in advisory roles with UNDP, UNOPS, and IFAD, and her journey is chronicled in her autobiography The Scientist Entrepreneur.



Nagakarthish MP

Sauramandala Foundation

www.sauramandala.org

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2025

Sauramandala Foundation is a non-profit organisation working to drive systemic, community-led transformation across some of India's most remote and underserved regions. Founded in 2018, it operates across Northeast India with a vision to institutionalise the Centre for Accelerated Development (CFAD)—a decentralised, field-embedded problem-solving platform. Its three-stage CFAD model—Ground Insights, Co-created Pilots, and Evidence-based Advocacy—ensures that every intervention is rooted in lived realities and cultural context. Flagship programmes include the Chief Minister's Youth Centres, which have trained over 10,000 youth, solar electrification of 350+ health centres, and a doorstep incubation programme that has helped rural entrepreneurs increase incomes fivefold. The Foundation has unlocked over ₹125 crore in public funds and impacted over 10 lakh lives through initiatives in clean energy, sustainable agriculture, and early childhood education.

Focus

Rural Development and Poverty Alleviation.

Background

India's Northeast faces unique development challenges, including poor connectivity, cultural exclusion, and policy disconnects. Despite funding availability, programmes often fail due to lack of contextual design. In Meghalaya, 42% of rural schools remain unelectrified and 65% of youth lack vocational training. Sauramandala Foundation bridges this gap by co-creating locally grounded solutions that integrate gender and climate resilience. Its CFAD model enables participatory research, pilot testing, and policy advocacy, ensuring that innovations are scalable and equitable. With an initial investment of USD 500,000, the Foundation has catalysed over USD 15 million in government allocations, embedding its pilots into state frameworks.

Innovation & Activities

Sauramandala Foundation's innovation lies in its collaborative, ground-up approach to development. Through initiatives like the Chief Minister's Youth Centres, it has created safe learning spaces that foster skill-building and entrepreneurship. Its doorstep incubation programme supports grassroots innovators, while solar-powered health centres have improved maternal care and immunisation services. The Forgotten Folklore Project has produced 45 multilingual storybooks used by 4,000 children. Collectively, these programmes have empowered 10,000 youth, supported 450 entrepreneurs, and electrified 350+ health centres. Technology platforms like Avni, WhatsApp-based tools, and AI-powered dashboards enable real-time monitoring and adaptive implementation, ensuring that solutions remain community-led and scalable.

About the Entrepreneur

Nagakarthish MP is the Founder of Sauramandala Foundation and an Acumen Fellow with over a decade of experience in grassroots development, sustainability, and public health. His journey began with a deep awareness of policy gaps and inequities in remote regions, leading him to start Sauramandala to bridge these divides. He has held leadership roles at Beyond Purpose Social Ventures and Mesha Energy Solutions, deploying clean energy across underserved areas. His work has earned recognition including the People's Choice Award at the IMF Mountain Film Festival and selection for The/Nudge Accelerator Programme. Fluent in Hindi and Kannada, Nagakarthish continues to champion inclusive, community-driven development across India's most challenging geographies.



Piyush Tewari

SaveLIFE Foundation

www.savelifefoundation.org

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2025

SaveLIFE Foundation (SLF) is a non-profit organisation addressing India's road safety crisis through its integrated, data-driven Zero-Fatality Solution (ZFS). Operating across 36 highways and 21 districts in 16 Indian states, ZFS strengthens road engineering, enforcement, trauma care, and community engagement to reduce fatalities and improve commuter safety. Since inception, ZFS has reduced road crash fatalities by an average of 32%, with declines of up to 67% on high-risk corridors. In FY 2024–25 alone, over 163 million commuters benefitted from safer travel, and ZFS unlocked over USD 70 million in public investment. SLF's innovation lies in its catalytic financial model and robust technology stack, including AI-powered crash analytics, GIS-based hotspot mapping, and digital public goods like Surakshak and Rakshak. Founded in 2008 by Piyush Tewari after the loss of his cousin in a preventable crash, SLF has also led national reforms such as the Good Samaritan Law and the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act.

Focus

Public Health.

Background

India records 175,000 road crash deaths and 500,000 serious injuries annually, with vulnerable road users—pedestrians, cyclists, and two-wheeler riders—accounting for 64% of fatalities. These incidents disproportionately affect low-income communities and often lead to financial ruin and emotional trauma. Despite rapid infrastructure growth, systemic issues like fragmented governance, weak enforcement, and outdated regulations persist. SLF addresses these challenges through its Zero-Fatality Solution, which integrates safer infrastructure, improved enforcement, trauma care, and community engagement. The model has been embedded in national policy and is now being scaled across India and internationally.

Innovation & Activities

SLF's Zero-Fatality Solution is a replicable, scalable model that transforms high-risk roads through data-driven interventions. It has achieved up to 67% reduction in crash fatalities on corridors like NH-48 and the Mumbai-Pune Expressway. The model acts as a financial multiplier, unlocking ₹20–₹350 in public investment for every ₹1 invested. SLF uses AI-based crash analytics, forensic simulations, and GIS mapping to design targeted interventions. It also develops digital public goods like Surakshak (for crash investigation training) and Rakshak (for first responders). In FY 2024–25, SLF's work impacted over 163 million commuters and catalysed USD 186 million in public investment, with independent validation from KPMG, Deloitte, and government agencies.

About the Entrepreneur

Piyush Tewari is the Founder and CEO of SaveLIFE Foundation. A Harvard MPA graduate and former private equity professional, he founded SLF in 2008 after losing his cousin in a road crash. His leadership has led to landmark reforms like the Good Samaritan Law and the Motor Vehicles (Amendment) Act. He pioneered the Zero-Fatality Corridor model and has trained over 9,000 first responders. His work has earned him the Skoll Award for Social Innovation (2024), the Elevate Prize (2023), and recognition as a Young Global Leader by the World Economic Forum. He currently serves on India's National Road Safety Council.



Sumita Ghose

Rangсутra Crafts India

www.rangсутra.com

Finalist: Social Entrepreneur of the Year India-2025

Rangсутra Crafts India is an artisan-owned social enterprise committed to creating sustainable and dignified livelihoods for rural artisans, especially women, through the production and promotion of handcrafted textile products. Founded in 2006, it works across Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, and Maharashtra, engaging over 8,000 artisans in nine traditional craft forms. More than 70% of these artisans are women, many of whom are shareholders in the company. Rangсутra's decentralised model ensures artisans are not only skilled producers but also co-owners, with opportunities to serve on the Board of Directors. In FY 2023–24, it directly engaged 1,956 artisans, with weavers earning an average monthly income of ₹10,669—more than double the national average. Nearly 989 artisans received training, contributing to ₹41.78 lakh in estimated human capital value creation. For many women, their share certificate is the first asset held in their name—a powerful symbol of agency and empowerment.

Focus

Women Empowerment and Livelihood.

Background

India's handloom sector faces persistent challenges including low wages, outdated technology, and limited market access. The average monthly income of a handloom household is just ₹3,042, while global demand for handmade, sustainable textiles continues to grow. Rangсутra addresses this gap by linking rural artisans to global markets through a model that ensures fair wages, ownership, and dignity. In FY 2023–24, it provided employment to 1,956 artisans—80% of them women—and helped avoid over 150 tCO₂e in emissions through sustainable practices. Its decentralised, solar-powered production model and use of eco-friendly materials like BCI cotton and Lyocell reflect its commitment to environmental and social responsibility.

Innovation & Activities

Rangсутra's innovation lies in its inclusive business model that positions artisans as co-owners and decision-makers. Through a hub-and-spoke structure of village craft centres, it enables production at scale while keeping artisans close to home. The enterprise has reached over 8,000 artisans—more than 70% women—and indirectly impacted 50,000 family and community members. Its Credit Plus approach includes training in design, quality, and production planning, supported by technologies like Tara Looms, ERPNext, and Shopify. In FY 2023–24 alone, it mobilised 1,956 artisans, created significant income gains, and delivered training to nearly 989 artisans.

About the Entrepreneur

Sumita Ghose is the Founder and Managing Director of Rangсутra Crafts India. A social entrepreneur with over 45 years of experience, she holds master's degrees in Economics and Conflict Transformation, the latter earned as a Fulbright Fellow in the United States. Her journey into entrepreneurship was shaped by personal tragedy and a deep commitment to bridging rural–urban inequalities. Under her leadership, Rangсутra has grown into a profitable, artisan-owned company with over 2,000 rural shareholders. She has worked with URMUL Trust, The Hunger Project, and served as a MacArthur Fellow. Her work has been recognised with the Nari Shakti Puraskar and the Women Transforming India Award. A practitioner of Integral Yoga, she draws strength from meditation, music, and reading, and continues to inspire through her vision and empathy.

16TH YEARS OF TRANSFORMATIVE IMPACT

Join the
Legacy of
Social
Innovators!

**16TH SOCIAL
ENTREPRENEUR
OF THE YEAR AWARD,
INDIA- 2025**



A close-up photograph of a person's hand holding a small, green, leafy plant. The plant is growing out of a mound of dark, rich soil. The hand is positioned at the bottom left, with fingers gently cupping the base of the plant. The background is a soft, out-of-focus cityscape with tall buildings under a bright sky. The overall tone is positive and hopeful, representing growth, care, and social impact.

Social Entrepreneur of the Year - India



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 fine 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 fellowship 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 Perna. 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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