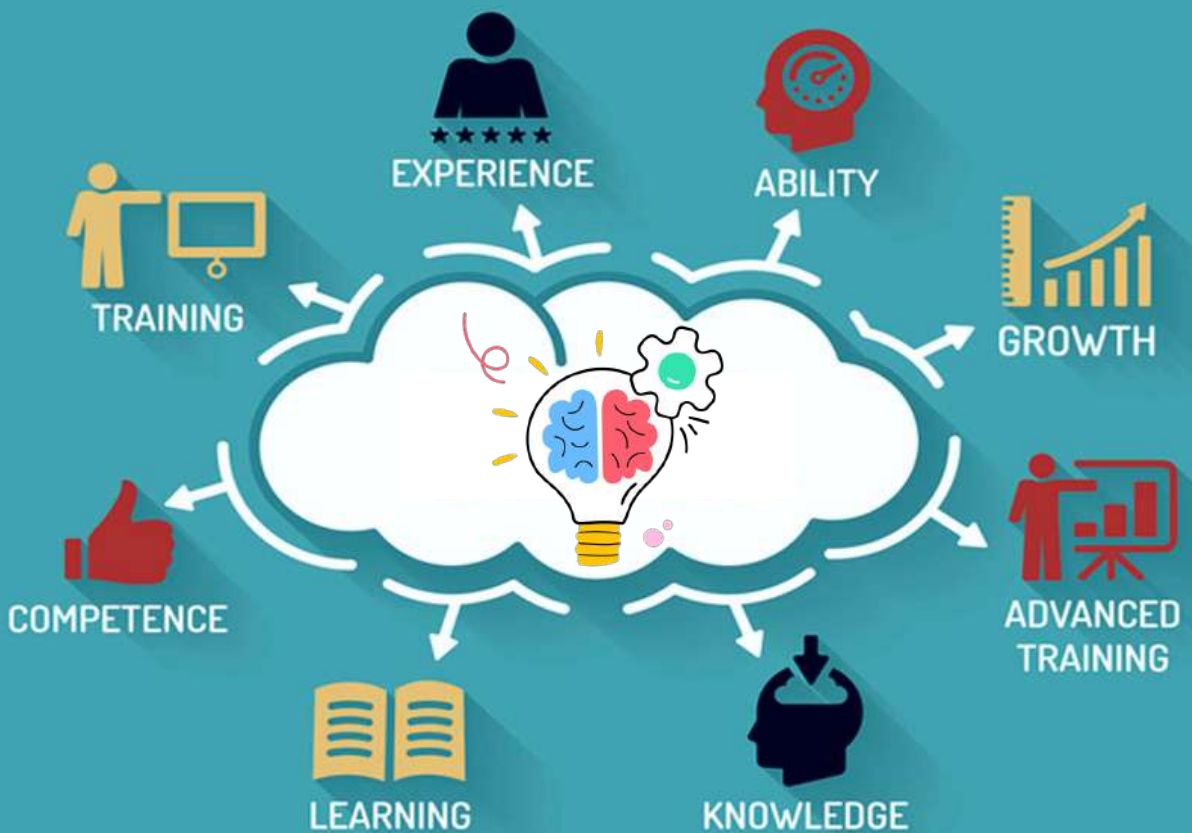


FOSTERING SKILL DEVELOPMENT: KEY TO INDIA'S INCLUSIVE GROWTH



Edited by:

Meena Galliara and Sayantan Khanra

School of Business Management
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University



*Fostering Skill
Development: Key to
India's Inclusive
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Sayantana Khanra

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Preface

In the dynamic landscape of India's growing economy, a glaring weakness remains – finding a more inclusive workforce. Despite the country's economic progress, informal employment still predominates and gender differentials in labor force participation continue. The capacity to create a productive labour force depends on the availability of an appropriately skilled workforce. This calls for steady investments in skill development, as well as promoting entrepreneurship. The first three chapters of the edited book provide a comprehensive account of policies and programs for skill development, livelihood support, and entrepreneurship in India, focusing on the needs of marginalized and vulnerable groups. The book has collated six interesting case studies that describe the innovative models deployed by NGOs to address the skill gap and economically empower vulnerable communities.

The First Chapter of the book sets the context and relevance for Vocational Training, its impact on employability, and its role in fostering economic growth. The chapter delves into the multifaceted changes that have reshaped vocational education, focusing on the key drivers of transformation, emerging trends, and the potential impact on students, industries, and the economy.

The complexities in attaining the mission of skill development are discussed in Chapter Two. The author articulates that the challenges in skill development are complex and multi-fold, primarily due to the legacy carried forward from the nation's historical, social, and economic profile. This chapter delves into the challenges and roadblocks of implementing the ambitious skill development agenda.

Chapter Three discusses the relevance of adopting innovative skill development models to keep up with global employability trends, economic growth, and inclusive development. The examples cited in the chapter illustrate the innovative mechanisms adopted by NGOs and

corporations in facilitating economic inclusion and equity to create a broader social impact.

The innovative entrepreneurship model deployed by the Salaam Bombay Foundation to promote entrepreneurship opportunities among resource-poor students is presented in Chapter Four. The case illustrates the importance of strengthening entrepreneurial intentions through mentorship and training. This consequentially results in building confidence and self efficacy among young entrepreneurs.

Chapter Five presents the case of Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan (GGVS) in promoting sustainable agriculture and facilitating the economic empowerment of farmers. The case discusses the innovative strategy adopted by GGVS and its journey for transforming farmers to adopt organic farming.

Chapter Six illustrates the case study based on the *Women on Wheels project initiated by Jan Vikas Charitable Trust and Azad Foundation for training educated resource-poor women* to become professional drivers. The case accentuates the relevance of the project in enabling women to earn dignified livelihoods as well as offer safety to women commuters. The authors articulate the need for developing a supportive ecosystem through cross-sector partnerships to allow women drivers to overcome logistical and societal barriers.

The Berhampore Minority and Community Development Service (BMCDS) case study is presented in Chapter Seven. This case describes various strategies, including skill training, deployed by BMCDS to empower highly marginalized women hailing from various villages in West Bengal. The authors assert that persisting challenges like entrenched societal norms, childcare dilemmas, technological knowledge barriers, etc., pose obstacles to economically empowering women and recommend a few strategies to address the same.

Chapter Eight presents the strategy executed by Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF) in promoting better menstrual hygiene management (MHM) at the pan-India level and assisting rural women in setting up microenterprises to manufacture and sell Suneheri Pads (Gel-based sanitary napkins). The author maps the social impact of these initiatives and deliberates on the challenges faced in maintaining the financial sustainability of these enterprises.

Chapter Nine presents the efforts taken by Able Disabled All People Together (ADAPT) to equip disabled youth with vocational skills that enhance their employability and independence.

This book presents nine chapters on workforce development trends from academicians and practitioners. Explore the complex dimensions, problems and treatments of inclusive growth in India. It is hoped that this book will serve as a gateway for useful information to students, faculty members and researchers in the field. Into the exciting world of skill creation, a little mysterious and with so much information.

Meena Galliard & Sayantan Khanra

Editors

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Chapter I

**SKILLS IN TRANSITION EXPLORING THE
CHANGING LANDSCAPE OF VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION**

Ms. JayaBala Girish

Assistant Professor,
School of Skill Education,
Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai.

Priya Singh, Ph.D

Dean, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences,
MIT ADT University, Pune.

Bala Krishnamoorthy, Ph.D

Professor -Strategy,
School of Business Management,
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

Vocational education is a crucial component of any nation's educational system. It equips individuals with practical skills and knowledge directly applicable to the workforce. In this article, we explore the significance of vocational education, its impact on employability, and its role in fostering economic growth. We also delve into the challenges and opportunities within

the vocational education landscape, focusing on global trends and best practices.

Vocational education, often called skill development, has significantly transformed recently. The landscape of vocational learning has evolved to meet the demands of a rapidly changing job market, technological advances, and learners' shifting preferences. This paper delves into the multifaceted changes that have reshaped vocational education, focusing on the key drivers of transformation, emerging trends, and the potential impact on students, industries, and the economy. Also, we will deal with the vital terms that have phenomenally changed the face of skilling.

Introduction

The practice of dividing the curriculum into academic and vocational aspects and treating the latter as a default for those deemed to be ill-suited to the former has been an enduring staple of educational systems and schools across the globe (Theodore et al., Autumn, 1998, Vol. 28, No. 3 Autumn, 1998). The partitioning and rationing of the curriculum along these primary lines is an obvious way in which schools fulfill their purpose of social and cultural reproduction (see, e.g., Anyon 1988; Apple, 1982; Bourdieu, 1971; Eggleston, 1977). The vocational option is more likely to be imposed upon poor communities than upon affluent ones upon the children of the barrios and the inner cities of suburbs. People who live in poor communities know that schooling holds the keys to social mobility.

1. Drivers of Change in Vocational Learning

Though the traditional class and status rigidities that have attended vocational education endure, recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in this form of education, sparked by the pressures of a global economy and commitment to the belief that the curriculum must now be more deliberately connected with work (see, e.g., Aring 1993; Gray 1991; Grubb, 1996; Lewis, 1991; Rosenstock, 1991; Vaughan, 1991). With this resurgence has come a reassessment of the nature of contemporary work. It has been argued that technological, process, and social complexities have replaced Fordism in the

workplace. It has been further argued that workers need to be educated for job flexibility instead of being trained for particular jobs. Because the character of work and jobs has changed, it is felt that traditional job-specific vocational education must be superseded by a new vocationalism (see the comparison in Kurt Lewis, 1994)

This contribution aims to give an overview and analysis of the current initiatives in the field of vocational education. The reason behind that is that we think this field of skill education has developed well during the last two decades, but further development is needed since the problems around and within the vocational space are pressing while this sector of education plays an essential role in socio-economic development (Mulder, 2012). It is not by coincidence that the European Union has agreed upon the Copenhagen declaration on enhanced cooperation in vocational education and that EU member states with solid VET systems are doing relatively well in the current economic recession. (Martin Mulder & Eline Roelofs 2012)

Several vital drivers have propelled the changing landscape of vocational learning. First and foremost is the dynamic nature of the job market. As industries evolve and new technologies emerge, the skills required for employment constantly evolve. Vocational education institutions have recognized the need to stay aligned with these shifts to ensure students are equipped with the relevant skills. Artificial intelligence, machine learning, and social research are certain domains that have evolved in the 21st century.

Globalization has also played a crucial role in driving change. The demand for a globally competitive workforce has grown as businesses expand internationally. (Margeviča & Grinsbergs, 2011). Vocational programs have adapted to prepare students for careers that transcend geographical boundaries and require a deeper understanding of international markets and cultures. Banking finance and insurance or health care verticals not only deal with the changing scenario in India but also align their program objectives with global needs.

Furthermore, technological advances have profoundly impacted vocational learning (Dietzen and Wünsche (2011)). The digital age has ushered in a new era of connectivity, automation, and data-driven decision-making. Vocational programs now incorporate digital literacy, coding, data analysis, and other tech-related skills to meet the demands of the modern workforce. Generic subjects like design thinking, Ethics, and corporate governance add further hue to already multifaceted vocational education.

Another driving force is the changing demographics of learners (Spierings & Meerman, 2011). A more diverse and inclusive student body demands programs catering to various needs and backgrounds. This factor has led to the development of flexible, customized vocational pathways that accommodate various learning styles and levels of prior knowledge. (Cattaneo 2011)

2. Emerging Trends in Vocational Learning:

Blended Learning and Online Platforms: One of the most prominent trends in vocational education is integrating online learning. Blended learning models combine traditional classroom instruction with online resources, providing students with flexibility and accessibility (M. Grosch). Online platforms offer courses, certifications, and simulations that enhance hands-on learning. This trend has become especially relevant in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, which accelerated the adoption of remote and online learning (Sharmila Devi, 2020)

Industry Partnerships: Vocational institutions are increasingly forming partnerships with industry players. These collaborations bridge the gap between education and the workforce by offering students real-world experiences, internships, and apprenticeships. Industry-driven curriculum development ensures graduates possess the skills and knowledge employers seek (MJ et al. – 2023). Skilling is based mainly on work-integrated learning, like on-the-job training. Students learn as they work on the shop floor, thus adding to the nation's economy even during their students' lives. Skill

knowledge providers rooted in the industries act as the fulcrum of vocational education. (Bagwell - Innovations in education and training international, 1998 - Taylor & Francis)

Soft Skills and Career Readiness: While technical skills remain vital, vocational education has recognized the importance of soft skills such as communication, teamwork, problem-solving, and adaptability (A Detgen, F Fernandez, A McMahon, 2021 - Wiley Online Library). Preparing students for the workplace goes beyond technical proficiency; it encompasses professional etiquette, networking, and career development skills.

Stackable Credentials: Vocational programs are moving toward stackable credentials to provide more flexible pathways (JT et al., M Rosin, Columbus, and McGraw 2012 - voced.edu.au). This approach allows students to earn certificates and credentials incrementally, enabling them to enter the workforce at various points while still having opportunities for career advancement through further education. Unlike the formulae education, it already follows the exit and entry while studying.

Focus on Sustainability and Green Technology: As sustainability gains prominence in various industries, vocational programs incorporate green technology and sustainable practices into curricula. This inclusion prepares students to meet the growing demand for environmentally conscious solutions in the job market (M Ikram, M Ferasso, R Sroufe, and Q Zhang - Journal of Cleaner Production, 2021 - Elsevier). Waste management and environmental upgradation are chiefly taught as the students learn the various domains. Thus, it inches towards fulfilling sustainable development goals that must be achieved by 2030.

Personalized Learning: Learning has gained traction in vocational education due to learners' unique needs and aspirations. Adaptive learning technologies and individualised pathways help students progress at their own pace and focus on areas where they need improvement. The student's current learning

is based on previous knowledge, which is calculated before offering a place at the NSQF level. (National Skill Qualification Framework)

Micro learning and Just-in-Time Training: Micro learning modules and just-in-time training provide quick, targeted bursts of information and skill-building. These approaches are ideal for busy professionals and can be delivered through mobile devices, making learning more accessible and efficient.

3. Impact of Changes in Vocational learning landscape on Stakeholders:

The changing landscape of vocational learning has profound implications for various stakeholders.

These changes offer students greater flexibility and a more personalized learning experience. They can acquire skills directly applicable to their job roles, making them more competitive in the job market. Additionally, vocational education can be more affordable and accessible through online platforms and stackable credentials.

Industries benefit from a better-prepared workforce to meet their specific needs. By collaborating with vocational institutions, companies can ensure that graduates possess the skills and knowledge required for immediate productivity. This reduces training costs and accelerates the on boarding process for new employees.

From an economic standpoint, an agile and well-trained workforce increases productivity and innovation. As vocational education adapts to the demands of emerging industries, it helps drive economic growth by supplying a steady stream of qualified workers. Moreover, a workforce with technical skills and career readiness is more resilient in economic challenges.

4. Challenges and Future Directions: While the changing landscape of vocational learning brings many advantages, it also presents challenges. Funding and resource allocation, particularly in the context of online learning

infrastructure, remain significant concerns. Ensuring that vocational programs remain affordable and accessible to all is essential. Additionally, the need for ongoing curriculum updates and professional development for educators is paramount. As industries evolve, vocational instructors must stay abreast of the latest trends and technologies to prepare their students effectively. There is no preservice or in-service training for the teachers of vocational education (EC Schmid, V Hegelheimer - ReCALL, 2014 - cambridge.org). This leads to a need for more vocational pedagogy.

The future of vocational education lies in continued adaptation and innovation. Vocational programs must anticipate emerging skills and industries, embrace technology, and foster a culture of lifelong learning to remain relevant. Collaboration between educational institutions, industry partners, and policymakers is crucial in navigating these challenges and charting a course toward a more dynamic and responsive vocational education landscape. Let us go through specific initiatives by GOI that hold high prominence in the vocational space.

5. Primary Goals to be achieved in vocational space are:

- Integration of Vocational Education with general academic education in all schools.
- Enhancing the employability and entrepreneurial abilities of the students and providing exposure to the work environment.
- Generating awareness amongst students about various career options to enable them to choose as per their aptitude, competence, and aspirations. (Samagra Shiksha - An Integrated Scheme for School Education Framework for Implementation, 2022)

6. NEP on Skill Education

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to significantly transform the nation's educational system. The policy promotes inclusiveness, flexibility, and comprehensive growth in education. It focuses on developing 21st-

century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. It emphasizes the importance of interdisciplinary learning opportunities, encouraging research and innovation, and aligning curricula with international standards.

The NEP2020 states some fundamental principles that will transform the education system and individual institutions. Among these principles, one of particular relevance to Vocational Education is – that there will be no "hard separations" between the "vocational and academic streams" (NEP Para 4.9). The policy aims to "overcome the social status hierarchy associated with Vocational Education and requires integration of Vocational Education into mainstream education in all education institutions in a phased manner" over the next decade (NEP Para 16.4).

The policy highlights the need for providing vocational exposure and skills to all students during school to become good, successful, innovative, adaptable, and productive human beings in today's rapidly changing world. The expectation is that the dignity of labour will be emphasized with a focus on the importance of various vocations involving Indian arts and artisanship, and the development of vocational capacities will go hand-in-hand with the development of academic or other capacities. For the inclusion of children with disabilities, emphasis has been laid on "assistive devices and appropriate technology-based tools, as well as adequate and language-appropriate teaching-learning materials and safety aspects.

Skill education in India is on the cusp of this transition in India's Education landscape. Through internship-embedded and hands-on learning to improve students' industrial preparedness and practical abilities, the NEP 2020 emphasizes skill-based education and training to bridge the gap between academia and industry. The policy also emphasizes the importance of teacher training and continuous professional development.

As one refers to reskilling and upskilling the youth, one aims to achieve a distinct skill set. The skill set typically comprises educational qualifications,

transferable skills, and personal attributes. Developing one's skill set, level of development, preparedness, clarity of goals, and self-confidence would constitute employability or, in other words, the Employability Quotient (EQ). NEP 2020 has chalked the significance of skill development. Blending and implementing skilling in education will mitigate poverty, utilize demographic dividend, socio-economic empowerment of underprivileged sectors, achieve economic growth, reduce social challenges, and result in economic inclusion.

As far as institutional mechanism is concerned, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, and the scheme - Prime Minister Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) have resulted in achieving considerable spin-offs.

The need of the hour is to ensure a talent pipeline as envisaged by the current policy while aspiring to achieve a "tech decade."

Through various national schemes abiding by the terms of reference of the National Education Policy (NEP), education and skilling have been integrated, and new-age skill education programs have been identified to create a workforce well-equipped with 21st-century skills.

The release of an enabling framework National Credit Framework (NCrF) further empowers, facilitates, and allows the stakeholders while giving them the flexibility to cater to their specific academic and skilling needs.

As mentioned above, Skill education in India is a well-structured pathway with competencies/National Occupational Standards that describe the skills, knowledge, and understanding needed to undertake a particular task or job to a nationally recognized level of competence as the building blocks to inform qualification units. The National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) theoretically makes it possible to drive competency-based training for every job role in the industry.

5. Key Provisions to Facilitate the VE in India in Compliance with NEP 2020

Qualification Pack (QP)

A Qualification Pack (QP) is an essential component of the skill development framework (Skill Development Initiatives and Career Development: The Interface in India, S Buela, RRP Miranda, and S Aravind - jivacareer.org). It is a document that defines the specific job roles and the associated knowledge, skills, and abilities required for those roles. QPs serve as a reference point for designing and developing training programs, assessment tools, and certification standards to ensure that individuals are adequately prepared for various job roles.

Here is an overview of the critical components typically found in a Qualification Pack in the context of skill development:

- **Job Role Title:** The QP begins with the job role title for which the qualification is being developed. This title should accurately reflect the role's responsibilities and functions.
- **Brief Description of the Job Role:** A concise description gives an overview. This description helps stakeholders understand the context and purpose of the qualification.
- **Occupational Standards:** The heart of the QP consists of detailed occupational standards that outline the knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) required for the job role (From the analysis of work processes to designing competency-based occupational standards and vocational curricula V Tütlys, G Spoettl - European Journal of Training and Development, 2017 - emerald.com)

These standards are typically divided into four categories:

- **Knowledge:** This section specifies the theoretical knowledge required, including concepts, principles, and procedures relevant to the job role.

- **Skills:** This section outlines individuals' practical skills and competencies to perform the job effectively. It includes both technical skills and soft skills.
- **Abilities:** Abilities refer to the aptitudes and personal qualities necessary for success in the job role. This may include problem-solving abilities, communication skills, adaptability, and more.
- **Key Responsibilities:** This section provides a detailed list of the main responsibilities and tasks associated with the job role. It offers a clear picture of the role's scope and duties.
- **Assessment Guidelines:** The QP includes guidelines for assessing individuals against the specified **National occupational standards**. This typically involves defining the assessment methods, criteria, and performance indicators used to evaluate candidates' competence.
- **Career Progression:** Some QPs also include information about potential career progression pathways for individuals in the specified job role. This can help individuals plan their career advancement within the industry.
- **Related Job Roles:** In some cases, the QP identifies job roles that are closely related or have overlapping skills. This information can be valuable for individuals exploring career options and training providers designing comprehensive programs.
- **Qualifications Framework:** The QP indicates the national or regional qualifications framework within which the job role and associated qualifications fit. This helps align the qualification with broader educational and vocational pathways.
- **Certification and Licensing:** Information about any required certifications or licenses associated with the job role may be included in the QP. This ensures that individuals are aware of any regulatory requirements.

- **Industry Collaboration:** The development of QPs often involves collaboration between industry experts, employers, training providers, and government agencies to ensure that the qualifications are relevant and meet industry standards.

Thus, Qualification Packs are valuable tools in skill development as they provide a transparent and standardized framework for designing training programs, conducting assessments, and certifying individuals in specific job roles. They play a critical role in bridging the gap between education and employment by ensuring individuals acquire the skills and knowledge needed for meaningful and productive careers.

National Occupational Standards (NOS) are documents that outline the skills, knowledge, and competencies required for specific job roles or occupations. These standards serve as a reference point for various aspects of workforce development, including training, assessment, and certification (A review of national occupational standards and the role of human resource development in their implementation AS Lee, RL Jacobs - Human Resource Development, 2021 - journals.sagepub.com)

NOS in India is developed and maintained by various sector-specific organizations, industry bodies, and government agencies. Here are some critical points regarding NOS in India, which has been instrumental in transforming vocational education in the Indian landscape. :

Development of NOS: NOS are typically developed through a collaborative process involving industry experts, employers, employees, and training providers. These stakeholders come together to define the skills and competencies needed for specific job roles within various sectors of the economy.

Sector-Specific: NOS are specific to different sectors and job roles. They cover many industries, including manufacturing, healthcare, IT, hospitality, agriculture and construction. Each sector may have its own set of NOS.

Skills and Competencies: NOS provides a detailed breakdown of the skills, knowledge, and behaviours expected of individuals working in a particular occupation. They specify the tasks, responsibilities, and performance criteria for each competency.

Alignment with Qualifications Frameworks: NOS in India are often aligned with the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF), which helps standardize qualifications and certifications across different sectors and ensure that they are comparable and recognized nationally.

Training and Curriculum Development: NOS is a foundation for developing training programs and curricula. Training providers use NOS to design courses and training materials that prepare individuals for specific job roles.

Assessment and Certification: NOS is used to assess the competencies of individuals seeking certification or qualification in a particular occupation. Assessment processes are designed to ensure that individuals meet the standards outlined in the NOS.

Government Initiatives: The Indian government, through agencies like the **National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)** and the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship**, plays a significant role in promoting and implementing NOS across various sectors. Government initiatives such as **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)** aim to skill and certify many people based on NOS.

Periodic Updates: NOS are not static documents; they are periodically reviewed and updated to reflect changes in industries, technologies, and job requirements. This ensures that they remain relevant and up-to-date.

Industry-Recognized NOS: NOS are widely recognized by industries and employers, and they play a crucial role in bridging the gap between the skills of the workforce and the demands of the job market.

In summary, National Occupational Standards in India are essential to the country's skill development and vocational training ecosystem. They help define the skills and competencies needed for various job roles, facilitate training and certification, and ultimately contribute to a more skilled and employable workforce.

6. Government Initiatives.

Skill India: Skill India is an initiative launched by the Government of India to empower the country's youth with skill sets that make them more employable and productive in their work environment.

Today, India is one of the youngest nations in the world, with more than 62% of its population in the working-age group (15-59 years) and over 54% of its total population below 25 years of age.

In the context of India, the country has been experiencing a demographic dividend for some time. The term "demographic dividend" refers to a period in a country's demographic transition when the working-age population (ages 15-64) is larger than the dependent population (Children and Elderly). Its population pyramid is expected to further bulge across the 15-59 age groups over the next decade (National Credit Framework, **NCrF**). Due to this, there is a huge opportunity and, at the same time, poses a formidable challenge. To reap this demographic dividend, India needs to equip its workforce with knowledge and employable skills to contribute substantively to the economic growth and development of the country. Today, India has 65% of its youth in the working age group. If ever there is a way to reap this demographic advantage, it has to be through the skill development of the youth so that they add to their personal growth and the country's economic growth.

Skill India an initiative by GOI offers courses across 40 sectors in the country aligned to the standards recognized by the industry, domain experts and the government under the National Skill Qualification Framework. The courses help a student focus on the practical delivery of work and help him/her enhance his/her technical expertise so that he/she is job-ready. The Prime

Minister launched the Skill Mission on 15 July 2015, and a Ministry for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) has been formed to focus on enhancing the employability of the youth through skill development. The skill ecosystem in India is seeing some significant reforms and policy interventions that are reinvigorating and re-energizing the country's workforce today and are preparing the youth for job and growth opportunities in the international market.

Among other initiatives, the Hon'ble Prime Minister's flagship scheme, Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) alone, has seen nearly 1.37 crore people get skilled and prepared for a new, successful India. More than 720 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras (PMKKs) have been established to support skill development infrastructure in the country. These are state-of-the-art centers of skilling with the latest pedagogy and use of technology. MSDE also recognizes and certifies skills acquired through informal means through its Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) program under PMKVY, bringing about a significant shift from an unorganized sector to an organized economy. So far, more than 50 lakh people have been certified and formally recognized under the aforementioned programs.

Skill India harbors responsibility for ensuring the implementation of Common norms across all skill development programs in the country so that they are all standardized and aligned to one object. The ITI ecosystem has also been brought under Skill India to garner better vocational education and training results. The Ministry has also actively made comprehensive reforms to the Apprentices Act 1961, where maximum control has been given to the private sector to facilitate the maintenance of the industry standards per market requirements. More regulatory rights have been given to the industry to set the target for the required apprentices. The ordinance has given way to an ample opportunity that the industry should leverage and benefit. MSDE also introduced the National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) scheme in August 2016 to promote the most sustainable model of skill development and industry connection. Under this scheme, the Government of India provides

financial benefits for apprenticeship. More than 7 lakh apprenticeship pieces of training have been conducted so far.

MSDE has also introduced the Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana (PM-YUVA), which aims to educate and equip potential and early-stage entrepreneurs and catalyze a cultural shift to support aspiring entrepreneurs. The candidates are linked to the MUDRA scheme of the government to get assistance in initial business funding. Skill India is no longer just limited to the domestic market but is actively engaging with countries worldwide to promote cross-geographical exposure and opportunities in the international market. The success of a nation always depends on the success of its youth, and Skill India is sure to bring a lot of advantages and opportunities for these young Indians. The Ministry is responsible for the coordination of all Skill Development efforts across the country, the removal of the disconnect between demand and supply of skilled human resources, building the vocational and technical training framework, skill up-gradation, building of new skills and innovative thinking not only for existing jobs but also jobs that are to be created.

The Ministry aims to skill on a large scale with speed and high standards to achieve its vision of a 'Skilled India.' It is aided in these initiatives by its functional arms - Directorate General of Training (DGT), National Council for Vocational Education and Training (NCVET), National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), National Skill Development Fund (NSDF) and 37 Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) as well as 33 National Skill Training Institutes (NSTIs/NSTI (w)), about 15000 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) under DGT and 187 training partners registered with NSDC. The Ministry also intends to work with the existing network of Skill Development centers, universities, and other alliances in the field. Further, collaborations with relevant Central Ministries, State governments, international organizations, industry, and NGOs have been initiated for multi-level engagement and more impactful implementation of Skill Development efforts.

We need to get the national vocational standard so that when a student comes through the skill development program, they can seamlessly be integrated

into the formal education system and even get a PhD if they wish.' (National Human Resource Development in Practice: An Interview with M.V. Subbiah) Many Sector Skill Councils were established all over the nation to set national vocational standards. Sector Skill Councils (SSCs) are industry-led bodies in India that play a crucial role in the country's skill development ecosystem. They were established as part of the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) under the aegis of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). SSCs are responsible for addressing the skill development needs of specific industry sectors. The functions of the Sector Skill Council are:

1. **Industry Focus:** Each Sector Skill Council focuses on a particular industry sector, such as healthcare, retail, automotive, construction, IT, and more. Their main purpose is to identify and address the specific skill requirements of these industries.
2. **Skills Gap Analysis:** SSCs conduct a thorough analysis of the skills gap within their respective industries. This involves identifying the specific job roles, skills, and competencies that are in demand and then comparing this with the skills of the available workforce.
3. **Occupational Standards:** Based on their analysis, SSCs develop occupational standards that describe the skills, knowledge, and competencies required for various job roles within the industry. These standards serve as a reference for the development of training programs and assessment criteria.
4. **Curriculum and Training:** SSCs collaborate with training providers, both public and private, to develop and standardize training curricula for different job roles. They help design courses and programs that align with the industry's needs.
5. **Assessment and Certification:** SSCs are responsible for setting up a framework for assessment and certification of skills. They work with assessment agencies to ensure that individuals are properly evaluated and certified as per industry standards.

6. **Quality Assurance:** SSCs are involved in ensuring the quality of training and assessment. They help maintain a high standard of skill development programs.
7. **Industry Feedback:** SSCs facilitate regular interaction between the government and industry stakeholders to understand evolving industry needs and adapt skill development programs accordingly.
8. **Employability:** The ultimate goal of SSCs is to enhance the employability of the Indian workforce by making sure that the skills developed through various training programs are aligned with industry requirements.
9. **Collaboration:** SSCs work with a wide range of stakeholders, including industry associations, employers, training providers, and government agencies, to create a comprehensive ecosystem for skill development.

The establishment of Sector Skill Councils is part of the broader effort to address the skills gap in India and make the country's workforce more competitive, both domestically and internationally. They play a crucial role in shaping India's vocational education and skill development landscape. Congruent to the sectors set up by the sector skill councils the skill institutes across India have started various graduate and undergraduate courses.

With a similar aim in view, many skill institutes were established across the nation between the years 2011 to 2014. School of Vocational Education (SVE), functioning under Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), is one such reputed skilling institute in India. It follows the Work Integrated Training model. It runs courses in Agriculture, Automotive, Banking Finance Security and Insurance, Electronics, Healthcare, Sports Management, Hospitality, Travel and tourism to name a few.

7. Conclusion:

The students' employability with skill training is assured, evident through the placement data provided in the subsequent figures. So far, by June 2022,

nearly 6177 students have graduated from TISS SVE, out of which about 82 per cent have found initial placements or chosen to be self-employed. Ten per cent of students have opted for higher education, and 2 per cent neither took up any employment nor enrolled in higher education. (Source: Hunar, Skill Magazine, Issue 1). The changing landscape of vocational learning reflects a commitment to preparing students for the demands of the modern workforce. With evolving technologies, shifting industry needs, and diverse student populations, vocational education has adapted and innovated to provide flexible, relevant, and accessible learning opportunities.

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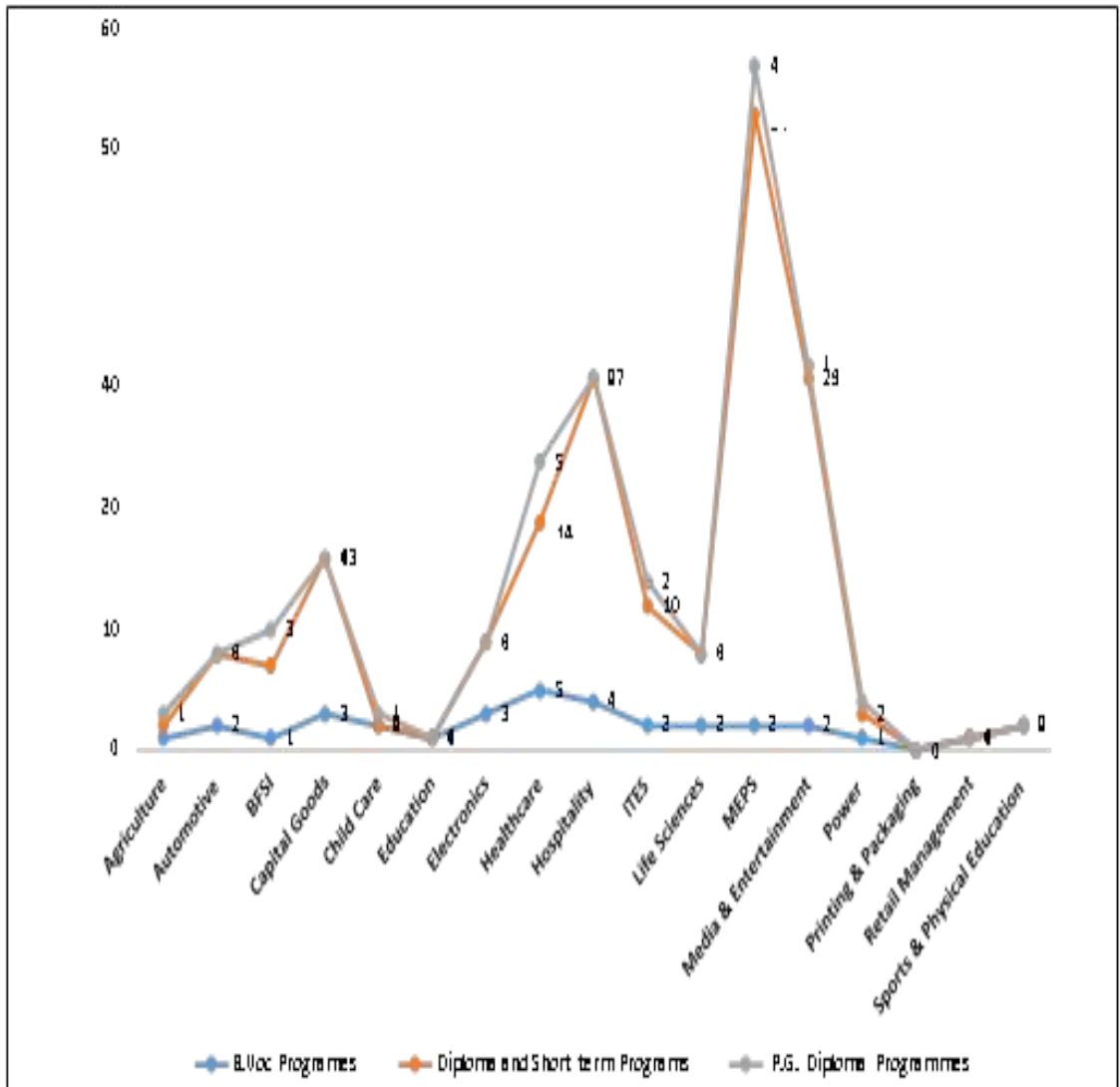
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FIGURE 1 - SECTOR-WISE NUMBER OF PROGRAMME (223)



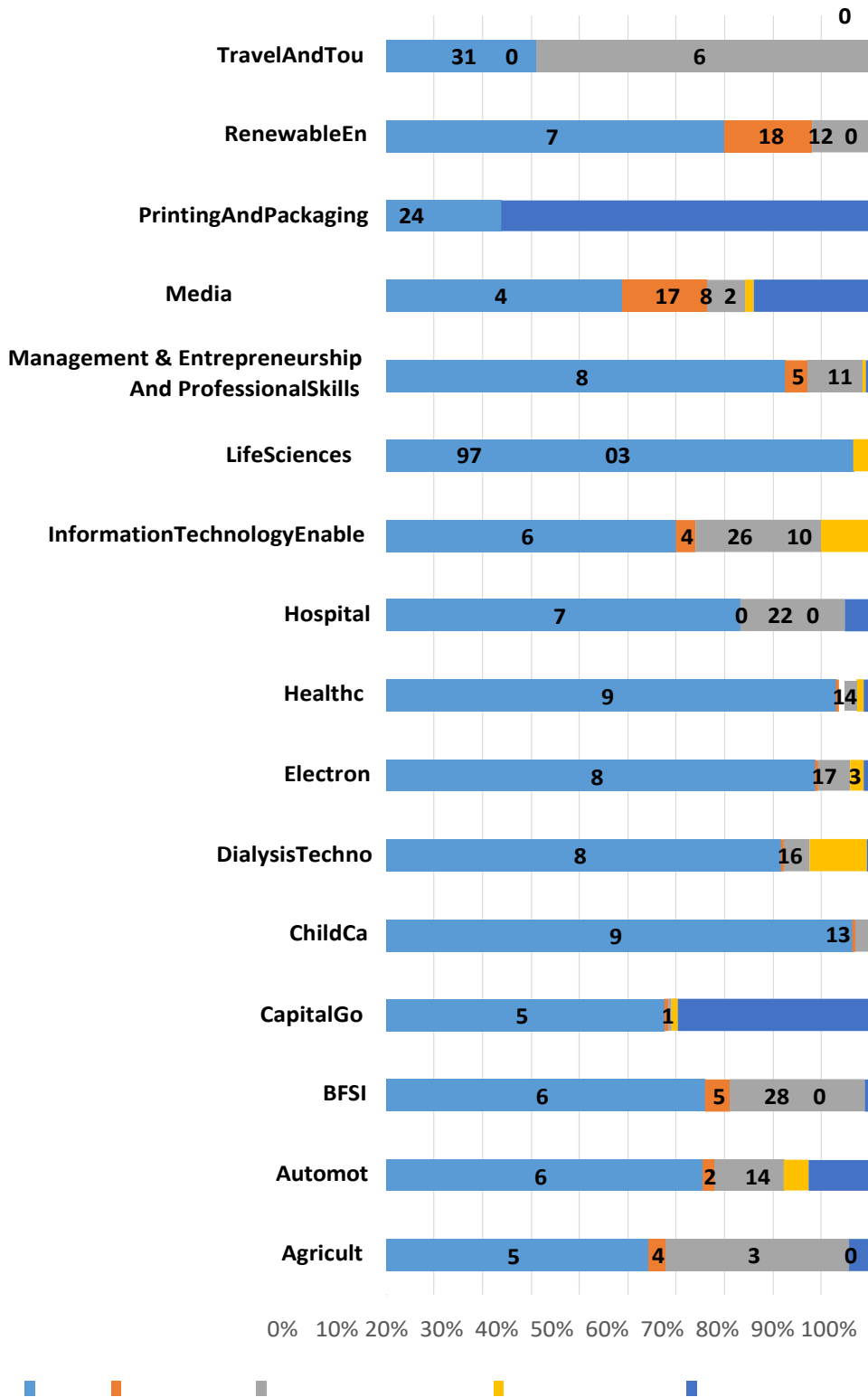
(Source: HUNAR the skill Magazine, TISS SVE, 2023)

Table I - PLACEMENT DATA OF THE STUDENTS (ACADEMIC YEAR 2022) (Data taken from TISS SVE ERP portal)

Sector/Vertical	Placed	Pursuing further education	Self employed	Not opted	Placement Data updation in process	Grand Total
Agriculture	6				24	30
Automotive	24	18	1		41	84
Banking, Financial Services And Insurance					50	50
Capital Goods	33	2			11	46
Child Care	15				44	59
Dialysis Technology	102	5		38	14	159
Electronics	85	5	2	9	46	147
Healthcare	567	35	10	39	499	1150
ITES	12	6		1	45	64
Management & Entrepreneurship	40	9	2		41	92
Media& Entertainment	39	12	2		107	160
Power	5	1		3	5	14
Tourism & Hospitality					252	252
Travel And Tourism					49	49
Grand Total	928	93	17	90	1228	2356

FIGURE II SECTOR-WISE PLACEMENT PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO HAVE COMPLETED BACHELORS(5573), (Source – Hunar, Skill Magazine, TISS-SVE, 2023)

Skills in Transition Exploring the Changing Landscape of ... Education



Chapter II

CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING THE SKILL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

Satish M.K, Ph.D.

Associate Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)
School of Business Management, Mumbai
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

India has embarked on a mission to equip its workforce entering the labour market with appropriate skills as per industry standards, focusing on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to harness the nation's demographic advantage. A skilled workforce would increase productivity, enabling India to improve its competency as a manufacturing and service capital of the world. While the Agenda is placed in the right direction, the complexity of the canvas of skill development with different stakeholders and priorities makes its implementation a challenging one. Challenges are complex and multi-fold, some due to the legacy carried forward from the nation's historical social and economic profile. This article delves into the challenges and roadblocks of implementing the ambitious skill development agenda.

Key Words: Skill Development, National Skill Development Mission, Industry

1. Introduction

Ranked as the world's sixth largest economy, India is seen as one of the world's fastest-growing major economies, with the potential to achieve a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 (GoI, 2018). Sectorally, agriculture is estimated to

Challenges in Implementing the Skill Development Agenda

reach USD 1 trillion, manufacturing USD 1 trillion, and services USD 3 trillion (GoI, 2018). Knowledge and skill development is important in a nation's growth agenda. Good education and skills are valued to advance in life (Prabhat, 2021), ensuring economic and social mobility. There is a widely felt need to equip India's workforce with appropriate skills and knowledge as per industry standards.

Post-independence, there was an emphasis on industrial development. To support industrial development, the need was felt for a steady supply of trained industrial workforce. In this direction, in 1969, the first Industrial Training Institute (ITI) was established by the Ministry of Labour and Employment, which marked the beginning of vocational training in the country (British Council, 2016). Soon, many Central Tool Room and Training Centres, Polytechnics, and ITIs were set up across the country by the Centre and State governments. However, these vocational educational institutions were plagued by inefficiency and poor quality training, leading to a decline in quality.

Post the economic reforms of 1991, when India witnessed rapid economic growth, the poor quality of students graduating from vocational training institutions became a hindrance. This was severely felt in the manufacturing sector. The poor quality of graduating students from vocational training institutions has been widely discussed, and the Industry is very vocal about this problem. To address this problem, in the 2000s, there was a shift in the approach to skill development, and an effort was made to engage the private sector both for rapid expansion and improving the quality of skill training (British Council, 2016). The private sector became a key partner in skill training. Along with the private sector Industry Associations such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI), and the Associated Chambers of Commerce and Industry in India (ASSOCHAM) are also engaged from a policy and implementation perspective (British Council, 2016). Also, India witnessed a structural shift in the economy, with the service sector growing rapidly and manufacturing remaining constant. Today, the service sector is the largest

contributor to the GDP (Prabhat, 2021) and the largest employer after agriculture.

2. Government Initiatives Towards Skill Development

2.1 *Skill Development Policy*

To facilitate skill development, the Government of India in 2015 came up with the Skill Development Policy with an ambitious target of skilling 500 million. The primary focus of the Skill Development Policy is to upskill the workers already working in the informal sector and those entering the labour market for the first time. Under the policy, skill sector councils are set up for market research and labour market development. The policy also sets standards for training and curricula. The National Vocational Qualification Framework (NVQF) sets standards for horizontal and vertical mobility. Skill development strategies are developed by engaging the Sector Skill Councils (SSC) and District Skill Committees (DSC). Skill sector councils are autonomous bodies under the National Skill Development Corporation and are led by industry leaders. The role of skill sector councils includes undertaking skill gap studies, developing competency framework and occupation standards, training the trainers, certifying trainers, and supporting affiliating skill training institutes. Based on the demand-supply analysis and skill relevance, skill development strategies are developed at the state and district levels (Wheelbox, 2023). Special focus is on Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) which would aid in improving India's competency in the global economy (Wheelbox, 2023).

2.2 *National Skill Development Mission*

The Skill Development Policy is implemented in a mission mode through the National Skill Development Mission launched in 2015. The main objective is to harness the nation's demographic dividend and channel the youth's energies and aspirations through skill development (Upadhyay & Chowdhury, 2022). Through the Skill Development Mission, the Government of India aims to develop industry-oriented practical skills and improve the youth's employability (Sharma, 2023). Skill India Mission exhibits a more market-oriented approach as the emphasis on vocational training has moved away

from government Industrial Training Institutes and Polytechnics to skill development through a large number of private and social sector organizations (Upadhyay & Chowdhury, 2022). The key schemes under the National Skill Development Mission include Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY)ⁱ, Pradhan Mantri YUVA (PM YUVA) Yojanaⁱⁱ, Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)ⁱⁱⁱ and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme^{iv}. About 13.7 million youth have been trained under the PMKVY¹. To develop the skill development infrastructure, about 720 Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Kendras have been established². The Ministry of Labour and Employment, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Food Processing, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Micro Small and Medium Enterprises, and Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment are the central ministries driving the skill development agenda.

While many ministries are involved in skill development, the most significant practical challenge is ensuring convergence amongst all schemes and various stakeholders such as the Centre and State government departments, educational and training centres, private corporations, NGOs, and Industry. To ensure better convergence of skill development, the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) was formed in 2014 to implement skill development programmes in the country under the umbrella of the Skill India Mission. Sharma (2023). MSDE has brought about reforms to the Apprentices Act 1961, enabling more industry power and easy implementation. The scheme National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (NAPS) launched in 2016, promotes skill development through connect with the industry and financial support from the Ministry.

3. Challenges in Skill Development

India faces a dual challenge with a shortage of trained quality manpower while large sections of educated youth cannot find employment. These youth possess little or no job skills (FICCI, 2015). India is now witnessing a pertinent

¹Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

²Source: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship

demand-supply problem. This is due to the wide gap between industry requirements and workers' skill levels due to varied reasons such as inadequate infrastructure, outdated curriculum, and lack of industry engagement (FICCI, 2015). Industry and the industry association have been very vocal about the lack of employability skills in the youth. Also, the sizeable invisible employment situation in critical sectors, especially manufacturing, where there is already an oversupply, exhibits a demand constraint, and further adding more workers might aggregate demand-supply concerns (Singh, 2003).

Over the years, the number of youth seeking vocational education, which prepares learners for jobs that are based on manual activities, has decreased. Vocational education is part of the higher education system which includes institutions such as Industrial Training Institutes, Polytechnic Colleges, and Nursing colleges which provide vocational diploma or degree (Matthias and Regel, 2021). There is a systematic fall in the quality of vocational education in India (Bhandari, 2021). In the last two to three decades, vocational education was not seen as aspirational because of its association with manual or physical labour. Vocational education is currently seen as a poor cousin of academic education (Matthias & Regel, 2021). The 11th five-year plan re-emphasized vocational education and large-scale skill training through special training modules delivered through polytechnics and Industrial Training Institutes (Bhandari, 2021). Initiatives have been taken to upgrade the quality of vocational education with schemes such as upgrading Industrial Training Institutes with aid from the World Bank under the Vocational Training Improvement Project (Matthias & Regel, 2021). However, challenges persist.

Some of the critical challenges that have emerged since the inception of the National Skill Development Mission include a mismatch between the skills of the youth and their aspirations, demand and supply mismatch, quality of trainers and training delivery, and low willingness to undergo skill training by rural youth and women (Table No 1). A matter of concern is that women's labour force participation is amongst the lowest in the world, with only about 21% of women in the workforce against a global average of 47.1% (Bhandari, 2021). The challenges are discussed in detail in the following section.

Table 1:Key Challenges in Skill Development

Challenge	Description
Aspiration and Skill Mismatch	Vertical mismatch (usually measured in terms of over-education, under-education, over-skilling, and under-skilling), skill gaps, skill shortages (usually measured in terms of unfilled and hard-to-fill vacancies), the field of study (horizontal) mismatch, and skill obsolescence
Demand and Supply Mismatch	More people than the available jobs at the low skills level, while there are more jobs at the high skills level than those available for such jobs
Mobilization Issues	Traditional mindset, social factors, low willingness to migrate, low salaries at entry level.
Women	Low participation rates of working-age women in the labour force. Child and early marriages lead to incomplete education among women.
Quality	Shortage of Quality Trainers, Assessors, and Career Counsellors
Training Delivery	Unavailability of books, training materials, infrastructure, equipment, etc

Source: NSDC website

3.1 Institutional Framework and Skill Development Eco System

There is a multiplicity of institutional frameworks with around 17 ministries, two national-level agencies, numerous sector skill councils, state development missions, and industry associations (Sharma, 2018). While the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship is the main Ministry incharge of skill development, other ministries continue their skill development schemes. This has led to a lack of convergence and duplication of efforts in a few instances. In addition, the skill development ecosystem is skewed and more aligned with the formal educational system with limited emphasis on vocational training (FICCI, 2015). There is a need to delink skill development with higher

education and vocational skill development. The skill development policy is aligned with this. Further, the National Education Policy 2020 envisages introducing vocational education at the secondary school level. This would integrate vocational education with general education. Better collaboration between secondary schools, polytechnics, Industrial Training Institutes, and the Industry would facilitate this integration.

3.2 Placement Linked Challenges-Employability

A key challenge of India's skill training setup is the lack of linkages between education and the placement of a trained workforce. Employability is considered the process by which individuals are made capable of technical and behavioural skills to enter the workforce (Sen, 2021). Skill development alone will not bring change if not complemented with employment generation. The factors to be considered while considering skill development in the context of employability include (Sen, 2021):

- ***Aspirations of the Youth:*** Youth do not see a future in professions such as agriculture and traditional manufacturing
- ***Urbanization:*** Most jobs in manufacturing are created in urban areas-Tier I and Tier II cities and that too in a few urban clusters
- ***Labour Productivity:*** Employment has to transition from a lower work productivity to a higher work productivity

It is estimated that about 12.8 million people enter the job market every year (Agarwal, 2017), and skill training becomes redundant without job opportunities. If not employed or starting an enterprise quickly, students with skills tend to forget the skill, or the skill training becomes redundant gradually. In addition, it has been observed that not all job placements are well-paying with good working conditions. Job retention is a key concern in placement-linked skill development programmes. One of the reasons is that youth find it difficult to adapt to the discipline of formal work and urban life (IDFC Foundation 2013). Upadhy and Chowdhury (2022) highlight the realities of low-paid, precarious work conditions, such as jobs in large retail stores, beauty parlours, and delivery services are very apparent in urban India.

3.3 Reaching Out to Remote and Marginalized Population

- **Rural Population and Women:** In India, about 73 per cent of households are in rural areas³ (NITI Aayog 2015), and out of these 51 % of households' main source of income is manual casual labour. 35.7 % of rural households are illiterate, and about 67 % have education up to primary or below primary (NITI Aayog 2015). Women's workforce participation is at a low of 25.5 %, and they continue to be under-represented in training programmes (NITI Aayog 2015). Upgrading the skills of this workforce is the biggest challenge. There is inadequate skill training infrastructure in the rural and remote areas which accentuates this problem.
- **Working Age Population:** The objective of the Skill India Mission is to harness India's demographic dividend fully to foster employment generation and economic growth. India's working-age population (age group 15-59 years) is estimated at 65 per cent (NITI Aayog 2015). Backward states of Assam, Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Madhya Pradesh are estimated to have more working age population in comparison to advanced states in South and West India (NITI Aayog 2015). These states pose a challenge due to low literacy and awareness, weak skill development infrastructure, lower ability to pay, and lack of industrial employment.
- **People with Disability:** The need has been strongly felt to economically engage people with disability and provide appropriate skills for them to lead a normal life. While challenges exist in training them, policy initiatives have been taken by NSDC through the Skill Council for Persons with Disability, where special certified trainers impart training. However, the training programmes need to have a wider reach. NGOs with innovative training models can support government initiatives.

3.4 Role of the Industry

A key concern is the existing wage structure. The industry must pay wages commensurate with the workers' skills so labour laws are not violated, and

³ As per the socio-economic & caste census 2011

worker rights are protected (Agarwal, 2017). This is a challenge, especially when labour from rural India gain skills and enter the urban labour market and are forced to manage their living with a meagre salary in a challenging urban environment. This is quoted as one of the key reasons for skilled rural youth dropping out of the urban workforce.

3.5 Job Creation

Since 1980, India's annual GDP has been in the range of 4-8%. Still, employment creation has been shrinking over the period while India's working-age population has continued to grow, leading to jobless growth (Orlanda, 2022). Orlanda (2022) estimates that at the current level of employment elasticity, India's annual GDP has to grow at 18% to generate sufficient jobs. As the economy grows, the workforce will transition from agriculture to higher value-added manufacturing. However, in the case of India, the predominant trend is the movement from agriculture to construction and services and not manufacturing. Productivity increase in manufacturing due to automation and lack of employable skills needed for transition limits this preferred movement from agriculture to manufacturing. The declining share of jobs in the manufacturing sector is a cause of concern, and the Government of India, as articulated in the Economic Surveys of 2015, 2016 and 2017, focuses on growth and job creation in the Indian Manufacturing Sector (Bhaury et al., 2021). Make in India initiative is an effort towards this. While Indian workers are transitioning from agriculture, the movement is mainly towards jobs such as petty retailing, small eateries, domestic help, security staffing, and transport, predominantly in informal enterprises (Orlanda, 2022).

The new jobs created are mainly in urban-industrial clusters, especially in Tier I and Tier II cities, with service clusters in Information Technology, Health and Hospitality, and old manufacturing (Orlanda, 2022). Small towns, especially those in the backward regions of India, are being left out, leading to a widening disparity between developed and underdeveloped areas of the country.

3.6 Newer Set of Challenges (GIG Economy)

Research has documented the desire of youth in villages and small towns to move to large cities in search of employment, especially in the new economy (Upadhyaya & Chowdhury, 2022). The assumption is that education and skill development would facilitate their upward economic and social mobility. One sector which has witnessed significant labour absorption in urban India is the Platform Economy or the Gig Economy. The gig economy is defined as a digital platform/app where a service provider and service requestor come together. Livelihoods in the gig economy are outside the traditional employer-employee arrangement (NITI Aayog, 2022). In India, there is no statistical data on the number and status of gig workers (Shipra, 2020). NITI Aayog estimated that there will be about 7.7 million gig workers in 2020 and is expected to reach about 23.5 million by 2029-30 (NITI Aayog 2022) and generate upto 4% of the country's income (Madan, 2023). NITI Aayog (2022) mentions that about 47% of the gig work is in medium-skilled jobs, about 22% in high-skilled jobs, and 31% in low-skilled jobs. Madan (2023) notes that in urban India, about 73 million youth are seeking employment, and with limited formal job prospects, they find refuge in the gig economy. The gig economy thrives due to high levels of unemployment and underemployment (Madan, 2023).

NITI Aayog sees the gig economy as a micro-entrepreneurship and has stressed the promotion of skilling and job creation. There is an emphasis on providing social protection measures to gig workers, which can include paid sick leave, health access and insurance, occupational disease and work accident insurance, pension plans, and support to workers in a situation of irregular work (NITI Aayog 2022).

While gig economy service providers portray gig workers as micro-entrepreneurs, they exhibit characteristics of exploited workers (Shipra, 2020). Gig economy service providers shift the risk of business to these gigworkers. However, they retain autonomy over monetary decisions (Shipra, 2020). The lack of skill of gig workers, especially in entrepreneurship, makes these semi-skilled workers incapable of managing investment, future payoff, servicing loans, etc. It was evident during COVID-19 that gig workers working as partners with Uber and Ola struggled with their vehicle loan servicing

(Shipra, 2020), and many discontinued from the gig economy. There is inadequate legal protection safeguarding gig workers' rights and interests, and they continue to be vulnerable.

3.7 Dominance of Informal Labour

One of the key trends is the casualization of the workforce. Casual/informal jobs offer no job security or formal job-related benefits such as a provident fund and pension. It has been observed that the primary demand for casual labour has come from the construction industry, which has overtaken the manufacturing sector (IDFC Foundation 2013, Saraf 2016). India is witnessing a job creation challenge where the agriculture and manufacturing sectors have shown a deteriorating capacity to absorb labour (Saraf, 2016). The challenge for skill development is ensuring how to train youth and create sustainable employment. Making a living by working in the informal sector with little economic and social security is India's most significant employment challenge.

Businesses are also responsible for the increase in the trend of informalization of Indian labour. When informal labour is available to be hired at a lower cost, Indian businesses have shown a strong inclination to informal labour. Automobiles and garment manufacturing are examples where informal labour constitutes more than 85 % of their workforce (Gupta Dipankar, 2013). Relying on cheap, informal labour has become a business habit (Gupta Dipankar, 2013). Upadhyaya and Chowdhury (2022) highlight the predominance of informal work even in the organized sector, making the future of skilled service workers as bleak as that of the unskilled casual worker.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The target of skilling 500 million under the National Skill Development Policy is ambitious. While efforts by the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Council are noteworthy, many challenges exist in implementing the skill development agenda. The first challenge is that the multiplicity of institutions and the poor condition of the higher education ecosystem limit the skill development programmes from reaching their potential. The efforts are diluted, and the results are far from satisfactory. The second set of challenges is related to the

Challenges in Implementing the Skill Development Agenda

demand-supply mismatch and jobs not meeting the aspirations of the youth. Challenges also persist with the training infrastructure and the quality of training delivery. The third set of challenges relates to the lack of inclusion of remote and marginalized youth, especially the rural poor. The fourth challenge is the dominance of the informal sector and the emergence of the gig economy. Jobs created in the informal sector and gig economy are strenuous and need more job security. Covid-19 brought this challenge to the forefront.

As India strives to achieve the skill development agenda in pursuit of rapid and equitable economic growth, addressing the challenges becomes imperative. The need to engage more with the industry and other stakeholders, such as the non-government organizations, is felt. Innovative skill development models help address the challenges, significantly improving the quality of training and reaching out to youth who are currently out of the skill ecosystem.

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ⁱ PMKVY, PMKVY 2.0 and PMKVY 3.0 are demand-driven, short-term skill development training programmes for all districts in the country

ⁱⁱ The scheme aims to create an enabling environment through entrepreneurship and training and provide easy access to the entrepreneur network

ⁱⁱⁱ Launched in 2018, SANKALP is a World Bank funded programme of skill development

^{iv} Launched in 2018, SANKALP is a World Bank funded programme for skill development.

Chapter III

**SOCIAL INNOVATIONS FOR ECONOMIC
EMPOWERMENT**

Dr. Meena Galliara, Ph.D.

Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

To keep up with global employability trends, economic growth, and inclusive development, it is important to adopt innovative skill development models. Given this context, the chapter briefly tracks the skill development landscape and maps the government's efforts to continuously adapt its skill development approach. The chapter highlights innovative partnership strategies NGOs adopt to address the biggest challenge of reaching out to various target audiences with quality training. The chapter also delves into the role of corporations in enhancing the quality and scale of vocational training through the CSR route and Partnership with National Skill Development Corporation. The examples cited in the chapter illustrate the innovative mechanisms adopted by NGOs and corporations in facilitating economic inclusion and equity to create a broader social impact.

1. Introduction

India has made encouraging progress in reducing its official poverty rate (raghuvanshi, 2023). However, the global multidimensional poverty index¹ (mpi) 2023 report indicates that india still has over 230 million poor people (undp, 2023). The nation has a long way to go to help people experiencing poverty attain better living standards. to achieve this, economic growth is the most powerful instrument for reducing poverty and improving the quality of life (duttagupta et al., 2017). economic empowerment stems from skill development, as acquiring relevant skills enhances one's employability and income-earning potential. Skills and knowledge drive a country's economic growth and social development (sharma, 2023). Countries with higher levels and better skill standards adjust more effectively to the challenges and opportunities in domestic and international job markets (singh et al., 2017). to reap the benefit of india's demographic advantage, we must equip our workforce (singh, 2023) with employable skills and knowledge that meet the requirements of the globalized labour market, industry 4.0, and future skills (wheebox, 2023). innovative actions to generate alternatives contribute to resource-constrained communities' economic empowerment. This enables maintaining social stability and promoting a more equitable society. To economically empower people and be globally competitive, investing in building human capital through innovative skill development initiatives (meethal, 2014).

Social Innovation for Economic Empowerment

Social innovation is a "new response" to an unsatisfactory social situation (Cloutier (2003) and offers progressive solutions to various social problems related to exclusion deprivation Moulart et al. (2013). According to Mulgan (2007), Benneworth & Jorge (2015), and ATEs (2023), social innovation is a set of novel ideas (products, services, or action models) or new ways of doing things to find effective and efficient solutions to address societal challenges specifically of the marginalized populations. These solutions are often an

¹ MPI-interlinked deprivations in health, education and standard of living that **directly affect a person's life and wellbeing**

outcome of collaborative action taken by stakeholders to drive systemic changes and create social value. For instance, providing access to microfinance through banks and business training to empower local youth to take up entrepreneurship or providing access to potable drinking water through Water ATMs.

Social innovations occur at different levels, i.e., macro (societal/systemic), meso (organizational/community), and micro (individual). To accelerate economic empowerment in India, the government at the macro level initiated schemes like 'Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana' (PMJDY) and 'Goods and Services Tax' (GST) which brought systemic change.

PMJDY aimed to provide financial inclusion to the masses by offering bank accounts, insurance, and pension schemes. It transformed the country's financial landscape, empowering millions at the societal level. The introduction of GST simplified the tax structure, which aimed to boost economic growth, reduce corruption, and create a more transparent and efficient tax system. In the context of skill development, the government at the macro-level initiated the 'Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana' (PMKVY), which aims at enabling enrolment for industry-relevant skill training and securing better livelihoods. Similarly, to address the shortage of necessary skills among our youth, the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 provides an overarching framework for exposing at least 50% of all school students to vocational education by 2025. It advocates a transition from a learning-based approach to a skill-based approach (Ministry of Education, 2020).

At the Meso level of social innovation, initiatives like the 'Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act' (MGNREGA), a demand-based employment program, have been introduced. To execute MGNREGA, each state has to raise a demand for employment to the Centre for transfer of resources. Many industry associations and sector-specific bodies are crucial at the meso level. For instance, initiatives by the IT industry to develop digital

skills or by healthcare associations to train healthcare professionals contribute to skill development at this level.

Micro-level innovations aim to bring transformations at the individual level. For instance, Digital Green uses technology to empower small-scale farmers. They share videos that disseminate agricultural best practices, enhancing knowledge and improving yields for individual farmers.

2. Indian Context: Economic Empowerment Strategy

India's sheer population and diversity required a massive, diverse, innovative skill development strategy. To achieve growth, equity, and social justice, the Indian Government initiated several schemes to empower the resource-poor communities economically. See Table 1.

Given the significant presence of the informal sector in India, skill development efforts targeted enhancing skills for informal and unorganized labour through programs like MGNREGA and DDU-GKY. Considering a sizable youth population, skill development initiatives like PMKVY have emphasized catering to the needs and aspirations of the youth to make them more employable. Schemes like DAY-NULM and NRLM focus on skill development and employment generation to address issues of rural unemployment. The government has continuously adapted its skill development approach in line with the economic demands and global trends.

Post-liberalization, innovations in employment opportunities for the poor have included microfinance initiatives and skill development programs. Innovation in economic empowerment ensures we adapt to diverse challenges, break traditional barriers, and create sustainable solutions, fostering equality and driving economic growth. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, there was greater emphasis on accessing skill development through digital platforms. The gig economy and online platforms have provided new avenues for flexible and decentralized work, contributing to economic inclusion. Driven by

globalization, the Indian economy has been undergoing a paradigm shift toward knowledge and skills (Ghost et al., 2022).

Table 1
Major Schemes For Skilling & Economic Empowerment

Year	Name of the Scheme	Purpose
1950	Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs)	The focus was on providing vocational training to meet industrial needs
1961	Apprentices Act 1961, subsequently amended in 2014	The Act made provisions for providing industrial training to youth.
1980	National Rural Employment Programme (NREP)	To use the unemployed and the underemployed workers to build community assets.
1983	Rural Landless Employment Guarantee (RLEG)	To provide 100 days of guaranteed employment to one member from each rural landless household.
1983	National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) 'Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII)	Promote self-employment and entrepreneurship by providing knowledge support.
1989	Jawahar Rozgar Yojana (JRY)	To provide supplementary employment opportunities for rural poor

Year	Name of the Scheme	Purpose
1993	Employment Assurance Scheme (EAS)	To provide employment opportunities during the lean agricultural season.

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1993	Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship(IIE)	To build Small and Micro Enterprises (SME) capacities and facilitate entrepreneurship development.
1993	Rashtriya Mahila Kosh (RMK)	Microfinance organization for the economic empowerment of poor women. RMK provides concessional, collateral-free micro-credit.
1999	Jawahar Gram Samridhi Yojana (JGSY)	To create need-based village infrastructure and employ the rural poor.
1999	Swarna Jyanti Gram Swarojgar Yojana	Promoting self-employment through the formation of SHGs, training provision of credit, and market support.
2001	Sampoorna Gramin Rozgar Yojana (SGRY)	Promotion of wage employment.
2004	National Food for Work Program (NFWP)	Provide supplementary wage employment and create assets.
2006	National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS)	Provide 100 days of guaranteed employment to one member from each rural household and create community assets.
2007	Skill Development Initiative Scheme' (SDI Scheme)	Training framework for Modular Employable Skills (MES) for specific audiences like school dropouts and workers working in the informal economy.
2008	Prime Minister - Rural Employment Generation Programmes' (Merger of PMRY and REGP)	Self-employment opportunities for rural and urban poor.

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2008	National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC)	Public-private partnership (PPP) in skill development
2009	Rural Self Employment Training Institutes' (RSETI's)	Imparting training to rural BPL youth
2011	Aajeevika - National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)	Institutional platforms for the creation of sustainable livelihood and improved access to credit.

Year	Name of the Scheme	Purpose
2011	Mahila Kisan Sashaktikaran Pariyojana	To build the capacities of women in the domain of agro-ecologically sustainable practices.
2014	Jan Dhan Yojana	A financial inclusion program for promoting access to financial services, including banking and deposit accounts.
2014	Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)	The apex body for all skilling activities at the pan-India level.
2014	National Digital Literacy Mission (NDLM)	Has been formulated to impart IT training
2015	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana	Loan Scheme for skilled youth to set up small business
2015	Digital India	Fostering economic growth through digital means.
2015	Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana	A scheme providing loans for non-agricultural activities to micro and small enterprises.
2015	The National Skill Development Mission	To create convergence across sectors and States in terms of skill training activities

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2015	National Skill Development Policy	Provide high-quality skill training with scale.
2016	Pradhan Mantri Yuva Yojana	Entrepreneurship education and training
2016	Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY)	Launched to provide rural youth with skill development training.
2016	Startup India	Government initiative to promote entrepreneurship by providing financial support, encouraging innovation, and simplifying regulations.
2016	Stand Up India Scheme	Financing SC/ST and Women Entrepreneurs
2016	Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme	Provide capital and technical support to rural enterprises.
2017	Mahila Shakti Kendra (MSK)	Inter-sectoral convergence of women's schemes
2017	Digital Saksharta Mission (PMGDISHA)	Digital training to rural citizens for operating computers or digital access devices (like tablets, smartphones, etc.).
Year	Name of the Scheme	Purpose
2018	Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP)	Upgrade the quality and scale of short-term skill training provided by institutions and provide market support.
2021	Venture Capital Fund (VCF) for Scheduled Tribes	To promote entrepreneurship among the Scheduled Tribes.
2021	Pradhan Mantri Jan Jatiya Vikas Mission	As part of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan' to facilitate the Van Dhan groups and

	(PMJVM)	Vandhan Kendra formation. To market forest produce Van Dhan Producer Enterprises.
2023	Vishwakarma Yojana	Scheme to uplift individuals skilled in traditional craftsmanship. (Specifically from Other Backward Classes (OBC) communities).
2023	Lakhpati Didi Program	Provide skill training to SHG women to enable them to earn over INR One lakh per year.

Source: Collated by Author from Government Press Releases

3. NGO- Government Partnerships

For Governments, partnership with NGOs is no longer an option but an obligation (Sumiyana et al., 2022). Governments seek NGO partnerships due to their agility, grassroots connections, and specialized expertise. NGOs can efficiently implement targeted interventions, bridge gaps in service delivery, and reach marginalized communities that may be challenging for governments to access directly. Various services are being delivered through NGO-government partnerships, like providing technical education, micro-funding, financial literacy, entrepreneurship development, market connections, and technology integration.

3.1 Community-Centric Initiatives

NGOs have played a crucial role in addressing resource-constrained communities' skilling needs through innovative and community-centric initiatives. They have designed skill development programs specifically tailored to marginalized communities' needs, considering local contexts, cultural sensitivities, and economic realities. For example, Fertile Ground, an NGO, provides farmers and small-scale tea growers with support, training, and resources. Ambuja Cement Foundation provides skill training based on the requirements of local industries. This approach directly contributes to sustainable livelihoods. Governments realize that building partnerships with

Sumiyana et al. (2022) states that working with "NGOs is no longer an option for government but an obligation." According to Bano (2019), collaborating with NGOs fosters innovation and flexibility, leading to more effective and sustainable economic empowerment initiatives. As NGOs adopt robust monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to assess the effectiveness of their skilling programs. This data-driven approach allows them to refine strategies and maximize positive outcomes (Khan et al., 2020).

4. Typology of Partnerships

NGOs have partnered with the government to empower rural communities to strengthen the service delivery systems, policy advocacy, and financial support. The same are briefly described below:

4.1. Service Delivery Partnership:

NGOs collaborate to deliver specific services like vocational training in schools or skill training in communities. NGOs like Pradan and SEWA have partnered with the government to execute the 'Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana' (DDU-GKY) to impart skills and promote livelihood opportunities. Nidan, a Delhi-based NGO, partners with the government in urban areas to execute skill development and employment generation programs for marginalized communities. Under the aegis of the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) in India, NGOs have successfully implemented the MGNREGA, ensuring employment opportunities and economic support in rural areas. In line with the government's mission of Skill India, NGOs like Salaam Bombay Foundation, Globalize Skills Foundation, Udhyam Learning Foundation (ULF), and several others, besides promoting vocational skills, also offer entrepreneurship modules in schools and inspire students to set up their business.

4.2. Policy Advocacy Partnerships:

NGOs work with various government agencies to influence policy decisions and create frameworks that support economic empowerment. NGOs such as

SEWA, Oxfam, and others have collaborated with governments to advocate for policies promoting economic equality and social justice.

4.3. Funding Partnerships:

Governments financially support NGOs to implement specific projects. For example, the Aga Khan Rural Support Program (AKRSP) collaborates with the government on watershed development, combining efforts to enhance agricultural productivity and rural incomes. Funding support from the government is used by NGOs "to augment and improve public services at the local level; engage citizens in the design, delivery, and monitoring of development strategies; and build social capital" (Brinkerhoff, 2003).

5. Economic Empowerment of Women

Studies conducted by Mehrotra et al. (2017, 2019) & Dewan (2019) indicate that poor educational attainment, marriage, domestic responsibilities, lack of vocational skilling, and social norms limit women's workforce participation. India stands at 140th position of 156 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index 2021 (WEF, 2021). To alleviate women from their subjugated status, the MDGs and SDGs have reinforced the thrust towards gender equality, empowerment of women, and alleviation of poverty. Empowered women become agents of change, driving economic growth, social progress, and sustainable development (FPJ Features Desk, 2023).

5.1 Women and Skill Development

The Government of India (GoI) has promoted FLP through employment generation activities like MNERGA and the National Rural/Urban Livelihood Mission. Despite various schemes and programs run by different ministries towards furthering rural women's rights through provisions like reservations in local governments and Self Help Groups (SHGs), there is still a wide gender gap in economics and employment (Deka 2019). A growing realization is that vocational education and training are significant in procuring gender equality. The role of NGOs towards women's empowerment has been crucial in the Indian scenario (Narumugai & Kumar, 2017). For instance, NGOs like the

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Rural Women's Social Education Centre (RUWSEC) and Educate Girls focus on empowering rural women, including those from poor communities, through education, skill development, and entrepreneurship skills.

Similarly, the Mahila Housing SEWA Trust (MHT), a Gujarat-based NGO working across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Karnataka, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh, addresses the livelihood needs of women from poor communities. To enhance economic opportunities, they offer training in various skills, including tailoring, embroidery, and business management. Women's Education and Economic Centre (WEED) at Kanchipuram in Tamil Nadu works towards the economic upliftment of women, especially those from impoverished backgrounds. Their initiatives include skill training programs aimed at enhancing income-generating opportunities. Kudumbashree, a leading NGO in Kerala, implements skill development programs to enhance the capabilities of women from economically disadvantaged communities. A study conducted by Ponnusamy et al. (2016) reveals that NGOs have effectively executed government agriculture extension programs (2016). This has enhanced the confidence of farm women as they get agricultural training and financial and market support.

NGOs contribute significantly to addressing the skilling needs of the bottom of the pyramid, fostering sustainable development, and empowering individuals and communities. For instance, Prerana, a Bangalore-based NGO, focuses on the education-to-employment of girls. To enhance graduate girls' employability skills, the organization offers the 'Prerana Readiness for Employment Program (PREP)'. Barefoot College in Rajasthan focuses on empowering women through skill development in rural areas. Their programs include solar engineering, handicrafts, and other vocational skills contributing to economic sustainability.

5.2 Promoting Entrepreneurship

Schemes like Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana, Udyam Sakhi Portal for Women Entrepreneurs, and Women Entrepreneurship Platform provide

dedicated incubation and acceleration support. Despite the support, only 13.76 per cent of female entrepreneurs own 20.37 per cent of MSMEs in India (IIST & IWWAGE, 2020). Through their study, Bain & Company and Google (2019) revealed that predominantly women entrepreneurs lack awareness of financing schemes, fear scaling, and feel that societal bias limits their growth. The lack of a supportive ecosystem affects the confidence and development of women entrepreneurs. India is among the worst-performing nations in women's entrepreneurship (EdelGive Foundation, 2020).

NGOs have played a catalytic role (Narumugai & Kumar, 2017; Kilby, 2011) and displayed their potential to transform the entrepreneurial landscape (The World Bank, 2020; Nandan & Kushwaha, 2019; Lenka & Agarwal, 2017). NGOs like Udyogini "challenge the notion that entrepreneurship is a male-dominated space and connect aspiring women (and youth) with the markets, remove barriers, build skills, and make resources accessible to them" (Lendingkart.com, 2021). Community-based organizations have designed programs to promote non-traditional skills among women-led enterprises (Rao, 2023). According to the Google & Bain report (2020), "Organizations like the Mann Deshi Foundation and Wadhvani Foundation have developed hard and soft skills training for rural women entrepreneurs, benefiting around 150,000 microenterprises." The Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a pan-India NGO, works towards women's economic empowerment in the informal sector. They provide skill development programs ranging from traditional crafts to modern vocational skills, focusing on entrepreneurship.

Interestingly, NGOs provide sustainable solutions to pressing social issues by promoting women's entrepreneurship. For instance, MAYA, a Karnataka-based NGO, aims to "Create an empowered and equitable society that systematically addresses livelihood, education, and health" (MAYA, 2021). To improve affordability and access to healthcare in marginalized communities, local women with educational qualifications of Xth grade are trained as Health Navigators (HN). These women manage their micro-health enterprises based on revenue models (Maya Health, 2021). Anyay Rahit Zindagi (ARZ), a

Goa-based NGO through its Swift Wash initiative, focuses on re/integrating trafficked women by skilling them in managing a commercial mechanized laundry unit with the support of Taj Hotels (Sharma & Hyatt, 2018). Janvikas, a Gujarat-based NGO, trains women drivers through its 'Driverben - Ek Nayi Pehchan' to uplift separated, widowed, divorced, and educated women (Jan Vikas, 2020). Micro-enterprises led by women bring a regional balance, leading to improved income distribution and better societal status. Besides being potential beneficiaries of SDGs, women are also active participants in attaining gender equality (SDG 5); they create jobs and provide decent work & economic growth (SDG 8). This helps in reducing poverty (SDG1) various inequities (SDG 10), and attaining access to better health and education for the family (SDG 3 &4).

6. Inclusion of Tribals

Tribal welfare in India remains a critical concern, as indigenous communities often face socioeconomic disparities and cultural challenges. Rapid industrialization and modernization have affected the traditional livelihood support systems of the tribals (Singh, 2021).

NGOs play a vital role in promoting sustainable livelihoods of tribal communities by designing culturally specific vocational training that respects their traditional skills and wisdom. To overcome geographical barriers, NGOs often use mobile training units and a participatory approach in the planning and execution of skilling programs to ensure their sustainability. Livelihood programs for tribals have concentrated on developing scientific agricultural practices, producing high-quality traditional handicrafts, and supporting eco-friendly ventures.(Gupta, 2023). NGOs and social enterprises working with tribals help bridge the skill gap, empower tribal communities, and preserve their unique cultural heritage. For instance, to boost the empowerment of tribal women, the Jharkhand State Livelihood Promotion Society (JSLPS) promotes the Adiva brand of tribal jewelry made by women staying in remote villages of Jharkhand(JSLPS, 2021). USHA's Silai School helps tribal women in various states acquire new skills and become economically independent (Usha

Silai School, 2023). Torpa Rural Development Society for Women (TRDSW) and Edel Give Foundation train tribal women in bamboo handicraft training and are exhibited in TRDSW's showroom(TRDSW, 2023).

Pradan, a national-level NGO, has helped women in Odisha to form SHGs, provided training and technology to women to manufacture high-quality 'Siali' leaf plates, and supported them in setting up Kandhamal Women's Leaf-plate Cooperative Limited.

The cooperative supplies biodegradable leaf plates to wholesalers in domestic and international markets(Pradan, 2017).Aranya, a social enterprise from Chhattisgarh, has helped tribals to process organic tamarind sauce and market it as 'Imli Chaska' (Roy, 2018).Access Livelihoods Consulting India (ALC India) supports tribals in setting up micro-enterprises. They provide skill development, market connections, and other support mechanisms to farmer-producer groups and cooperatives. EAGL Livelihood Foundation, a Pune-based NGO, empowers farmers and tribal groups in Maharashtra's Melghat region using livestock (EAGL,2023). NGOs like Universal Versatile Society (UVS), Swadesh Foundation, WOTR from Maharashtra, Gramya Resource Center for Women from Telangana, Vaagdhara from Rajasthan, Last Forest from Kotagiri region of Tamil Nadu, and several others focus on developing novel irrigation systems for organic agriculture, climate change adaptation, watershed and natural resource management.

'Tech for Tribals,'an initiative of IIT-Kanpur in partnership with Van Dhan Vikas Kendras (VDVKs), offers hands-on training to tribal entrepreneurs in value addition and processing of forest produce. It enables tribals to develop their business and market their products globally(PIB, 2020).

7. Inclusion of Disabled

In India, people with disabilities are largely denied access to educational and livelihood opportunities due to several socioeconomic and political barriers (Singh 2014).They "lack the necessary literacy, numeracy, and digital

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skills(OECD, 2022). Very few adults get an opportunity to upgrade their skills. This further aggravates the existing education inequalities. In this context, NGOs in India play a crucial role in skilling the disabled by providing vocational training, education, and employment opportunities. They also sensitize employers towards the needs of PwDs for an equitable work environment. For instance, the NIIT Foundation has been running innovative projects in schools and colleges for students with severe disabilities. The foundation has done exemplary work in skilling disabled students and making them employable(NIIT Foundation, 2021).

Bengaluru-based Enable India is a pioneer institution for promoting employability for disabled people. It offers skill training to 19 types of disabilities across 28 states and eight union territories in India. The training models designed by Enable India Academy to train disabled persons are also used in Africa, Asia, Europe, and America. To employ people with disabilities, it has collaborated with 786 companies and 229 partner organizations across 1343 locations in over 185 countries. (Enable India, 2023). Another Bengaluru-based NGO- Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled, offerstraining across 13 cities in India in sectors like hospitality, retail, and garments. Besides, it provides entrepreneurship, business management, and technical skills training. The Trust also enables them to work in BPOs and call centers (Samarthanam, 2023).

Delhi-based Sarthak Educational Trust's pan-India operations offer skills in tourism, hospitality, organized retail, and IT, placing them in corporates and other sectors (Sarthak Educational Trust, 2023). Youth4Jobs, a Telangana-based NGO, has launched a fully accessible job platform for youth with disabilities called Swaraj Ability(Youth4Jobs, 2023). According to Suresh & Dyaram (2022),"The labor market in India has undergone remarkable changes in the last decade, and policies for the integration of persons with disabilities into mainstream employment have also changed significantly in recent years." Service sector organizations in India are making concerted efforts toward

workplace inclusion and integration of persons with disabilities (Kulkarni et al., 2016).

To promote skilling in Agriculture, horticulture, and allied sectors, the Association of People with Disability (APD) Karnataka-based NGO reaches out to marginalized youth with disabilities and trains them through formal and informal courses (APD, 2023).

It can be surmised from the above discussion that NGOs, in partnership with corporations and governments, are creating innovative strategies to develop the right skills among people with disabilities to have better employability prospects. Despite the efforts, there is still a substantial gap in achieving better employment outcomes and greater labour market inclusion of people with disability (OECD, 2022).

8. Role of Corporates

In a changing business environment, the mantra to stay relevant in the competing market is to skill, reskill, and upskill people (Shankar, 2023). Traditional Industrial Training Institutes cannot cope with the changing skill demands. Workplaces of the future are expected to undergo unprecedented changes that can only be tackled by creating a robust and inclusive skill development ecosystem by forging a) Public-Private Partnerships (Sharma, 2023) and b) CSR Funding.

Financial support through CSR has played a significant role in facilitating vocational skilling for the underprivileged. Sec 135 of the Companies Act 2013 states that businesses with a net worth over INR 5000 million, sales over INR 1 billion, or net profit over INR 50 million must contribute a minimum of 2% of their net profit over the preceding three years towards CSR. Schedule VII of the Companies Act 2013 notifies the types of community development activities the corporations could take up (MCA, 2021).

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As per the Ministry of Corporate Affairs data, from April 2014 to March 2022, the total CSR expenditure across all sectors amounted to INR 1,535.51 Billion; from this, 3.76 per cent (INR 57.71 Billion) was invested in Livelihood Enhancement Projects, 3.42 per cent (INR 52.56 Billion) was invested in Vocational Education. Investment in Women's Empowerment was found to be 1.02 per cent (INR 15.64 Billion) (MCA 2022).

To skill adolescents and youth and economically empower them, Companies have adopted multiple strategies, which are elucidated below:

8.1 Set up Skill Development Institutes

Corporations play a major role in ensuring that skill development and economic empowerment initiatives are spread evenly across regions and demographics through CSR funding. Several corporate foundations, like Axis Bank Foundation and ICICI Bank Foundation, have set up their skill training institutes to offer vocational training opportunities for resource-poor communities. They provide high-quality and hands-on experience. For example, the Ambuja Foundation offers skill training programs to rural youth across ten States through its Skill & Entrepreneurship Development Institute (SEDI) and 35 SEDI centers. These centers impart skills in multiple sectors like retail, beauty, construction, health, telecom, hospitality, industrial, automobile, logistics, and beauty. They have a trainee placement rate of 75 per cent (ACF, 2023).

Companies gain from investing in skill development by strategically aligning their vocational training offerings with the skills that are required by their respective sectors. For instance, Godrej & Boyce's youth-oriented and employability DISHA focuses on offering industry-relevant skills to the marginalized youth of the country. It has set up 29 Centres of Excellence across India to provide technical training ranging from 15 days to 3 months in repairing refrigerators, washing machines, microwave ovens, and air conditioners(Kala, 2021).

8.2. Upgrade Existing Facilities

Many corporates have refurbished old infrastructure and equipment in existing ITIs and professional training establishments. They participate in designing innovative programs and bolster training capacity through financial support and knowledge partnerships. A few examples include "Mercedes Benz setting up an 'Auto Body Repair Training Centre in collaboration with Don Bosco ITI in Pune or the work done by Tata Motors in the North-Eastern states through multiple tie-ups. In the Automotive sector, Maruti, Ashok Leyland, and Tata Motors have led by partnering with many ITIs. IT sector companies like Adobe, Microsoft, and IBM also offer training programming at highly subsidized cost to both skills training-oriented foundations and government organizations" (Babu et al., 2019).

8.3. Support to the Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises(MSME)

Corporations have enabled Farmer Producer Groups, SHGs, and MSMEs by mentoring and strengthening their business management skills. For instance, "HSBC and Mann Deshi Foundation support smaller-scale industries and have also worked in training and expertise advancement through their loan programs"(Babu et al., 2019). E-commerce business ventures like Snapdeal and Flipkart help SHGs to sell their items through their platforms. The app-based service marketplace UrbanClap has collaborated with NSDC to train service professionals across the country (Divecha, 2020).

8.4. Digital Inclusion

Several companies in India are actively engaged in digital inclusion initiatives to bridge the digital gap. A few examples include Reliance Jio, which has brought millions of people online through its affordable data and smartphone offerings. Google, through its "Internet Saathi" program in collaboration with Tata Trusts, focuses on training women in rural areas to use the Internet effectively. This initiative helps bridge the digital gender gap and empowers women through digital literacy. Microsoft's "Project Sangam" is another example, aiming to enhance employability by providing skills training and resources, particularly for underserved communities. Corporations like JP

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Morgan, Capgemini, Accenture, Wells Fargo, Citi, Unilever, HSBC, ITC, ICRA, and others have helped NGOs like the Anudip Foundation to create digital livelihoods for underserved communities. With the support of corporations, it provides technology-driven employability and entrepreneurship support to the youth in resource-poor communities. Besides these, many more companies exemplify the commitment to digital inclusion, leveraging technology to empower individuals and communities across India.

A few more examples of CSR initiatives undertaken by corporates to empower the resource-poor are listed in Table 2.

Table 2
CSR Initiatives for Economic Empowerment

Corporate	Projects
Hindustan Unilever Limited	Has initiated Project Shakti across 18 States. Project Shakti has over one and a half lakh Shakti Entrepreneurs (Shakti Ammas). Women are trained in the distribution management of HUL's products. This initiative has helped women gain selling skills and become confident.
Sterlite Technologies Limited	STL implements the Jeewan Jyoti Women Empowerment Program in partnership with MAVIM, Rangсутra, and Lighthouse Communities Foundation. Training is provided on advanced handicrafts, quality, supply chain management, packaging, and other processes.
Godrej Consumer Products Limited	In partnership with Saath, Dhriti, Pratham, Vrutti, YUVA, and Vision India, the Company implements the Salon-i - Beautypreneurs program. The program is unique as it aims explicitly at employability, entrepreneurship, and empowerment of women.
JSW Steel Limited	In partnership with the JSW Foundation, the company executes the JSW Shakti initiative. Under this initiative, the company has set up four BPO centers across rural

	Karnataka and Maharashtra provide localized employment to educated rural women.
NTPC Ltd	The company has adopted 18 Industrial Training Institutes (ITIs) to provide vocational training, skill upgradation, and income generation programs.
ICICI Bank	The ICICI Foundation has set up 26 Academies to offer vocational training in 17 technical and office skills. It has collaborated with various corporates like Voltas, Schneider Electric India Foundation, etc, for designing training curriculum. The courses offered enable trainees to develop market-based employability skills.
Asian Paints	The Asian Paints Colour Academy offers training to youth on basic and specialized painting techniques. This helps them gain dignified employment.
Corporate	Projects
Tech Mahindra Limited	Through Tech Mahindra Foundation, SMART (Skills-for-Market Training) training is provided to young adults across 11 cities in India. This program has SMART, SMART+ (for persons with disabilities), and SMART-T (technical courses) centers operational across India.
Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT)	In partnership with Jan Shikshan Sansthan, JNPT conducts skill development programs for the cosmetic and healthcare industry. Besides, for communities located in coastal regions, skill development in vegetable and fish drying is undertaken.
Mahindra Group	Has set up "Mahindra Pride Classroom" to offer vocational training for youth in rural areas and enhance their employability.
Reliance Foundation	Has launched various skill development programs, especially in rural areas, covering sectors like healthcare, agriculture, and manufacturing

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Dr. Reddy's Foundation	Implements skill development, livelihood programs, and livestock management to support small and marginal farmers. They have also set up 'High-Quality Healthcare Skilling' (HQHCS) centers to train allied healthcare professionals for the community.
Sai Life Services	In partnership with the National Institute of Information Technology (NIIT) Foundation, the company trains candidates for entry-level job roles in segments like Healthcare, BFSI, BPO/CRM, and Retail.

Source: Collated by Author from company websites/Annual Reports and other secondary sources.

8.5 Public-Private Partnership in Skilling

To be employable in the competing market, it is necessary to reskill and upskill. Traditional Industrial Training Institutes are unable to cope with changing skill demands for providing qualified personnel. Workplaces of the future are expected to undergo unprecedented changes that can only be tackled by creating a robust and inclusive skill development ecosystem by forging public-private partnerships (Sharma, 2023). The need for a public-private partnership (PPP) model to bridge the skilling gap in India was first felt during the early 2000s (Srinivasan, 2022). The Government of India established the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) in 2000 to fill the skilling gap and facilitate industry connections to increase employability (Ghatak, 2016). NSDC has collaborated with 574 training partners and set up 1019 Training Centers across 26 States and four Union Territories (NSDC, 2020) to create a sustainable and enabling skill ecosystem.

According to Srinivasan (2022), "PPP has allowed for an increase in efficiency and effectiveness of solutions, through the resources that the Government can provide, along with the expertise of the private sector to improve the overall skilling infrastructure in the country. "For instance, NSDC collaborates with multiple companies to promote skill development, and companies like Larsen & Toubro (L&T) actively participate in these initiatives, especially in the

construction and infrastructure sectors. Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) has the "Urja Ganga" program, which emphasizes skill development in the energy sector and training youth in various disciplines. IL&FS Skills Development Corporation Limited, through its Skills Programme for Inclusive Growth (SPRING) initiative, provides placement-driven skills training to school dropouts, high school students, and ITI graduates. The skill training covers various industries like manufacturing, engineering, construction, hospitality, textiles etc. IL&FS has designed multimedia training content in 30 trades to increase the reach of the programs. In partnership with IIT Bombay, they have developed K-Yan, a multimedia device that enables interactive training delivery with minimal infrastructural requirements (Dikmener & Dinc, 2017). Pratham utilizes innovative learning techniques and vocational courses, often tailoring programs to local needs. Gram Tarang, on the other hand, focuses on sectors crucial to rural economies, offering training in agriculture, healthcare, and hospitality. Uber has collaborated with NSDC to train cab drivers.

It can be concluded from the above discussion that corporations play a crucial role in ensuring that young adults have access to better skilling opportunities. Investments made by corporates in skilling create shared value. It helps them meet the demand for procuring a skilled workforce for their organization and meet the industry's requirements.

9. Summing Up

Skill development is crucial in creating sustainable livelihoods and driving national progress. It contributes to structural transformation and results in labour productivity and inclusive growth. As we transcend in the industrial revolution's fourth phase, employers prefer hiring talent with domain expertise, digital literacy, and industry-relevant skills. Through strategic partnerships and sustained collaborations among NGOs, Governments, and Corporate Organizations, the demand to provide quality skilled manpower is being addressed. The partnerships have also facilitated more inclusion and equity and created a broader social impact.

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Chapter IV

**SALAAM BOMBAY FOUNDATION'S
ENTREPRENEURSHIP MODEL:
TRANSFORMATION FROM JOB SEEKERS TO
JOB CREATORS**

Gaurav Arora

Chief Growth Officer & Sr. Vice President – Projects (Skills, Sports),
Salaam Bombay Foundation

Sneha Menon

Consultant, Salaam Bombay Foundation

Meena Galliar, Ph.D.

Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)
School of Business Management, Mumbai
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan, or Self-reliant India campaign, aims to boost entrepreneurship and nurture innovation and employment. This case study explores the innovative entrepreneurship model deployed by Salaam Bombay Foundation to promote entrepreneurship opportunities among resource-poor urban adolescents. It confirms the importance of developing an entrepreneurial culture through mentorship support and education to

promote self-efficacy, financial independence, and a risk-taking mindset. It also highlights the critical need for government and entrepreneurship ecosystems to recognize this cohort as potential 'job creators,' a means to resolve the country's looming unemployment crisis and implement policies that foster advantageous environments for these micro businesses to flourish and scale.

1. Introduction

Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) was at a crossroads in 2020. Since its inception in 2002 to retain resource-challenged adolescents in formal education, SBF has initiated a variety of programs like the in-school leadership program and the after-school sports, arts, and media academies. To arrest the dropout rate of adolescents studying in secondary sections and equip them with employability skills, SBF decided to integrate skills with education. In 2014, SBF launched the 'Vocational Skill Development' program for students studying in class IX in municipal and government-aided schools. The innovative initiative taken up by SBF successfully transformed into a feeder program for the larger skill development initiatives present in the country. Today, the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP) also advocates the benefits of integrating vocational education with general education.

By 2019-2020, SBF had trained over 10,000 adolescents in market-relevant trades across Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Jaipur. It had built desirable aspirations among the adolescents and their families of enabling them to access a secure future. However, the nation's unemployment crisis loomed large over the future of these skilled and aspiring adolescents. The question now vexing the SBF team was '*How to plan a successful transition into work/earning opportunities for thousands of their aspiring alumni as next steps in their career progression?*' Given that some of the alumni were already earning part-time through the skills they had learned, the SBF team realized that the answer lay in shaping some of these alumni into job creators instead of job seekers.

1.1 A 'Job Creator' Economy Can Dispel the Unemployment Crisis in India

As per an International Monetary Fund (IMF) projection issued in September 2022, India has become the fifth-largest economy in the world, surpassing the United Kingdom (Armstrong, 2022). With a Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of 7.2% (Jain, 2023) and a young demographic dividend with a median age of 28.2 years (Jha, 2023), India is recognized as an economic powerhouse on the global stage. However, despite the subcontinent's rising economic growth, its state of unemployment continues to remain a stinging crisis.

Historical data on the unemployment rate in India over a period of 10 years (2013 - 2023) highlights an increase from 5.42% in 2013 to 8.4% in 2023 (Forbes India, 2023). Since 2019, the pace of regular wage job creation has decreased due to the growth slowdown and the pandemic (State of Working India (2023)). It would be important to draw attention to the fact that unemployment rates continued to rise despite major skill development reforms introduced by various governments, including the National Policy on Skill Development in 2009, followed by the National Skill Development Mission in 2015.

At the start of the pandemic, by April 2020, approximately 122 million Indians had become unemployed, 75% of which were small traders and daily wage labourers (The Hindu Data Team, 2020). Over a year later, during the second wave in April 2021, an estimated 7.35 million Indians lost their jobs ("7.35 million job losses", 2021). An analysis by the Pew Research Centre estimated that 75 million Indians had fallen below the poverty line because of the pandemic-induced recession (Kochhar, 2021). A report by Azim Premji University revealed that 230 million Indians fell below the national daily minimum wage threshold of INR 375 during the pandemicⁱ ("COVID-19 first wave", 2021).

The data above suggests the critical need for India to shift its predominantly job-seeking economy to a job-creator one, especially for the informal sector. The country needs people who can help create jobs at the grassroots level, enabling an increase in overall employment rates. For this, the government

must shift its focus from measuring only GDP or the size of the economy to also include employment or a combination of both as important variables in defining the growth of the economy (Misra, 2023).

India already has a vibrant startup culture and ecosystem. With over 100 unicorns at a total valuation of \$332.7 billion, India has soared to third place globally for the highest number of unicorns after the US and China (Forbes India, 2023; Fortune India, 2022). Additionally, India's startup ecosystem has grown aggressively, from 442 new startups in 2016 to more than 92,683 startups in 2023 (Kapoor & Debroy, 2019). As per the Economic Survey 2022-23, the number of direct jobs generated by Indian startups increased by 36%, which is "64% higher than the average of the previous three years" (Barik, 2023, para 4). However, the Indian startup industry and ecosystem has only focussed on and largely impacted the formal sector.

The Government of India has justifiably recognized entrepreneurship as a necessary ingredient for sowing the seeds of self-employment and generating job opportunities at the state and national levels. Many schemes, initiatives, and campaigns have been launched to encourage Indians to view entrepreneurship as a viable career to pursue. Some of these include 'Startup India,' 'Make in India,' 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and the 'Atal Innovation Mission' among others. While this ecosystem has predominantly impacted the formal sector, more must be done to foster a similar environment at the grassroots.

The World Economics' Quarterly Informal Economy Survey (QIES) latest report estimates that India's informal economy is 43.1 per cent of the total economy (Bhatia, 2023). Additionally, the National Sample Survey's data (2019) suggests that 83.5% of India's total workforce is employed in the informal sector (Natarajan et al., 2020). The International Labour Organisation's (ILO) study 'Women and men in the informal economy: A statistical picture, 2018' highlighted that India's informal work participation far surpassed the global average of 60% and is at par with sub-Saharan Africa, which stands at 89.2% (Kapoor, 2019). Large informal workforce participation,

as defined by the ILO and World Employment Federation, suggests an overall lower quality of life, making the informal workers "vulnerable to health hazards, economic downturns and natural catastrophes" (Salve, 2019; Kapoor, 2019, para 2).

The above data suggests there is an urgent push required from government policy to improve the conditions of informal work. The way forward could be the implementation of stronger skill development initiatives and subsequent entrepreneurial opportunities for the informal workforce at the grassroots. While India is known to have a thriving MSME (Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises) ecosystem, without the support of policymakers and stakeholders and the push for "integration of these enterprises into the larger ecosystem" (Venkatesan, 2023, para 7), an accelerated growth for this sector will only always remain below the horizon. For example, due to the impact of COVID-19, over 10,000 MSMEs shut down between 2022 and 2023 (Venkatesan, 2023).

Lakshmi Venkataraman Venkatesan, Founding and Managing Trustee, Bharatiya Yuva Shakti Trust in "Power of grassroots entrepreneurship: Role in job creation, community development, strengthening MSMEs," has stated, "Local entrepreneurs play a pivotal role in uplifting underserved communities. Grassroots entrepreneurs are instrumental in adopting sustainable business practices and contribute to community development by reinvesting profits locally" (Venkatesan, 2023, para 5). She adds, "Mass Entrepreneurship can also fuel job creation innovation and enhances competitiveness, culminating in a dynamic and inclusive local economy, well prepared to connect with national and global supply chains" (Venkatesan, 2023, para 2).

1.2 Entrepreneurship: A Game Changer for Empowering Grassroots Adolescents

Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) has been working with at-risk, resource-challenged adolescents hailing from urban slums and studying in municipal/government-aided schools since 2002. Having the opportunity to

closely interact with, monitor, and understand this demography and its environments, SBF mapped key triggers (dropout from school; unable to access a fruitful future) while crafting necessary solutions. These solutions included SBF's Vocational Skill Development Program, where beneficiaries were trained in market-relevant skills, including Beauty & Wellness, Bakery & Confectionary, Electrical and Electronics Appliance Repair, Event Photography, Choreography, Dance Fitness, and Acting/Theatre Workshops. Till date, over 50,000 adolescents have been trained through this program.

Trained beneficiaries aged 16-18 years who showcase a prowess for income generation, appetite for risk, and an entrepreneurial mindset were selected for SBF's flagship Entrepreneurship Incubator. Through the incubator, these budding adolescent entrepreneurs were nurtured and mentored by industry experts, and business management skills were provided to them as their businesses took flight.

As the next steps, some adolescent entrepreneurs want to scale their micro businesses and need capital for this. However, entrepreneurship/government ecosystems currently only cater to youth above 18 years of age. SBF identified an opportunity to provide seed fund/capital access and market linkages via credible investors to these adolescent entrepreneurs and launched 'Dolphin Tanki' in close collaboration with the School of Business Management (SBM), Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS). The platform gave these entrepreneurs an opportunity of a lifetime to experience the fundraising ecosystem firsthand.

The genesis behind the name 'Dolphin Tanki' came from SBF wanting the initiative to symbolize the relationship between the 'Dolphin' investors (Dolphins are known to be compassionate and benevolent mammals) who would nurture and care for the adolescent entrepreneurs within a 'Tanki' (a colloquial word used to describe 'tank' in different regions of India) which translates into a safe, fun and collaborative space for the adolescents in their entrepreneurship journey.

The learnings from deploying this program highlighted that early exposure to problem-solving increased an appetite for risk in this demography and enabled the development of an entrepreneurial mindset from a young age. This resulted in certain alumni displaying a prowess for setting up businesses with a long-term goal of scaling their business, creating lucrative income opportunities, and providing employment to those in their community. Therefore, SBF saw great potential if this program is to be scaled to a national level, providing more number of resource-challenged adolescents with access to opportunities in skill development and entrepreneurship.

2. About Salaam Bombay Foundation

Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) was founded in 2002 by Ms. Padmini Sekhsaria with the conviction that "A child in school has a future." The Foundation's journey began with the implementation of the three-year Super Army Program (which has now metamorphosed into the In-School Preventive Health Education Program) in Six municipal schools in Mumbai. The program aimed to influence and build refusal skills towards tobacco consumption amongst adolescents aged 12-17 years. Through the program, adolescents were also given the opportunity to disseminate their learnings on tobacco control within the communities and lead change by working with policymakers, lawmakers, media, and communities.

While implementing the tobacco control program, the SBF team soon learned that the municipal schools were experiencing high dropouts at the secondary school level. Upon further scrutiny, the team realised that, like tobacco consumption amongst adolescents, dropout levels were another grave symptom plaguing this demography. With the impact of these symptoms, the futures of these adolescents looked very grim. This led to the design and implementation of 'Project Résumé' in 2005. The program consisted of Arts, Media, Sports, and Vocational Skill Development Programs. Students exposed to the In-School Preventive Health Program and 'Project Résumé' built essential life and leadership skills, vital aspirations, and 21st-century market-relevant skills. The main objective of these Programs was for these vulnerable

adolescents to make the right choices for their health, education, and livelihood.

Harvard School of Public Health has studied the SBF model and found that beneficiaries impacted by the Foundation's Programs have greater ambition, with over 90% committing to finishing school. These adolescents have higher self-esteem and confidence than their peers and are 77% less likely to be disillusioned about their future.

As of the financial year ending March 2023, Salaam Bombay Foundation had reached more than 550,000 adolescents aged 11 to 17 years in 823 public schools across Mumbai, Pune, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Jaipur. The Foundation's work has been made possible by leveraging the existing government school infrastructure and combining it with alternate and innovative education tools.

The Foundation's Board of Directors includes DR. Sultan Pradhan, Head of Oncology, Prince Aly Khan Hospital and Chairman, Aga Khan Health Services; Ms. Padmini Sekhsaria, Founder and Director, Salaam Bombay Foundation; Mr. Balkumar Agarwal, Rtd. Additional Chief Secretary, Government of Maharashtra, Dr. Anjali Chhabria, Psychiatrist, Founder, Mind Temple, Mr. Suhail Nathani, Co-Founder and Partner, Economics Laws Practice, Mrs. Ritu Nanda, Partner, Alok Nanda Communications, Ms. Ashni Biyani, Chief Ideator, Future Ideas, the insights and design arm of the Future Group, Mr. Nikhil Swadi, Founder and Director, WitFin and Ms. Nandina Ramchandran, Chief Executive Officer of Salaam Bombay Foundation.

3. Transforming Adolescent Entrepreneurship at The Grassroots

While India's national average for school dropouts at the secondary school level was 12.6% for 2021-2022, seven states including Bihar (20.46%), Gujarat (17.85%), Assam (20.3%), Andhra Pradesh (16.7%), Punjab (17.2%), Meghalaya (21.7%) and Karnataka (14.6%) recorded higher dropout rates (PTI, 2023). In the state of Maharashtra, despite the annual dropout rate for the secondary

school level being at 10.7%, which is lower than the national average, five districts recorded dropout rates as high as 15% (PTI, 2023).

The reasons for dropping out of education have been cited in the National Sample Survey's 71st Round data (2014). Economic constraints (21%), engagement in domestic activities (13.2%), and engagement in economic activities (5%) are key factors for non-enrolment in education (National Sample Survey Office (NSSO), 2014). Additionally, the National Sample Survey's (NSS) 75th Round data (July 2017- June 2018) further broke down reasons for dropout based on gender. The most common reason was 'engagement in economic activities' (31%), and for females, it was 'engagement in domestic activities' (30%) (NSSO, 2017-2018, Persons currently not attending education). A survey conducted by UNICEF (2022) stated that '33% of girls in India drop out of school due to domestic work' ("In 2021-22, school dropout", 2023, para 12). Other reasons stated included marriage (17.1%) and financial constraints (Males:19%; Females: 17%) (NSSO, 2017-2018).

Having worked in the government school system for more than two decades, Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) had mapped these triggers for dropout. It was committed to bridging the gaps via a 360-degree holistic development model. SBF's skill development program was based on the continuum of learning through market-relevant paid internship opportunities and entrepreneurship.

As the first step, SBF introduced the adolescents studying in municipal and government-aided schools in urban cities to vocational skill development training in Class IX. The program was deployed in school in partnership with a network of training partners, and the relationship was built over the years with local government authorities, school principals, teachers, parents, and students. After skill training and completion of Class X, opportunities were provided to adolescents above 16 years old to get internship placements within the industry.

SBF's team had witnessed that many of its adolescent alumni were engaging themselves in part-time income-generation activities while pursuing their education. To promote their income generation, SBF awarded 'starter kits' (kits consisting of materials and products) to a few students. Of this group, certain alumni showcased an aptitude for setting up businesses with a long-term goal of scaling, generating steady income opportunities, and providing employment for others within their immediate community. SBF's team realized that some of their alumni were gifted with an entrepreneurial bent of mind, had an appetite for risk, and could even be potential 'job creators' if provided with the right platforms. This was an important outcome of SBF's skill development program.

Consequentially, the next step in providing a holistic 360-degree development model was to set up an Entrepreneurship Incubator to support alumni entrepreneurs in developing their businesses, especially in the initial stages. Incubation support would include mentoring, advisory support, business management skills, capital access, and market linkages.

The incubator was launched in July 2021 on World Youth Skills Day. As the building blocks of this incubator, SBF defined the opportunity of nurturing adolescent entrepreneurs as *'giving resource-challenged adolescents living in urban slums access to life-changing opportunities like Entrepreneurship which in turn empowered them to be self-employed, self-reliant, and financially independent while inspiring them to scale and create jobs for their communities.'*

Through the incubator, alumni were provided with training in entrepreneurship and various aspects of business management. To enable young entrepreneurs to thrive in the rapidly evolving digital landscape, they were provided with the necessary digital skills to market their products, manage their finances, and facilitate digital payments. The mentoring offered by industry experts and established entrepreneurs' helped in strengthening the business model and confidence of the adolescent entrepreneurs. As startup

support, they were provided with self-starter kits containing essential tools and equipment to boost their income.

Within a year of launching the incubator, the Foundation found that some adolescent entrepreneurs who were part of the incubator wanted to scale and structure their businesses from a home-based set-up to setting up a beauty salon or a mobile repair shop. However, this sort of scale-up would require further capital. As the entrepreneurs were below 18 years of age, no formal financial institution (banks/micro-lending institutions) was authorized to lend money to minors. SBF did not want to deter the budding entrepreneurs' vision for growth. Their zeal and enthusiasm were instrumental in germinating the idea of launching a platform for seeking seed funding and market linkages for adolescent entrepreneurs.

The concept of entrepreneurs pitching their business ideas to venture capitalists in the hope of getting funding for their businesses is not new. But, the application of this concept to promote startups from the bottom of the pyramid segment is innovative. Promoting Startups launched by resource-poor population needs support from impact investors who believe promoting entrepreneurs from economically deprived sections have tremendous potential to accelerate social transformation. Against this backdrop, the Foundation designed 'Dolphin Tanki' - a platform to enable entrepreneurs to pitch their business ideas as the next step of the Entrepreneurship cycle.

'Dolphin Tanki' awarded upto INR 40,000 to the most promising business pitches. As and when the adolescent alumni are ready to scale their ventures, they were mentored and groomed by students from the School of Business Management (SBM), NMIMS, via the 'We Care - Civic Engagement Internship' program. NMIMS faculty and students supported them in creating business plans that were then pitched to an expert panel of judges. The business plans included details such as market size, new customer acquisition, marketing and branding plans including promotional offers, and financials including profitability, giving these young entrepreneurs an actual sense of

the fundraising ecosystem. The entrepreneurs were then ready to pitch at 'Dolphin Tanki.'

So far, two editions of 'Dolphin Tanki' have been conducted in partnership with the School of Business Management, NMIMS. The first Dolphin Tanki event was rolled out in March 2022, wherein adolescent alumni from SBF's Mumbai Division participated. The second event was held in March 2023, in which alumni from Mumbai and Pune participated.

Post-winning, the entrepreneurs continued to receive handholding guidance and support from SBF, including regular monitoring of financials and in-person audits by SBF staff. The amount won was disbursed to the adolescent entrepreneur in the form of in-kind support, such as payments to vendors or other investments, including training or materials. Some of the materials provided to winning entrepreneurs included soldering machines, tool sets, blower machines, digital multi-meter, etc., for the Electronic/Electrical Appliances trades, while for the beauty trade, it would be an entire salon set-up including a salon chair, trolley, ironing machines, facial massage machine, and products, etc. as required; and for Bakery & Confectionary entrepreneurs have been given Oven (OTG), moulds, blender, mixer, and beater. These are provided directly by SBF to the adolescent. To encourage growth, SBF thought it important to set goals for these entrepreneurs. An agreement is signed stating that the entrepreneur will showcase an increase in revenue over a stipulated period (in the case of the 'Dolphin Tanki,' it is one year).

More recently, the 'Dolphin Tanki' platform evolved to provide additional support services to entrepreneurs. As the ventures of these adolescents continued to scale and expand, SBF thought it necessary to provide legal guidance that would help transform these businesses into formal entities such as proprietorships or partnerships. The entrepreneurs were guided on how to apply for important legal documents necessary for establishing a firm, including PAN Card, Aadhar Card, GST registration, professional tax registration, and other critical paperwork.

Till date, around 200 alumni have been nurtured via the incubator, receiving guidance from industry experts and domain specialists. These alumni were earning across sectors including Beauty & Wellness, Bakery & Confectionary, Electrical and Electronics Appliance Repair, Event Photography, Choreography, Dance Fitness, and Acting/Theatre Workshops.

4. Social Impact

Pooja Gupta was enrolled in SBF's vocational skill development program in Beauty & Wellness in class IX (Batch of 2018-2019). Pooja was sincere and diligent, and despite her disadvantaged background, she remained motivated to achieve more. Pooja's father was a fruit seller and also ran a television repair business. He was predominantly the sole breadwinner for the family until recently. Pooja had four other siblings - two brothers and two sisters. Through the vocational training, Pooja acquired industry-related skills, including facial, manicure, pedicure, hairstyling etc. At the age of 18, she developed the skills and confidence to manage her home-based beauty business-' Pooja Home Beauty Parlour' while pursuing her Bachelor of Commerce Degree.

Pooja completed her entrepreneurship training through SBF's Entrepreneurship Incubator for Grassroots Adolescents (2021-2022). She described this experience as a door full of opportunities that she believed she could not have otherwise easily opened. She is also a beneficiary of a starter kit awarded to students at SBF who showcase an entrepreneurial bent of mind with the potential to earn. This kit contained materials necessary to run a home-based business with ease. During this time, Pooja was able to earn up to Rs 40,000 through her home-based business. She was able to pay Rs 28,000 towards her college fees and save the remainder of the amount for any future requirements or investments.

Some of Pooja's most important learnings from her entrepreneurship training were utilizing digital marketing like Google Reviews (Pooja's business on Google Reviews had received 33 reviews and a rating of 4.8. Her microsite

was also listed on Google) and Instagram to increase her customer base; as well as digital payments using platforms like Paytm to validate cashflows.

Post her training in entrepreneurship, Pooja began showcasing a need to scale her home-based business. She was selected to present her business plan at the First edition of 'Dolphin Tanki.' For this, she was groomed and mentored by SBF along with SBM's staff and students. Pooja's business pitch to expand her beauty parlour impressed the judges. She was awarded INR 40,000/.

The amount of INR 40,000 was disbursed as in-kind support. Pooja was given the opportunity to invest the money as per her business requirements. Pooja had identified a big demand for makeup, so she chose to invest the funds in completing basic and advanced courses in makeup offered by Ajay Shelar (celebrity makeup artist). Pooja began applying her upgraded beauty skills with customers as soon as she started the makeup program. This helped boost her income and enabled her to earn an additional INR 44,000 in four months (INR 16,000 being earned from providing makeup services alone). Makeup became an added profile to Pooja's business. She offers makeup services for pre-wedding photoshoots, marriages (bridal makeup), and baby shower ceremonies.

Pooja's cumulative earnings since winning 'Dolphin Tanki' in 2022 has been INR 1,38,000. She has been able to contribute approximately INR 30,000 (21.7%) to her family for household expenses in 2022-2023. The fund won by Pooja to expand her business gave her the impetus to begin distributing business cards in larger apartment societies in Mumbai with the aim of targeting upper-middle-class women for home beauty services.

This experience has inspired Pooja to dream big. She wanted to open a Makeup Studio while being a successful makeup artist in the film industry. She believed she was only one step away from achieving her dream of being a successful entrepreneur while being able to take her entire family forward and break the vicious cycle of poverty.

The two editions of 'Dolphin Tanki' conducted in 2022 and 2023, respectively, have witnessed a total of 21 adolescent entrepreneurs pitching their business ideas to an eminent jury. For the winning entrepreneurs of 'Dolphin Tanki,' their average monthly income has increased from INR 1,860/- to INR 6102/-. The data suggests that SBF's incubator and the 'Dolphin Tanki' platform have helped these entrepreneurs (N=10) achieve a threefold increase in their monthly incomes.

5. Challenges Faced

Salaam Bombay Foundation encountered a couple of challenges while implementing the Entrepreneurship Incubator and 'Dolphin Tanki.' The subsequent section briefly elucidates the strategies adopted by SBF staff to address the challenges and remain focused on its mission of supporting adolescent entrepreneurs.

5.1 Reluctance of Parents to Allow the Adolescent to Pursue Entrepreneurship as a Career

Parents were often reluctant to support the adolescent's entrepreneurial journey, given concerns over the adolescent losing interest in studies, the adolescent not contributing to household chores, or facing stigma within the community (especially if girls in the family are running businesses). To overcome this challenge, SBF's team had an active engagement and constructive dialogue with parents. The team considered the active involvement of parents as a prerequisite for supporting the adolescents' entrepreneurial journey.

5.2 Seed Funding Access to Entrepreneurs Other than the 'Dolphin Tanki' Winners

Lack of access to seed funding could act as a deterrent as the adolescent may not be able to scale the business to the next level. To overcome this, SBF has been creating awareness and exposure on availing funding through various government and private schemes. Information has also been disbursed about availing loans through Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (PMMY), Social Stock Exchange (SSE), and Social Venture Capital. On attaining 18 years of age, the

entrepreneurs would have the knowledge and the tools to avail funding access through these schemes.

This awareness could even help the 'Dolphin Tanki' winners who want to eventually avail of high ticket size loans for the next level scale-up of their businesses. As an example, under the Micro Units Development and Refinance Agency (MUDRA) bank, loans above Rs 50,000 and up to Rs 5 Lakh are sanctioned as a part of the 'Kishor' scheme, and loan of above Rs Five Lakh and up to Rs 10 Lakh are sanctioned as a part of 'Tarun' scheme (Government of India, 2023).

5.3 Scale-up Through Integration with NEP 2020 Implementation

As a part of the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020, with the objective of promoting the 'Vocationalisation of Education' under the 'Samagra Shiksha Scheme,' secondary school students across the country are expected to undertake Vocational subjects as a part of their school curriculum. SBF envisages this as a scale-up opportunity by offering its program to interested secondary school students (in entrepreneurship) who have been provided vocational education under NEP 2020. However, this is still a very early stage of NEP 2020 implementation (post-COVID, 2023-24 is practically the 1st year where the schools are expected to open physically for the whole year), and the rollout is slow. Therefore, scaling up SBF's program through integration with NEP 2020 has been a challenge. Additionally, SBF will need to establish positive reinforcement mechanisms to motivate secondary schools and their students to take up entrepreneurship. To inculcate this, SBF plans to showcase the successful SBF entrepreneurs (from similar socioeconomic strata) during the orientation at the NEP schools. As role models from similar communities, we are hoping that SBF entrepreneurs will be able to motivate NEP school students to take up entrepreneurship.

6. Conclusion

The National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 2020) has emphasized improving the quality of education by ensuring that students are also acquiring relevant

skills (employability and entrepreneurial capabilities) to meet market demands. The policy has focused on integrating vocational education with general education, making it a mainstream option for all students. The implementation of the NEP has already begun with the integration of vocational and mainstream education, which is expected to take place in a phased manner across institutions. However, it would be critical for the Government of India to provide a structured framework for entrepreneurship training at the municipal/government school and junior college levels. This implementation framework has not yet been provided by the NEP 2020. Students who have received training in skill development at the school level through the NEP 2020 could also be provided with entrepreneurship training, financial literacy, and marketing (including digital marketing) skills as part of the module. Formal recognition of the training by the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship can be provided to students through government certificates or credit scores. These would be necessary skills and accreditation for kickstarting and running a successful micro business.

Current experience showed that entrepreneurs who are provided with INR 40,000 as financial support (through the 'Dolphin Tanki' platform) were able to recover equivalent earnings/revenue over less than a year. Even considering the fixed costs, these ventures could quickly break even over a maximum of one and a half years. While grant support through 'Dolphin Tanki' might not be the most sustainable way to broaden the base and reach out to many more grassroots adolescents, microloans with reasonable moratorium periods and soft interest rates could be a feasible option for scale-up. Unfortunately, the minimum age criteria for availing of government schemes or bank loans is 18 years. Therefore, funding access would be highly restricted for these adolescent entrepreneurs.

Our learnings indicate that our adolescent entrepreneurs want to scale their businesses. The public and private lending ecosystems (for providing microloans) in India need to recognize this age group (16 - 18 years) as an

untapped entrepreneurship opportunity for the economy and roll out formal funding schemes and initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana (<https://www.mudra.org.in>), Social Stock Exchange (SSE) (<https://www.nseindia.com/sse>) and Social Venture Capital. Given that this age group is recognized as minors as per regulations and many organizations and institutions may hesitate to provide funding for this reason, the lending ecosystem may evaluate adding clauses where the adolescent may be allowed to access a loan with the provision of an adult guarantor.

The Way Forward

Approximately 24 million Indian youth were estimated to have joined the workforce in 2022 (Kumar, 2023). Given the continuous surging unemployment crisis, these figures are going to be exceedingly difficult targets for the government to meet.

To quell this crisis, India must transition from a job-seeking economy to a job-creating one. The way forward must be the implementation of stronger entrepreneurial opportunities with a special focus on the unorganized sector. The Government of India has rightly recognized entrepreneurship as one of many solutions to help solve the unemployment crisis, implementing schemes and initiatives to encourage entrepreneurship in the country. However, the focus of this agenda tends to predominantly cater to the formal sector and youth above 18 years of age.

The Government and larger entrepreneurship ecosystem must also recognize adolescents aged 16-18 years as a large pool of untapped talent for entrepreneurship. The seeds of entrepreneurship must be sown within this demography by introducing them to the ecosystem through training, mentorship, and funding. Building such aspirations has the potential to mould these fledgling micro businesses into opportunities for scaling, which in turn may create jobs and contribute to the local economy in the future.

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Chapter V

**SKILL DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE
ORGANIC FARMING**

Minu Mehta

Associate Dean and Professor

Anil Surendra Modi School of Commerce, Mumbai
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Boishampayan Chatterjee

Assistant Professor

Anil Surendra Modi School of Commerce, Mumbai
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Hardik Goyal

Student of Bachelor of Commerce (Hons.)

Anil Surendra Modi School of Commerce, Mumbai
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies
(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan (GGVS) is a not-for-profit organization focused on the skill development of small and marginal farmers in Jakhora village, Rajasthan. It imparts organic farming skills, which have the twin advantages of popularising eco-friendly sustainable agriculture and helping the farmers

earn more. Since organic agricultural products attract higher prices and have broader market appeal, they ensure the poor farmers' economic empowerment and social inclusion. This case documents the journey of GGVS and its innovative strategy of winning over the trust of risk-averse farmers and persuading them to switch to organic farming.

Introduction

Tarachand Goyal's father, Shri Ram Avtar Goyal, a first-generation entrepreneur, had seen the struggle of people experiencing poverty in procuring the necessities of food for their families. He made charity and distribution of food for people in need a core value for his business, something that his sons Tarachand and Prakashchand had diligently followed all their lives. However, Tarachand felt that how many mouths one feeds is not enough; the quality of food one provides is also essential. Not only this, but he wanted a solution to ensure he was equipping people experiencing poverty with skills to produce good quality food products and making them agropreneurs capable of making decisions based on market demand. This led to the formation of Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan (GGVS) in 2010, a not-for-profit platform for skill development centers in his village, Jakhora, in district Kota, Rajasthan. The idea rested on Tarachand Goyal's understanding that organic crops attract higher prices and can become a powerful tool of economic empowerment and social inclusion for the small and marginal farmers in the country, who form a staggering 89.4% of the total farmers. By July 2016, Tarachand had set up the Shri Ramshantay Organic Farming Research and Training Center under the Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan.

Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan, however, was facing a different challenge now. Jakhora is a small village where an average small farmer has a landholding of less than 4 acres and is caught in the vicious cycle of low productivity and low revenue. Tarachand Goyal's skill development center was set up to impart organic farming skills to these poor farmers and augment their income streams since organic agricultural products attract higher rates and have broader markets worldwide. However, enrolling these farmers in the skill

development programs and convincing them to adopt these practices was an uphill battle. The small size of their farms had made the farmers very risk averse as all their fortunes were tied to the tiny plot of land, and they were afraid of experimenting with unfamiliar new techniques. Besides, all their time was spent on their farms, and they were reluctant to join a training program they were unsure they would benefit from. They needed to be convinced of either the need for skill development or the proposal of using their farms to cultivate organic crops. To bring behavioral change to these farmers, he devised an exciting strategy whereby he co-opted big farmers and used them as role models of thriving organic agriculture. Looking at the disinterest and resistance of the small farmers, Tarachand Goyal tapped into his existing network of farmers with big land holdings.

He convinced them to apply organic farming techniques on a small corner of their large farms and continue with their existing farming practices on the rest of their lands. This minimized the risk of a failed experiment, and soon, Tarachand successfully enlisted the support of a small number of farmers who volunteered to become social influencers. More rich farmers became interested in organic farming, and along with the social influencers, Tarachand Goyal succeeded in the voluntary enrolment of small farmers, who were his actual target group.

Over the last seven years, Shri Ramshantay Organic Farming Research and Training Center has become a beacon of hope for farmers who have found a mentor who invested in skill development and a torch bearer for sustainable agriculture. Tarachand is now looking for feasible solutions to scale his skill development operations and support start-ups in agro-tech and food-tech.

1. About Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan

Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan was founded by Shri Tarachand Goyal in 2010 to contribute towards the development of Jakhora village in Rajasthan. Born in Khanpur town of Jhalawar district, after getting an education there, he started a business in Khanpur in 1977 through a small grocery shop. He has been a

volunteer of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh since childhood. While discharging various responsibilities, he was the mahanagar sah-sanghchalak and sanghchalak of Kota for 13 years. He believed that there has always been a fear of something in the people since the olden times. Earlier, people used to fear the king's punishment, then fear of religious authorities, then fear of society, and he believed that in the future, people will be afraid of health. With this ideology, the Shri Ramshantay Organic Farming Research and Training Center was established in 2016 under the Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan with the motto 'Clean Diet, Healthy Family .'The focus of the center was on skill development related to organic agriculture. This center is registered by the Rajasthan State Organic Certification Agency, Jaipur, which is determined to provide the farmers with the best technology available and acceptable at the national level.

Center's research on ancient and traditional farming methods has been successfully combined with modern technology to improve farmers' income and provide health and abundant energy to farmers at low cost while preserving the environment and the living world. Excellent models have been prepared to keep the human body healthy and energetic by establishing various simple and easy dimensions.

The center aims to promote rapid progress in organic agriculture so that its future brightens and gives far-reaching positive results. To equip the farmers and entrepreneurs engaged in the development of organic agriculture with technical skills and the latest technological means, in which marketable organic crops are improved not only in terms of quality but also in terms of quantity, as well as to achieve a commercial and international level in this field. We aim to provide full benefits to the organic farming sector by exploring the potential of crop production. Also, our fundamental goal is to provide full benefits to the organic farming sector by exploring the commercial and international development possibilities in this area.

2. Organic Farming, Skill Development and Sustainable Business

Initiatives

Currently, chemical fertilizers-based farming is prevalent in India. The vision of Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan is to accept the work of living beings for the balance of life by living beings, for living beings, as organic agriculture. The Organization has made cow-based organic agriculture its center point, where pure food was first introduced through soil nutrition.

To establish human nutrition through proper land nutrition, the Organization developed a method of making manure for pure land nutrition. In this method, farmers create a nutrition garden for pure food for the body using grains, oilseeds, pulses, fruits, vegetables, spices, etc., from one bigha (1620 square meters) and one cow's dung and cow urine. To ensure that farmers and agriculture become self-reliant from sowing to market, the research center made continuous efforts on fertilizers, general pests, and disease control.

To promote organic farming, skill development is needed as farmers need more resources and technological expertise to practice organic farming. The Organization aims to train farmers and develop their skills by teaching them the various methods of developing manure at the farm. Most of the farmers were illiterate and were taught the skills required for in-house production. Apart from all the above, for cow-based organic agriculture, intensive research, and study were also done on fresh dung, cow urine, etc., of the Indian breed of cow about a particular crop through the laboratories established here, and the successful results obtained were shared among the farming community. The Organization has made efforts to conduct monthly training programs at the research center, organize Gram Chaupal in villages, and organize seminars, workshops, and meetings organized by institutions.

The Organization has been successfully able to involve technology with traditional farming methods. The farmer knows the conventional techniques, such as learning how to plant seeds, farm, and spread manure; by looking at the land, they find out whether the ground is wet or dry and whether the

seeds need to be planted. All these have resulted in some of the best practices in organic farming and a sustainable business model. For instance, Green Manure is produced by mixing any crop in the field when its vegetative growth occurs. Good seeds are used, which, when developed, are treated for one month. When it reaches its productive stage, vegetative growth happens, and a tonic in the form of liquid manure is provided to make the compost.

Nutrition management was not up to the mark, and the manure did not decompose fully earlier, so it used to lie as waste. The Organization developed a method to decompose it into compost. Hundreds of farmers adopted this method and established it as an achievement. Record crop production was also achieved in a large area due to quality compost and best management. The Organization has successfully saved traditional farming yet added technology to make it a sustainable business practice.

3. Social Impact of Organic Farming and Skill Development

The impact of organic farming in terms of sustainability has been manifold. Below are some benefits of sustainable agro-practice on nature and community done by the Organization:

Table 1 Impact of Organic Farming on Nature and Community

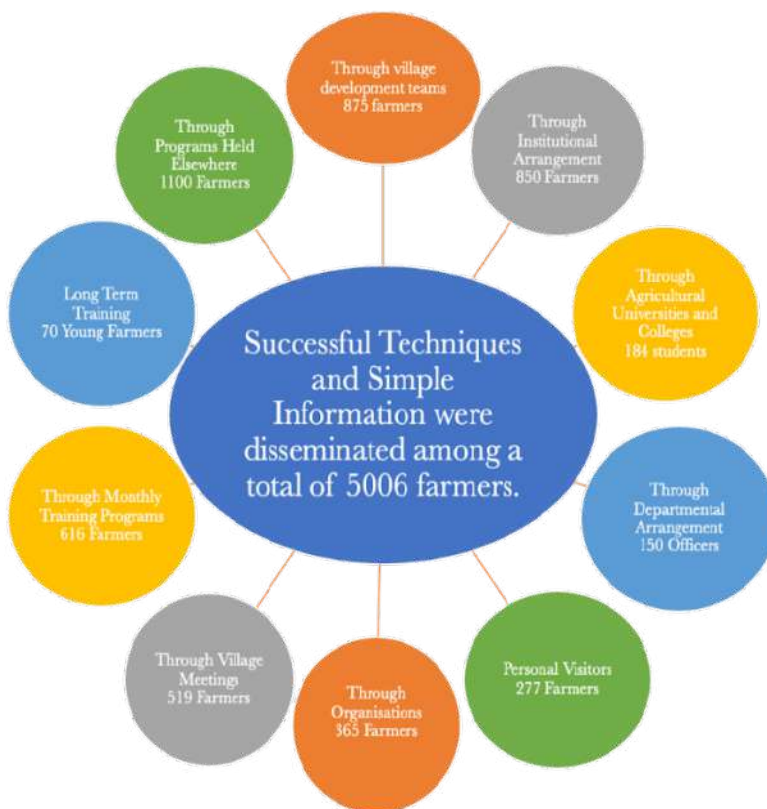
Nature	Community
Microorganisms- multiplication of microorganisms takes place. In chemical-based farming, microorganisms die whether they are beneficial or harmful.	Labor- When chemicals are used, they harm the person's body. However, the affected workers who joined GGVS became healthy after some time.
Soil- When chemical fertilizers are used, soil's physical, chemical, and biological properties are harmed. The Organization has protected all the properties through its methods and	Farmer- it also impacts farmers as they will avoid the chemicals and use natural products that will protect them from various diseases.

<p>increased the productivity and nutrition of the soil.</p>	
<p>Animal- when the animals consume healthy, pure, clean food, they will remain healthy and nutritious.</p>	<p>Consumers- When the consumer consumes chemical-free food, he will become healthy and satisfy the Organization's overall purpose.</p>
<p>Biodiversity- Chemical fertilizers affect the birds and other parts of biodiversity. It involves the mating and their population. Organic farming provides security to them. The center has developed a natural nutrition method for plants and trees, using cow urine and lime.</p>	<p>Dissemination- Personal connectivity, extension workers, rural development team, personal communication, connectivity, on-farm training program on the 15th of every month, and all the Organizations in this sector are also linked with the Organization.</p>
<p>Seed- for the first time, indigenous seed was produced. Some parts were developed, such as nutritional value, aroma, and medicinal value, which were studied and introduced. Then, it was protected and multiplied.</p>	<p>Cost- currently, a farmer purchases seed, fertilizer, insecticide, and herbicide from the market. After shifting to organic farming, he will develop everything on his farm. Manure is made from farm and animal waste. For insecticide, the center has developed its plant-based insecticide. Also, the farmer will grow his seed. In organic farming, the farmer makes and grows everything on his farm, which reduces costs by 50-80%.</p>
	<p>Market access- the plan involves the development of a marketing platform where the Organization will purchase the crop from the farmer and sell it to the end consumer.</p>

3.2 Farmer training and technology adoption

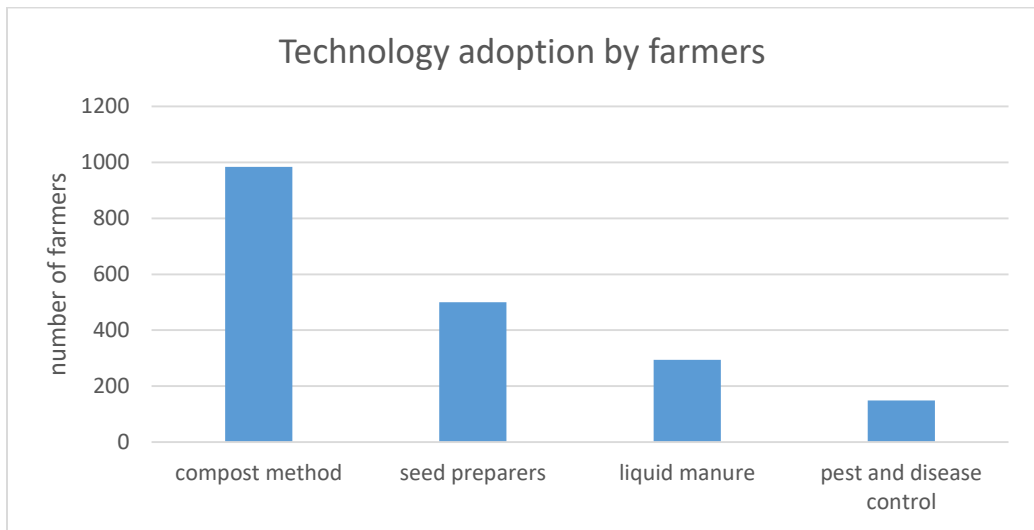
Farmers from 25 states of India visited the research center of the Organization. A total of 2512 farmers from 380 villages from 33 districts and 85 tehsils across Rajasthan came to the research center, received training, and observed the model farm here. The developed technology was disseminated among 5006 farmers at the research center, through various mediums, and by visiting other places. Figure 1 shows the details of the training.

Figure 1 Farmer Training Programs



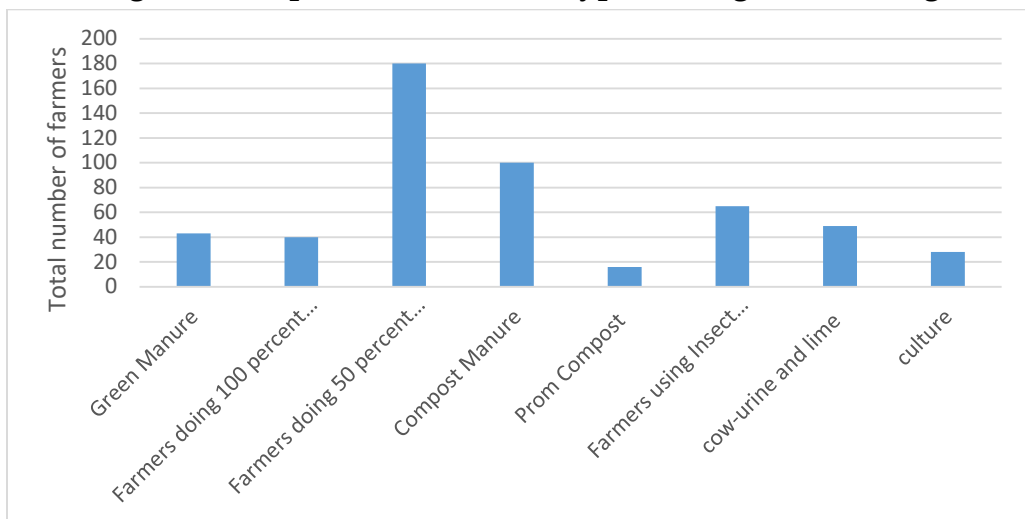
Apart from this, 616 farmers were trained in monthly training programs by the Research Center, of which 30 were females and 586 were male farmers. Village meetings are also organized to implement organic farming at the village level. Through this, 519 farmers have been trained so far.

Figure2 Technology Adoption



The Figure above shows the enthusiastic response of farmers to adopting the compost method, which forms the foundation of organic agricultural practices. GGVS is now focussing on popularising their pest and disease control techniques to wean off the farmers from their current chemical-heavy methods for these purposes.

Figure 3 Adoption of Different Types of Organic Farming



The above Figure shows the challenges GGVS faced in disseminating and adopting organic agriculture practices. As Tarachand Goyal himself admitted, it is surprising how difficult it is to reset the thinking of farmers. Despite the easy availability and low cost of ingredients like cow urine, farmers must be persistently persuaded to use these instead of the market alternatives rich in chemicals that harm the soil, water, and the environment.

4. Challenges Faced by Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan

The sustainability initiatives taken by Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan have been subject to challenges. Implementing organic farming and skill development had operational challenges and behavioral issues for farmers. Some of the significant operational challenges were the availability of raw materials, crop rotation, and arrangement of fertilizer stores. It was identified that raw materials for nutrition management took a lot of work. Most of the material needed in organic farming is made on the farm.

Regarding nutrition, compost is made from animal and crop waste decomposition as raw material. However, most farmers need more animals to make sufficient compost. Also, their waste needs to be collected due to grazing in the fields.

Furthermore, crop waste is not available due to herbicides. Another challenge is crop rotation, which needs to be implemented due to the practice of monocropping. Every year, the farmer plants only one crop in his field every season, such as wheat in Rabi and rice in Kharif. If both the crops are from the same family, then the nutrition consumption will be high, and gradually, the field will deteriorate. By planting only these crops, other crops will not be produced. Even if the waste is collected, the unavailability of fertilizer storage makes the farmers leave the waste in the open, causing the fertilizer quality to deteriorate because of exposure to sunlight. Apart from the operational challenges, farmers' behavioral issues, which have hindered the implementation of organic farming, have been identified. Due to a lack of correct information, many farmers' production in the organic sector decreased

many times, which led to a perception that organic farming could be more beneficial for them. Finally, although organic farming using improved technology has been developed, farmers prefer to avoid adopting technology.

Conclusion

Goyal Gramin Vikas Sansthan has proven the efficacy of using skill development as a tool for sustainable agricultural development and socio-economic inclusion of the small and marginal farmers of India. Given that there are more than 126 million small and marginal farmers in India, enhancing the skills of these farmers and teaching them how to grow organic products can bring about a significant socio-economic upliftment and work as a sustainable strategy to tackle rural poverty. Technology usage in traditional farming models deserves to be scaled up and replicated across the country as a cost-effective and sustainable business practice that allows access to markets and better livelihoods. The Organization's future plan involves initially connecting farmers with organic farming and getting organic farming done on 500 acres of area by 500 farmers in the next five years. The long-term plan is to cover Rajasthan with organic agriculture in the next 15 years. Furthermore, the Organization plans to develop a marketing platform to purchase the crop from the farmer and sell it to the end consumer.

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Chapter VI

**WOMEN ON WHEELS: THE DRIVERBEN
PROJECT OF THE JANVIKAS**

Mahima M.

MBA II Year

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Sayantana Khanra Ph.D

Assistant Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

The collaborative endeavor between Janvikas and Azad Foundation in Gujarat has given rise to the 'Women on Wheels' initiative, colloquially known as the 'Driverben' project. This initiative is dedicated to uplifting underprivileged Indian women by providing comprehensive driving courses, facilitating their transition into professional driving roles, and thereby enhancing their economic prospects. This case delves into the novel concept of 'woman chauffeurs,' addressing ingrained societal biases that impact their credibility and acceptance in the market while creating business opportunities via the 'Driverben' project. This case strategically outlines a marketing mix to yield

tangible outcomes, accompanied by recommendations directed at both public and private stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Skill development is a critical component for the economic and social advancement of India. With more than 12 million youths entering the workforce annually, there is a pressing need to equip them with the necessary skills and education to seize emerging opportunities. India faces a unique challenge—on one hand, there is a shortage of highly-trained, skilled labor, and on the other hand, a significant section of the educated workforce lacks employable skills. Despite ongoing efforts, the skill development ecosystem in India primarily revolves around formal education, with limited focus on vocational training.

The Indian government has initiated various programs to enhance vocational training for the youth. Nationally, initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana aim to incentivize and reward skill training, benefiting millions of youths. At the state level in Gujarat, programs such as the Crafting Training Scheme, Skill University, Kaushalya Vardhan Kendra, Industrial Kaushalya Vardhan Kendras, and Skill Certification under the Gujarat Skill Development Mission are scaling up vocational training. Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in Gujarat, like Janvikas, have also played a significant role in addressing the lack of skill development programs.

Janvikas, a registered NGO since 1987, focuses on women empowerment, gender awareness, environmental issues, social justice, and supporting underprivileged children and youth. Over three decades, Janvikas has expanded its presence in Gujarat and Odisha, operating through a network of 12 decentralized autonomous institutions in multiple states. The organization emphasizes enhancing employability and leadership among the youth and has recognized the need to work with rural women to improve their skillsets and entrepreneurial opportunities.

The 'Driverben' project, initiated in January 2016, is a collaborative effort between Janvikas and Azad Foundation. This program focuses on empowering socio-economically disadvantaged women by training them as professional, qualified drivers. While Azad Foundation had previously pioneered professional women drivers in other cities, Gujarat joined the list through its partnership with Janvikas. The project aims to achieve economic and social empowerment for marginalized women, challenge traditional stereotypes, and promote gender equality. Notably, it provides training in various areas and facilitates the acquisition of driver's licenses for the participants.

2. About 'Driverben' Project

As the 'Driverben' project gains momentum, it caters to a growing customer base, including senior citizens, pregnant women, and families with safety concerns, who prefer female drivers. The project is expected to broaden its reach and serve diverse segments in the future.

2.1. Customer Segmentation:

Customer segmentation is the practice of categorizing the audience based on common traits, which aids in tailoring project communications. For Driverben, potential customer segments included vulnerable individuals in need of trusted, safe commuting options. The 'Driverben' project segmented customers based on demographic and behavioral factors. Demographic segmentation targeted families with infants, pregnant women, girl children, and senior citizens. Behavioral segmentation focused on individuals who frequently visited malls and beauty salons.

2.2. Place or Channels:

Once customer segmentation was complete, the 'Driverben' project aimed to identify strategic locations for maximum impact. This involved dividing areas into zones, each encompassing several localities, and targeting locations where

the target audience frequented. These strategic places included hospitals, gardens, salons, and popular shops.

2.3. Promotional Strategies:

Promotional strategies aimed to raise awareness of women drivers' availability and address barriers to using Driverben services. The strategy included clear and informative posters and word-of-mouth marketing to highlight the benefits of employing women drivers. Testimonials from satisfied customers were utilized to build trust in the reliability of women drivers.

3. Resilience Strategies

In India, women have made significant strides in various fields, such as aviation, shipping, and railways. However, there remains a prevalent skepticism when it comes to hiring women as drivers. The Driverben project employed a multifaceted approach, encompassing customer segmentation, strategic placement, and effective promotional strategies, all while addressing the several barriers that emerged during its execution.

Throughout the course of the project, several barriers were encountered, each requiring tailored strategies for effective mitigation. Cultural barriers manifested in the prevailing perception that women were inefficient drivers. To address this, personal discussions with customers became pivotal, serving as a platform to educate them on the rigorous skill training provided to women drivers. Moreover, information about the project's success in Jaipur was shared, along with testimonials from existing clients, emphasizing the competence of women drivers.

Information barriers, stemming from a lack of awareness about the availability of women drivers in society, demanded a proactive approach. Information dissemination strategies were employed, utilizing standees and pamphlets strategically placed at prominent locations in the city. This approach aimed to

create widespread awareness about the Driverben project, fostering a better understanding of its goals and the presence of skilled women drivers.

Credibility barriers, specifically concerns regarding the reliability of women drivers, were addressed through comprehensive measures. Each woman driver underwent police verification to instill trust, and overall performance assurance measures were implemented, backed by assurances from Janvikas. This multifaceted strategy aimed to establish the credibility of women drivers within the community and among potential clients.

Functional barriers emerged in the form of concerns that women drivers may not be available for late evening work or be willing to undertake outstation duties. In response, a flexible approach was adopted, assuring customers that working hours and outstation duties for women drivers could be negotiated based on mutual agreement. This strategy aimed to accommodate the diverse needs of both drivers and clients.

Skilling barriers, particularly the misconception that women drivers cannot handle all types of modern cars, were tackled head-on. Customers were assured that women drivers were trained to drive all types of modern vehicles, debunking myths and reinforcing confidence in the capabilities of the female workforce. This strategy aimed to overcome prejudiced notions and ensure equal opportunities for women in the driving profession.

4. Key Concerns

The challenges faced by women drivers in India encompass both societal and logistical aspects. Addressing these concerns requires a concerted effort to break down stereotypes, provide proper training and licensing opportunities, and ensure safety and work-life balance for women in this profession.

4.1 Demand Side Concerns

On the demand side, prospective customers often express reservations about hiring women as drivers. While they may appreciate the idea of women drivers, initial hesitancy exists due to the stereotype that female drivers are less efficient than their male counterparts. Even those who hire women drivers tend to engage them only for specific days or part-time roles. Many women lack commercial licenses, limiting their employment opportunities as airport drivers, school van drivers, or cab drivers.

4.2 Logistical Challenges

Logistical challenges emerge when women drivers take on late-night or out-of-town duties. Maintaining a work-life balance becomes a major constraint as they require safe lodging and boarding facilities during out-of-town assignments. Identifying trusted, family-oriented customers also becomes a safety concern in such scenarios.

4.3. Societal aspects

Multiple challenges hinder women from pursuing car driving as a profession in India. These challenges are rooted in factors like limited educational qualifications, lack of exposure to city roads, low confidence levels, safety concerns, non-standard working hours, gender discrimination, and insufficient family support. These societal norms continue to reinforce the traditional role of women as homemakers, making it challenging for them to break free from these conventions. Overcoming these hurdles is essential to empower more women to pursue driving as a profession and challenge traditional gender norms.

5. Possible Way Forward

Janvikas is on a mission to empower women by increasing their enrollment as professional drivers, providing them with a means to earn a sustainable income. This initiative not only uplifts the financial situation of women but also enables them to make sound investment decisions, contributing to their

independence and dignity. However, to scale up this initiative further, strategic marketing interventions and efforts to challenge societal stereotypes about women drivers are necessary. The 'Driverben' project requires specific interventions, promotional strategies, and effective communication methods to facilitate this important behavioral change.

5.1. Creating a Supportive Ecosystem and Government Involvement

For the success and sustainability of the Driverben project, creating a supportive ecosystem through cross-sector partnerships is crucial. Collaborations with feminist groups can influence the government to formulate policies that grant professional driver's licenses to women. A dedicated government cell should be established to liaise with relevant departments and ensure women drivers' safety at work. Establishing a 24/7 women drivers' helpline is essential for immediate assistance. NGOs and the government can work together to sensitize society towards accepting women drivers, including educating school students about the dignity of driving as a profession and eradicating gender discrimination.

5.2. Industry Involvement and Skill Development

Forward-looking automobile companies, like Tata Motors and Mahinda & Mahindra, can contribute through CSR initiatives by providing exclusive training for women drivers, covering various high-end car models. Regular technical upgrade programs in car maintenance and value-added features should also be conducted. Customers who benefit from this initiative can become project ambassadors, sharing their experiences and feedback. Launching campaigns like "Drive The Change" and promoting them on social media can expand awareness, especially among younger and middle-aged audiences. Technology and social media can be harnessed effectively to promote this noble cause.

5.3. Leveraging Technology and Social Media

To further enhance their initiatives, NGOs, including Janvikas, can leverage technology and social media marketing. This includes sharing success stories of women who have benefitted from the Driverben project, emphasizing the advantages for women and society. Creating social media groups and advertising upcoming training sessions can connect with potential participants. Collaborative efforts with other organizations through various social media platforms, such as reels and awareness-raising events, can maximize the impact of the initiative. Ultimately, the goal is to encourage people to hire women drivers and be proud contributors to their journey towards a dignified livelihood.

6. Conclusion

The Driverben project not only challenges traditional gender norms but also fosters a more equitable society by providing women with the necessary training and support to become professional drivers. This initiative has achieved noteworthy progress in increasing the number of women drivers in India. One of the key achievements of the Driverben project is its contribution to enhancing road safety for women drivers. Another vital aspect of the Driverben project is its role in promoting financial independence and economic empowerment among women. By training and supporting women in becoming professional drivers, the project opens up opportunities for them to generate income and improve their financial well-being. The Driverben project serves as an inspiring model for organizations striving to empower women in India. Although lasting change doesn't happen overnight, it is through such initiatives that we can create a more equitable and inclusive society. Let's support and promote such initiatives to build a more equal and prosperous future.

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Chapter VII

**BERHAMPORE MINORITY AND COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT SERVICE ADDRESSING
INSTITUTIONAL VOIDS**

Gourav Bokaria

MBA II Year

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Sayan Dasgupta

MBA II Year

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Sayantana Khanra, Ph.D.

Assistant Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Abstract

This case study illuminates the transformative initiatives led by the Berhampore Minority And Community Development Service (BMCDS), a dedicated non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Berhampore, West Bengal. Established in 2001, BMCDS has consistently pursued its mission

to uplift economically and educationally disadvantaged communities in the Murshidabad District. The case provides an in-depth examination of BMCDS's multifaceted efforts, encompassing critical areas such as healthcare, legal assistance, women's empowerment, and community engagement. It highlights the pivotal role of NGOs like BMCDS in addressing societal gaps, including economic disparities, gender-based income inequalities, healthcare disparities, gender-based violence, and limited educational access.

1. Introduction

Berhampore Minority and Community Development Service (BMCDS) is a proactive non-governmental organization (NGO) located in Berhampore, West Bengal. Since its establishment in 2001, BMCDS has been steadfast in its commitment to serving the economically and educationally underprivileged segments of society in the Murshidabad District of West Bengal. BMCDS has been an influential force in addressing critical social issues and celebrating community events that promote well-being and engagement. Their work spans various domains, including healthcare, legal support, women's empowerment, and community involvement.

Economic disparities and gender-based income gaps are significant institutional voids that NGOs dedicated to women's empowerment aim to rectify. These organizations provide resources, training, and advocacy for equal pay while endeavouring to shape legislation that supports women's employment. Furthermore, they address the underrepresentation of women in politics and leadership roles by running campaigns that encourage women to enter these domains.

Healthcare disparities, particularly in reproductive rights and access, represent substantial institutional gaps. NGOs focus on advancing women's healthcare access, providing education on women's health, and advocating for legislation that protects reproductive rights. These NGOs also challenge societal norms and cultural practices that perpetuate gender inequality. Additionally, they establish support networks for women facing violence and discrimination through initiatives providing shelters, counselling, and legal assistance. Economic independence is another pivotal aspect addressed

through empowerment programs that emphasize skill development and microfinance initiatives. These multifaceted efforts collectively contribute to dismantling institutional barriers to gender equality.

Gender-based violence, including domestic abuse, sexual harassment, and human trafficking, is another critical area of focus for these NGOs. Institutional deficiencies in addressing such violence drive these organizations to establish support systems for victims, raise awareness, and advocate for stronger legal measures. Limited access to education remains a persistent challenge for girls and women, and empowerment NGOs work to increase access to quality education, support legislation ensuring equal educational opportunities, and challenge social and cultural norms that discourage female education. Women's empowerment NGOs play a crucial role in addressing structural gaps within societal and governmental frameworks, which may vary across regions but often involve issues like the lack of legal protections for women's rights.

BMCDS and similar non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are instrumental in driving positive transformations, dedicated to addressing institutional gaps and advancing gender equality within society. They actively advocate for the enforcement of established laws and the introduction of new legislation aimed at closing these protective loopholes. This case underscores BMCDS's pivotal role in effecting positive changes at the grassroots level in rural India, particularly in the context of gender equality and empowerment.

2. About Berhampore Minority and Community Development Service (BMCDS)

BMCDS actively participates in several events that bring the community together. For instance, on Teacher's Day, BMCDS organizes celebrations in local primary schools, where teachers and students join in commemorating the day while reflecting on their roles and responsibilities. Another noteworthy event is International Missing Children Day, observed on May 25th, in collaboration with state government dignitaries at Berhampore Bus Stand. BMCDS distributes sweets to a hundred participating children and their parents, creating awareness about the issue. Similarly, BMCDS engages in

community outreach during World AIDS Day, held on December 1st, partnering with the district public health department and the Chief Medical Officer of Health of Murshidabad. This event includes participation from sex workers and features folk songs, street dramas, and puppet shows to educate them about HIV/AIDS. Republic Day is also celebrated in the society's campus, with members and children participating in various competitions such as quizzes, painting, and singing.

At the grassroots level, BMCDS is actively involved in initiatives aimed at addressing critical social issues. One of their pivotal programs is the National Pulse Polio and Routine Immunization Programme. Many rural areas in West Bengal lack adequate healthcare facilities and basic immunization, resulting in high disease prevalence among children. BMCDS bridges this gap by providing polio immunization to these remote areas within the Murshidabad district. BMCDS also conducts advocacy programs, focusing on promoting fundamental rights, particularly for women and children in villages. It advocates for clean drinking water, sanitation, and improved drainage systems. Additionally, the organization runs a Health Awareness Program, which includes campaigns in rural areas of Murshidabad to combat diseases such as Polio, TB, Malaria, and Filariasis. It also extends support for maternal and child health in the district.

Legal Aid Services form another integral part of BMCDS's initiatives. Many individuals, especially those in rural areas, struggle to access quality legal aid or guidance for their pursuit of justice. BMCDS addresses this issue by providing free legal aid services to segments of the population who cannot afford quality legal representation. Lastly, BMCDS places significant emphasis on the training and empowerment of distressed women in West Bengal. These women, often from rural regions, are facing severe economic and social challenges. BMCDS works towards uplifting and empowering these women, including destitute individuals, victims of sexual abuse, widows, migrants, refugees, and the homeless, hailing from various villages in West Bengal. The organization strives to improve the quality of life and prospects for these marginalized women.

3. BMCDS's Initiative for the Welfare of the Disadvantaged Women

The initiative under discussion focuses on empowering distressed women in the rural villages of Murshidabad, West Bengal, through a training program aimed at making them financially independent. These women, often victims of abandonment, sexual abuse, or widowed, face a multitude of challenges due to early marriages and limited financial autonomy. BMCDS plays a crucial role in upskilling these women, enabling them to earn their livelihood and provide their families with basic necessities. The initiative has three key objectives: to establish a seamless and effective training program for distressed women, to collect and analyse data to identify factors affecting participation, and to raise awareness about the training program through various means.

The execution of this transformative initiative unfolds across three meticulously planned phases. Commencing with immersive field observations, the initial data collection involves on-site visits, consultations with mentors, and a meticulous review of past training program reports. The insights gleaned underscore the nuanced challenges faced by these women, with factors like marital status, proximity to training centres, and transportation means significantly influencing attendance. Subsequent primary data collection, facilitated through a robust questionnaire, delves into the profiles of participating women. This phase unearths the predominant reasons for non-attendance, primarily rooted in societal and familial responsibilities, supplemented by financial constraints. Crucially, feedback from women who have undergone the training program provides nuanced insights, highlighting the interplay of family responsibilities and word-of-mouth referrals in shaping participation patterns.

Upon meticulous collection and analysis of primary and secondary data, a tapestry of insights emerges, shedding light on the multifaceted challenges faced by different stakeholders. For the women involved, the training program serves as a conduit for empowerment, offering skills and income-generation avenues. However, the success of the program hinges on overcoming several hurdles. From the societal perspective, entrenched norms pose a formidable barrier, particularly regarding women's employment outside the home. Shifting mind sets and exploring work-from-home

alternatives become imperative. Childcare, compounded by the absence of male family members, surfaces as a critical concern, demanding policy shifts related to school attendance. Beyond these societal challenges, technological knowledge gaps and organizational inefficiencies echo the need for comprehensive support systems, both during and post-training. These findings crystallize the intricate landscape in which the initiative operates, signalling towards nuanced interventions for sustained impact.

4. Way Forwards

Creating awareness is paramount in ensuring the success of training programs for rural women. Employing effective mediums to reach the target audience is crucial. In rural areas, local media, such as radio broadcasts and announcements via modes of transportation like rickshaws, significantly expand awareness. Featuring stories and advertisements about the program helps people comprehend the training opportunities and the positive impact on women and their families. Word of mouth within rural communities, especially when program participants share their experiences, is a powerful means of spreading awareness. Collaboration with local organizations, such as women's groups, amplifies awareness and encourages participation.

The implementation of a child care and education division alongside the training program is critical to provide mothers with a supportive environment for their children. Creating a safe and nurturing environment with age-appropriate toys and educational materials is essential. Offering educational activities like reading, singing, and play-based learning supports children's development while mothers participate in training. Flexible scheduling, including child care services during, before, and after training sessions, enhances program accessibility.

Organizing three-day workshop camps in rural locations near railway stations is a practical strategy to ensure greater participation. These camps focus on sharing information, providing demo training, and imparting technological knowledge, including basic skills like inserting a SIM card and making calls. Conducting these workshops brings valuable training closer to the rural

population, making it easier for them to access the resources needed for personal and professional development.

Establishing a feedback system is essential for ensuring the effectiveness of the training program. This system allows women to share their thoughts on the training process, express preferences, and voice concerns or reasons for absenteeism. Feedback is invaluable for improving program content and structure. Implementing an evaluation criterion and monitoring system ensures women's skills consistently improve and the program aligns with its objectives.

Embracing technological advancements is critical for reducing paperwork and time consumption in training programs. Imparting basic knowledge of tasks like Excel data entry and formula sheet generation enhances efficiency. Leveraging technology ensures the program stays up-to-date with modern practices.

In future, the program may explore collaborating with design schools to further empower rural women. This collaboration would involve reaching out to schools, discussing potential partnership opportunities, and creating a detailed agreement outlining goals, responsibilities, and expected outcomes. Logistics related to food, lodging, and transportation for participating women must be well-planned.

Introducing a training course focused on financial literacy and small business-related skills is a potential future proposal. This course equips rural women with essential financial knowledge and entrepreneurial skills, enhancing economic independence. Assisting women in creating marketplaces or events to showcase their products highlights program effectiveness and boosts economic prospects.

5. Conclusion

This case presents the significant role of organizations like BMCDS in addressing pressing societal issues and promoting gender equality in rural India. The main highlights are threefold: Firstly, Empowerment NGOs are

pivotal in mitigating economic disparities, advocating for gender equality, enhancing women's healthcare, and combatting gender-based violence. Secondly, persisting challenges, including awareness gaps, entrenched societal norms, childcare dilemmas, and technological knowledge barriers, pose obstacles to the success of women's training programs. This case underscores the comprehensive efforts essential for empowering disadvantaged women, diminishing gender disparities, and ensuring the prosperity of rural training programs. BMCDS and kindred organizations stand at the forefront of these transformative endeavours, tirelessly striving to instigate positive change at the grassroots level.

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Exhibit: Snippets from Field Observations





Chapter VIII

**MENSTRUAL HYGIENE MANAGEMENT: A
CASE OF RURAL LIVELIHOOD GENERATION
BY AMBUJA CEMENT FOUNDATION**

Hritvik Polumahanti

MBA Student

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Alaknanda Menon

Assistant Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)

School of Business Management, Mumbai

SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies

(NMIMS) Deemed-to-be-University

Anagha Mahajani

Chief Impact Officer

Ambuja Cement Foundation

Abstract:

This study explores the challenges and initiatives related to menstrual hygiene management in rural India, where cultural norms and limited access to sanitation facilities contribute to persistent issues. Focusing on the efforts of the Ambuja Cement Foundation, the paper outlines their four-pronged strategy involving knowledge dissemination, access to menstrual products, MHM and water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities, and safe

disposal. The foundation's Sunheri Pads initiative, a micro-enterprise empowering rural women to manufacture and sell gel-based sanitary napkins, is a central theme. The study evaluates the impact, operational aspects, and challenges faced by Sunheri Pads, emphasizing the need for strategic pricing, packaging, and market expansion. The findings underscore the crucial role of ACF's comprehensive approach in addressing MHM issues, positively impacting over 200 villages and 130 schools.

1. Introduction

Menstruation is a natural physiological process, and menstrual hygiene is a basic fundamental necessity for women, yet it remains a significant challenge in many parts of India. A large part of the female population in India still faces challenges related to menstrual hygiene management. Lack of awareness, and limited access to proper sanitation facilities (Das and Das, 2019) contribute to the persistent issues surrounding menstrual hygiene management. Additionally, there is a stigma associated with menstruation itself, and other socio-cultural norms and myths (Sinha and Paul, 2018) that create further issues. Poor menstrual hygiene leads to a host of complications including urinary tract infections (UTIs), reproductive health problems, skin rashes and irritations due to prolonged use of unhygienic menstrual materials. The social isolation and stigma not only affect the girls' education and opportunities but also add to the mental health issues due to shame, embarrassment, and anxiety.

To address these challenges, the Indian government, along with various non-profit organizations, has been working to promote menstrual hygiene awareness. Initiatives such as the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan include components that focus on improving sanitation facilities, including those catering to menstrual hygiene. Charitable institutions and non-profit organizations actively work toward spreading awareness and providing access to menstrual products for marginalized communities. Ambuja Cement Foundation, along with its networks helps in addressing this very important public health issue by creating awareness through several programs and initiatives. Not only has it been helping create awareness through its sakhis (voluntary health workers) but also empowered rural women to set up micro-

enterprises to manufacture sanitary napkins and sell them to the local population.

2. About Ambuja Cement Foundation

Ambuja Foundation is an independent, pan-India development organization, committed to generating prosperous rural communities. It works on a mission to *'Energise, Involve and Enable communities to realize their potential and* believes in the vast, untapped potential of rural communities and the unstoppable power of the people that live there. It was established in 1993 to promote sustainable development by addressing environmental and social issues. The organisation believes in the immense, unrealised potential of rural areas and the irrepressible strength of their inhabitants. It helps in enabling livelihoods as a means of realising this potential via investments in water, agriculture, skills, women, health, and education (About us generating prosperity, n.d).

Together with like-minded corporations, governments, and others, ACF collaborates with communities to tackle important issues, allowing locals to be the change agents and catalysts. Throughout over three decades of labour, they have been able to effect a shift in the rural regions where they operate.

3. Ambuja Cement Foundation's menstrual hygiene management initiatives

One of the major initiatives in the health and hygiene segment is ACF's menstrual hygiene initiatives. ACF acknowledges the importance of menstrual hygiene in sustaining the health and well-being of women and girls and seeks to increase understanding and access to safe and hygienic menstrual practices. The charity undertakes awareness campaigns and seminars to educate girls, women, and communities about menstruation hygiene and associated health concerns and thereafter with its multiple collaborations has also helped in upskilling women in rural areas to set up their sanitary napkin manufacturing set up, package it and then sell it in their networks and run them as independent micro-enterprises. It provides the machines for free to those microunits, trains the women and girls in the operating procedure of the machines, and helps them set up and run the unit. The women thereafter sell

the manufactured pads called “Sunheri Pads” either wrapped in paper or transparent sheets and make a small commission as profit after selling each unit. The distribution of Sunheri pads is essentially done by the women manufacturing this by themselves or through other sakhis.

To address the menstrual hygiene issues and educate the masses about it, ACF has a four-pronged strategy, that is carried out by sakhis and other peer educators who are adolescents trained by ACF sakhis. ACF intends to provide access to knowledge, access to menstrual products, access to MHM & WASH and access to safe disposal of used absorbents.

3.1 Access to Knowledge

The Sakhis and peer educators help in creating awareness and sharing knowledge of the human body, the reproductive system, the menstrual cycle, and the changes that occur during the pubertal stage. ACF also provides them with training aids and tools like flippable cloth aprons and uterus models to demonstrate the various phases of the menstrual cycle. Because the Sakhis and peer educators come from the same community, they develop a trusting relationship with other adolescent girls in the community. This helps in communicating the messages succinctly and the confidentiality is also maintained. Additionally, meetings with medical professionals including gynaecologists are scheduled to highlight the importance of Menstrual Hygiene Management (MHM).

3.2 Access to menstrual products

Finding sanitary pads and napkins can be challenging, even for those who are sufficiently knowledgeable. It can occasionally take young girls 20 kilometres to locate sanitary pads. Because sanitary napkins are stigmatized, women find it difficult to discuss their needs with male family members. Girls resort to using cloth napkins. An ACF investigation found that the serviette is frequently made from discarded fabric, which raises the risk of UTIs. Additionally, there is a strong correlation between a family's income and the use of sanitary pads as opposed to cloth napkins. A larger household income suggests a higher usage of sanitary pads.

Although it's not the best option, young adolescent girls are taught by ACF's Sakhis and peer educators to make cloth napkins using fresh fabric and, in situations where access is limited, to use reusable sanitary napkins. Sakhis also distribute sanitary pads and raise awareness about menstruation health and cleanliness by going from house to house. Training is offered module-by-module with an emphasis on maintaining cleanliness and hygiene. To get sanitary napkins, the females can also give the sakhis a call. And now with the availability of machines with the generous support of Hafele, the women have formed self-help groups (SHG) and micro enterprises that manufacture sanitary napkins which are sold to the locals through the sakhis.

3.3 Access to MHM & WASH

Village schools frequently don't have facilities for changing or discarding sanitary napkins. This includes clean water and soap, hygienic changing areas, and restrooms designated for each gender. As a result, many girls in this age range discontinue their education. To manage menstruation hygiene, ACF and its Sakhis collaborate with schools in these isolated areas to offer a clean and sanitary infrastructure. Many of the schools where ACF operates have undergone renovations that involve the installation of water and sanitation systems as well as measures to guarantee the supply of soap and water. Additionally, ACF has established a group of champions in schools to oversee and assist with the MHM programme.

3.4 Access to Safe Disposal of Used absorbents

Sanitary napkins are frequently disposed of improperly in commodes, open pits, and sewer lines due to a lack of knowledge regarding appropriate disposal practices. To promote behaviour change, ACF works with sakhis and champions to raise knowledge of proper disposal techniques and how to wrap and discard used sanitary napkins. ACF also works with villages to install disposal machines, which enable the safe and hygienic disposal of sanitary napkins. Additionally, schools are equipped with incinerators or collection bags made specifically for this.

With its unwavering commitment to improving the health and hygiene of the rural masses, working comprehensively across all its four pillars, ACF has

provided menstrual health management services to over 200 villages and over 130 schools in 18 different locales.

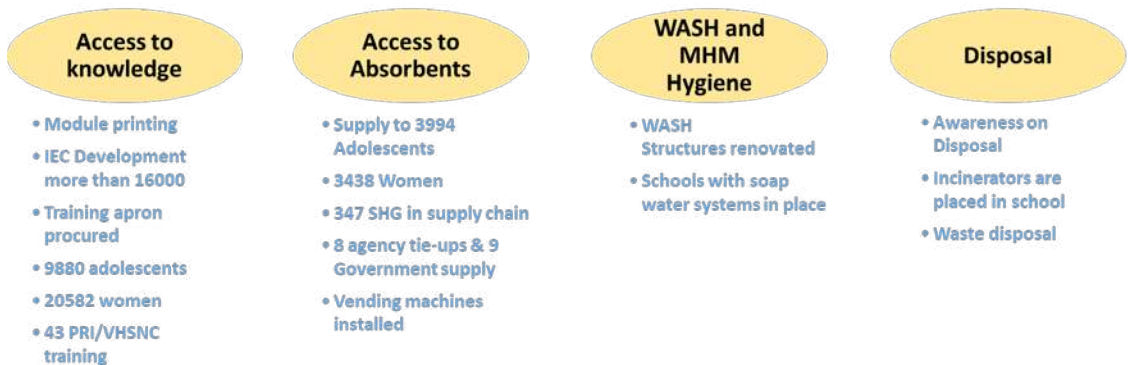


Figure 1: Impact of ACF's Menstrual Hygiene Management

Source:<https://www.ambujacementfoundation.org/blog/menstrual-hygiene-management-for-adolescent-girls>

4. The Sunheri Pads Initiative

Sanitary napkins are an important albeit 'taboo' topic in quite a few rural populace in India. Young girls and women have also resorted to using makeshift pads using husk, sand, ash and other materials which are not only unsanitary but also dangerous. Though the proportion of rural women (15-24 years) using locally prepared napkins, sanitary napkins, menstrual cups and tampons has increased from 48.2% in 2015-16 to 72.3% in 2019-21, it is still a long way to go. ACF as a part of its strategy to provide access to safe sanitary products started this initiative of skilling rural women in manufacturing their own pads.

Along with local non-governmental organizations, it aids women SHGs to run micro-enterprises that can manufacture sanitary napkins and sell them to the nearby locals. ACF in partnership with Hafele has provided these women with the machines. ACF in partnership with the NGOs help these women source the raw material and train the women in manufacturing the napkins or pads. The final product is a gel-based sanitary napkin called "Sunheri Pads". This product essentially also fills up the gap in the market of providing affordable gel-based pads which are a boon to the women who have long

working hours in the field and need biodegradable and environment-friendly pads. ACF has facilitated 7 such centres across the country to start with.

While there is an army of women who tirelessly work in shifts according to their convenience to manufacture these, there is yet another segment that is being trained as marketing agents. They act as the supply chain links who not only sell the napkins but also create awareness about MHMs. The marketing agents earn 2 rupees per sale. They conduct group meetings and have WhatsApp groups for women and adolescents to create awareness and that in turn helps them generate sales as well. However, only a tiny portion of the overall sales came from the sales generated by the team members. The Ambuja Cement Foundation's well-established network of sakhis accounted for the majority of sales.

Users of Sunehri pads provided mostly positive feedback, indicating that the product is comparable in terms of comfort and quality to other similar products, if not better. In response to user suggestions, the pads were repackaged from khaki pouches to transparent pouches to increase trust among customers. Sunehri pads are currently only available through the Sakhis network and not available at other Kirana stores or wholesalers. To expand the market reach, it is necessary to use a traditional distribution approach via wholesalers, as the sakhis network is insufficient to reach all villages surrounding the manufacturing setups. Vendors are willing to shelf Sunehri pads, but only if the packaging is comparable to other products in the market. Therefore, developing an appropriate packaging design is essential to compete with other brands in the market. In one of the studies initiated for a particular village Chandrapur, they found that there are currently six other brands of sanitary pads available in the market, including Proease, Snowy, Whisper, Stayfree, Nine, and Kotex.

Survey data suggests that Proease has the largest market share due to its highly competitive pricing and intense marketing efforts at the time of introduction to the market. Proease is available to end-users at one of the lowest prices in the market i.e. ₹34, which includes 6 pads. However, wholesalers purchase Proease at a discounted price of ₹24 and sell it to

retailers for ₹25, making a profit of ₹1 per pack. Retailers then sell Proease to end-users at a price that is feasible for them, which can go up to ₹34. Proease pads are presented in an eye-catching package, while Sunehri's pads are sold in unbranded, transparent pouches. Sunehri pads are gel-based pads, unlike Proease which are cotton-based, which can give Sunehri an edge over Proease. But to gain a foothold in the market, there needs to be a focus on pricing and packaging.

Proease also prioritized point-to-point marketing by setting up physical stalls to promote their products. They also tied up with some of the major shops to distribute free samples of their products. Another key aspect that works in their favour is their volumes. Since Proease can provide large volumes consistently, shopkeepers are comfortable doing business with them.

While there were multiple challenges on the sell side, the challenges on the procurement side were not less. The raw materials cost is varying at different locations, resulting in different manufacturing costs. In Gujarat, the manufacturing cost is ₹38 and the selling price is ₹45. Whereas, in Maharashtra, the manufacturing cost is around ₹23 and the selling price is ₹35. Dominant market players in both these locations sell their products at a price of ₹35. However since the Gujarat plant's manufacturing cost is higher than the selling price of its competitor, it becomes difficult to penetrate the market. In such cases, centralization of the purchase of raw materials is needed. If the raw material is purchased in bulk quantity in Maharashtra at a lower price with additional discount, and supplied to Gujarat the overall cost for both locations might come down significantly.

5. Conclusion

Though Sunehri pads is a great initiative and generates livelihood for so many rural women, there are so many decisions that need to be taken to make it a sustainable venture. Should they relook and create different packaging? If yes is it something that will be location-specific or a uniform design to be followed all across the different units in different locations? Can ACF scale this to a major project and not just a pilot in seven locations? Should they centralize the procurement and who would manage it then? Can the SHGs start working

together despite being in different geographies? Some of the women aspire to make this make it into a business like any other commercial sanitary napkin. Can they sail the licencing and other regulatory environments of their own?

The ACF's menstrual hygiene initiatives, particularly the Sunheri Pads project, represent a significant stride toward addressing the multifaceted challenges of menstrual hygiene in rural India. While the initiative has shown promising results, challenges related to procurement costs, pricing strategies, and market penetration require strategic consideration. The study advocates for a nuanced approach, including uniform packaging designs, centralizing raw material procurement, and navigating regulatory landscapes. Scaling the project beyond the current seven locations could provide sustainable livelihoods for more women. ACF's collaboration with NGOs, support from Hafele, and the involvement of local communities demonstrate a holistic model for MHM initiatives. This research contributes valuable insights for organizations, policymakers, and stakeholders working towards enhancing menstrual hygiene awareness and management in similar contexts. This research also highlights the challenges faced by a for-profit micro-enterprise for social purposes.

Note: This Chapter is based on the experiential learning gathered by Mr. Hritoik Polumahanti who was placed at Ambuja Cement Foundation for his We Care: Civic Engagement Internship in February 2023.

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Chapter IX

**ADAPT'S MODEL OF SKILL DEVELOPMENT
FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

Simi Vij

Development Consultant and Visiting Faculty
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) Deemed-
to-University

Varsha Hooja

Trustee and Senior Director, Inclusive Education
ADAPT

Satish M.K, Ph.D.

Associate Professor (Business Environment and Strategy)
School of Business Management, Mumbai
SVKM's Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS) Deemed-
to-University

Abstract

India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) in 2007. Article 27 of UNCRPD (United Nations, 2020) recognizes the right of persons with disability to work. While the rights of persons with disability are recognized, skilling them and engaging them in productive work is a challenging task both for the skill provider and the employer. In India, NGOs have played an important role in skilling the disabled. The National Job Development Centre, now called The Skills Development Centre, set up by Padmashree Dr. Mithu Alur in 1989 for

skilling the disabled, provides specific skill training based on the trainee's capabilities. The initiative has scaled up to various geographies. Despite success stories, crucial challenges related to non-homogeneity, inadequate quality, and low employability rates exist and need immediate attention.

Keywords: Skill Development, Non-Government Organization, Sustainability

1. Introduction

Skilling persons with disabilities is an important step towards creating a more inclusive society. According to the International Labour Organization (ILO) (Shenoy, 2011), persons with disabilities often face disproportionate poverty and unemployment, and by providing them with the necessary skills and removing barriers, we can help them achieve sustainable independence and become contributing members of society. In fact, persons with disabilities are an untapped resource of skill and talent and represent an overlooked multibillion-dollar market segment. The ILO has recommended that persons with disabilities be included as one of the target groups in the Skilling Mission (Shenoy, 2011).

India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disability (UNCRPD) in 2007. Article 27 of UNCRPD (United Nations, 2020) "recognizes the right of persons with disability to work, on an equal basis with others; this includes the opportunity to gain a living by work freely chosen or accepted in the labour market and work environment that is open, inclusive and accessible to persons with disability". The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG) Goal 8 commands decent work and economic growth for every individual and has set guidelines and targets for countries to achieve by 2030.

According to the Census 2011 (Office of the Chief Commissioner for Persons with Disabilities 2021), about 13.4 million persons with disabilities are in the employable age of 15 to 59 years. About 9.9 million persons with disabilities are in the employable age group or are marginal workers. About 74 per cent of persons with disabilities in the employable age are not meaningfully employed. There is an urgent need to address this by scaling up the skill

training for the disabled and integrating them productively in the labour market.

Skill development is a priority, and India aspires to harness the skill sets of the youth towards nation-building. In this direction, the Government of India has launched the ambitious “National Skill Development Mission” in 2015 to create a pool of trained and skilled workforce, sufficient to meet domestic requirements of a growing economy. Skill development schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) (Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship, 2023), Pradhan Mantri YUVA (PM YUVA) Yojana, (Press Information Bureau, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 2022), Skill Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) (Ministry of Skill Development And Entrepreneurship, 2023) and Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) (Ministry of Skills Development & Entrepreneurship, 2018) are being implemented. While provisions for skilling the disabled youth exist in the schemes, they fall short. Young people with disabilities still struggle to access decent work despite India having ratified the UNCRPD. Access to quality education, vocational training, and employment are denied to millions of young persons with disability.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have an important role to play in skilling the disabled. While most NGOs focus on rehabilitation and advocacy, there are few which focus on training.¹ Persons with disabilities have remarked that the training provided in most NGOs does not match the needs of the industry.

2. About Able Disabled All People Together (ADAPT)

The Spastics Society of India (SSI), now called ADAPT, set up by Dr. Mithu Alur, addressed this issue in 1989. Having begun to educate young people with severe disabilities, ADAPT expanded into post-educational training. A small programme was set up to demonstrate what disabled youth could do after school.

In a small building adjacent to ADAPT's first centre in Colaba, it set up a work

centre that would provide skills training for young adolescents and adults to deal with a variety of activities suited to their skills and aptitude. The skills introduced were carpentry, printing, office file-making, tailoring, textile printing, ceramic work, screen printing, catering, and horticulture sections. They were paid a small stipend from the Ministry of Social Welfare. This proved to be a small ray of hope for parents of severely disabled young people who may never get employment (SSI Annual Report, 1981–82).

2.1 Skills Development Centre

In 1989, the municipal authorities granted land to ADAPT to set up the National Job Development Centre, now called the Skills Development Centre. Developed on ILO principles in collaboration with the Spastics Society, UK and the European Union, and USAID, it was geared to give complete training facilities to each individual, according to their ability. This became the vocational branch of the organisation and was recognized by the Disability Welfare Commissioner's office in the Social Justice Department (Government of Maharashtra). The SDC aims to empower youth with disabilities by equipping them with job skills and social competencies, thereby facilitating their entry into the workforce.

The focus is on creating awareness on disability as a social and societal problem rather than a medical and individual problem. This orthodoxy has made it imperative to change attitudes everywhere – including those of persons with disabilities themselves. The social model says that it is the environment needs to be fixed and that persons with disability are handicapped more by the environment and faulty attitudes and mindsets within society. This requires concerted efforts at the workplace of the disabled. Therefore the objectives of the Skill Development Centre include:

- To formalize assessment strategies for employment.
- To develop context-specific models of vocational training and conduct an in-depth analysis of the person's profile, of his or her strengths and weaknesses, that can be adapted at the urban, slum, and national levels
- To research various aspects that affect the employment process of persons with disabilities.

The fundamental goal of SDC is to provide appropriate training facilities, vocational guidance and counselling, and selective employment. Training and placement are carried out according to need-based analyses suited to each client. Post-placement follow-ups are done to work towards inclusive employment, making employment of clients with special needs sustainable. Parents, being the main stakeholders, are included in the whole process (Alur, 2017).

2.2. Initiatives: Transforming Education/Skill Development at Grassroots

The process involved selective training for selective placement, where the trainees were accessed, trained, and then placed in corporates for work experience. The focus was on Individualised Training Programmes and Individualised Development Programmes using the transdisciplinary model. The model is in convergence with an individual's ability, not disability.

2.3. Mobility Aids and the Wheelchair Division

A Mobility Aids and Wheelchair Department was also set up, and the first wheelchair was made as a result of the Indo-Swedish collaboration. The research was led by Sathi Alur, who called the first wheelchair rolled out 'Triumph'. The division assembled appropriate wheelchairs and other mobility aids suitable for local conditions. The original design was obtained from Sweden under a grant from Lutherhjälpen, together with the necessary equipment and technical support.

3. Social Impact Of The Initiatives

The Skills Development Centre broke stereotypes and non-conventional and non-stereotyped vocational skills and activities were initiated.

- a) **Computer Training Service:** Seen from this perspective, a Computer Training Service was launched in 1990, the first of its kind in Asia, offering a unique training opportunity for bright disabled students. The Courses offered were data entry, secretarial skills, graphics and web designing, programming, computerized accounts, desktop publishing, and front office reception. Technical training in the tailoring, printing, and food processing trades also formed part of the skills curriculum

offered to students with an aptitude for these courses.

- b) **Inclusive Job Fairs:** Job Fairs for persons with disabilities were organised, based on the Social Model of Disability, in collaboration with ADAPT Rights Group (ARG) of the Spastics Society, which was founded by Ms Malini Chib. Preparatory sessions on interview skills for the participants were held for the candidates before the Job Fair. They were also given booklets containing tips for interviews and retaining their jobs.

A positive spin-off of the Job Fair was the interest shown by other leading corporates like Deutsche Bank, Zen Financial Co., Growmore Estate Consultants, Sanat Trading, Trans Ocean Inc, Arya Honda Shaman Cars (I) Pvt. Ltd. Most of them were keen to recruit receptionists, office assistants, telemarketing executives and customer relationship executives.

- c) **Code of Policy and Practice:** An important guide for employers was created by Dr Alur, entitled 'Code of Policy and Practice for People with Disabilities' (COPP), for the corporate sector on the experience of countries around the world in the management of disability at the workplace (Alur, 2017).
- d) **Reference Kit:** Vandana Garware compiled a reference kit on employment to empower disabled individuals and help employers get practical information on employment. The reference kit provided the critical guidance needed to recruit people with disability.

4. SDC: Key Outcomes

The Skills Development Centre has many achievements to its name. A few of them are given below:

- a) **Diverse Employment Models:** The SDC has developed over 400 distinct employment models tailored to the unique abilities and aspirations of individuals with disabilities. These models span various sectors, emphasizing inclusivity and breaking away from traditional stereotypes.

- b) **Shifting Employment Opportunities:** Historically, disabled adults were often relegated to 'C' and 'D' category jobs, such as basket weaving and telephone operating. However, the SDC's most significant contribution has been elevating employment opportunities to 'A' and 'B' category jobs. These jobs require higher levels of functioning in computer skills, accounts, library sciences, DTP publishing, etc. Today, people work in private and public sectors as programmers, account executives, administrative executives, web designers, computer applications trainers, senior secretarial assistants, and graphic designers.

- c) **Entrepreneurship and Academia:** Some SDC graduates have ventured into entrepreneurship, establishing successful businesses. Others have pursued advanced academic degrees, including Master's and Ph.D. programmes.

- d) **Private and Public Sector Partnerships:** Individuals with disabilities are pursuing careers in the private and public sectors in fields like accounting, journalism, finance, computing, and librarianship. Some of the companies that have employed disabled people have been Tata Motors, Reliance Infocom, Department of Census Operations, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Bank of India, Patni Computers Limited, Web Access India Pvt. Ltd., Saturn Ship Agencies and KPMG and others. SDC has worked closely with the Confederation of Indian Industries (CII). In the last fifteen years, people with disabilities have been placed in 300 different areas of employment (Alur, 2017). Trainees have been placed in malls and departmental stores, and some work with their families. Modules for empowerment and training have been created for Corporates, parents, trainees, and trainers. These have been piloted successfully and are being offered to all stakeholders to smoothen the transition.

- e) **Collaborations:** SDC has collaborated with mainstream training institutions to provide specialized skills for its young trainees, especially in computer training.

9. ADAPT, SDC: Success Stories

ADAPT is proud of its students, who have overcome many challenges and achieved financial independence, having done their training at SDC.

a) Shamshudin Sheikh

Shamshudin, who has a speech impairment, joined ADAPT in the vocational training unit at the age of twenty-four. He had migrated from his village where his family stayed and was now living with his father who worked as a house help in Mumbai. Shamshudin had no formal schooling; however, his comprehension skills and work ethic were reasonably good. He could communicate well with gestures. Initially, to understand his aptitude, he was given training in various vocational skills. Following this, he was sent to The TAJ for a formal three-month training programme in hospitality. On completing the training programme, Shamshudin was given a certificate based on which ADAPT staff helped place him for 'on the job' training at the 'Out of the Blue' restaurant at Union Park, Bandra, Mumbai. Shamshudin has been absorbed by the restaurant 'Out of the Blue' and is working as an attendant. His seniors are very happy with his performance.

b) Narendra Daigle

Narendra was born on 7 November 1983 and was diagnosed as a slow learner. He joined ADAPT in June 1992 in the prevocational section. His father was a watchman in St. Joseph's Convent High School. After training at ADAPT, Narendra was placed at U.B. Xpress West Pvt. Ltd, who later employed him. To begin with, the employees started by giving him single tasks and small jobs of sorting papers and filing them. Initially, he was confused and sometimes would mix up the documents to be filed. He was a very shy person, and his speech was not clear, thus making conversations with him difficult.

Over the years, Narendra has been able to understand and work much better and is also able to take up instructions and multi-tasking in a much better manner. He has learned to travel independently and, since he is financially stable, has married.

Mr Sachin Dalvi of U.B. Xpress West Pvt. Ltd. writes...

"We are happy that on today's date, Narendra has been able to manage the tasks given at the office very well and confidently. I thank all my colleagues for the unconditional support shown towards Narendra to build his positive attitude. I wish him the best always and thank ADAPT for giving us this opportunity."

c) Vijay Bisht

Vijay, sharing his story, says, "It might be due to the horse riding accident I had a day before, as I could feel a peculiar pain while bending my spine. It started with a tingling sensation from my toes; the feeling kept creeping up until it reached my waist, and I was paralyzed within an hour. Not even in my dreams did I expect this kind of situation in my life. I was a thirteen-year-old, healthy, strong, and sporty kid. I used to study in a boarding school (T N Academy, Sikkim) and had gone home on my winter vacations".

"I came to Mumbai after I graduated from Lucknow. On reaching Mumbai, I did a basic computer course from National Job Development Centre (Spastics Society). I managed to get a job with Tata Finance Ltd. and joined as a junior assistant. I completed ten years with the company and recently received the long service award. It has been a great learning experience as I have handled responsibilities in operations, marketing, IT training, and MIS. Tata's are very professional, concerned, and caring employers; I have been well taken care of, by my organization. I currently work for the IT Department as a Sr. Executive".

"Accessibility and commuting are the two factors responsible for shaping the lives and careers of most wheelchair users in cities. I am an active member of ADAPT (Able Disabled All People Together). This group comprises of like-minded young people, who aim to make Mumbai an accessible and also an inclusive city and carry out the daily business of life where no special institutions are required for persons with disabilities, and they are included into the mainstream".

"My first six months at work were terrible, as I had to use the public transport. In my desperation, I bought myself a second-hand Auto Rickshaw and modified it to enable me to drive it. Now I also own a Car (Maruti Zen Automatic), which comes in handy for my leisure-time pursuits too... like for, e.g. going out for

long drives on weekends. I was always very apprehensive about marriage in my condition. But now, since I am married and recently became a father, it can be said that a person with paralysis can lead a happy married life. I feel I have been fortunate to have a person like Asha for my wife, who has blended perfectly in my life despite all the limitations that face me”.

d) Ruma Kirtikar

Dr. Mithu Alur shares, “Ruma wanted to go to school like her elder sister, but no school would admit her because of her disability. She was taught at home up to Grade III, and a chance meeting with me at the Children’s Orthopaedic Hospital led her to join the Centre for Special Education, where she received education and therapy under one roof. She passed her SSC with flying colours and graduated college, breaking earlier barriers of travelling by public transport. Ruma completed a course in Library Science and returned to ADAPT to be an Assistant Librarian for many years before retiring a few years ago. She now lives independently”. (Alur, 2017)

10. Challenges

In addressing the institutional void surrounding skills development for persons with disabilities, it is crucial to recognize the existing gaps and challenges. Despite the absence of a national employment policy within the Ministry of Labour, various training institutions and mechanisms attempt to bridge this gap. However, these efforts often suffer from non-homogeneity, inadequate quality, and low employability rates.

- a) There are several barriers for people with disabilities to enter the labour market. These include a lack of education and training, poor financial resources, absence of daily living skills, and low self-esteem and confidence. Some persons with disability have low self-expectations. Persons with disability may not have access to situations of regular social interaction.
- b) Negative attitudes stemming from ignorance, misunderstanding, and stereotyping toward employees with disabilities can result in discrimination. Lack of access to skills and technology and low level of

involvement of the private sector in the skill training of PwDs.

- c) The training offered through various institutions/mechanisms lacks quality and is low on employability. Very low access to the present training infrastructure in the rural areas.
- d) One of the major gaps in the field of Employment for disabled people is that disability has not been positioned within the CSR policy framework.
- e) Many parents are very protective of their disabled children and pose a barrier to employment. They are fearful of letting their wards travel alone.

Research conducted by The Skills Development Centre has narrowed down the main barriers and blocks to employing persons with disability to the following stakeholders: trainees or clients, parents, trainers, community, corporates, and government.

11. Conclusion

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become integral to good business practice. CSR is considered an effective tool that synergizes the efforts of Corporate and social sector agencies towards sustainable growth and development of societal objectives at large. Inclusive employment will only be successful if some preparation is done. Some adjustments are necessary to enable them to contribute to productivity, staff morale, and team spirit in the workplace as a whole. Often, disabled people are taken in but made to sit and not given any jobs. On-the-job Training is vital. The candidates need to be trained and shaped to the job requirements. Selective training and selective placement, leading to inclusive employment, will provide support to the company and disabled persons.

To foster an inclusive culture throughout the organization, companies must invest in awareness-building through recruitment efforts, disability education programmes, and grassroots-led efforts and events. Sensitisation of people with disabilities should be encouraged amongst all workers. Disability

Etiquette Training for all stakeholders and the disabled themselves should be conducted across organizations to help include the disabled in the mainstream workplace. A Disability Coordinator is needed along with a continuum of support after placing the disabled person into the Job. The use of external support agencies can be invaluable.

Companies must offer mentoring and coaching initiatives, as well as skilling/reskilling programmes, to ensure that persons with disabilities continue to grow and succeed. Persons with disabilities should occupy roles at all levels, including top leadership positions.

It is also essential to make the workspaces accessible workspaces to remove physical barriers. All common areas, such as the foyer, reception, canteen, and library, should be accessible. Universal design does not only mean ramps and toilets but also access to training.

Transportation becomes a key need in providing and sustaining employment. The difficulty of travelling on buses, ramps not working, drivers refusing to use them, buses not close enough to the kerb, wheelchair spaces taken up by other people, buses pulling away before people were in place, and experiencing problems with other passengers are all deterrents. Companies could address transport issues through an Access Fund.

Companies and NGOs, by breaking down the barriers, promoting awareness and diverse hiring practices, and providing support and empowerment at all levels, can have a meaningful impact on transforming disability employment prospects.

This is the need of the hour to ensure that persons with disabilities are included in mainstream society and become tax-paying contributing citizens of India. The SDC's commitment to economic empowerment exemplifies how targeted skills development can transform lives, promote inclusivity, and contribute to nation-building. By bridging gaps and fostering a supportive environment, ADAPT has worked for a more equitable and prosperous society. ADAPT's model can be a significant step towards empowering

disabled individuals with vocational training and, ultimately employment.

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