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# CSR TIMES

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INDIA'S NO. 1 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MAGAZINE

**Navigating CSR  
Partnerships: What  
Indian Companies Must  
Know Before Collaborating  
with NGOs**

**The Future of NGOs in  
India: Poised at a delicate  
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NGOs:  
**BRIDGING  
GAPS  
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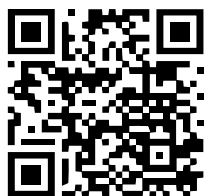
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PRASHANT DAS  
EDITOR

**In India, NGOs like the Pratham Education Foundation are rewriting the literacy story for millions of children, while others like the Youngistaan Foundation are mobilizing youth to address hunger and inequality head-on. Women's empowerment has found a powerful ally in programs like Nand Ghar, where nutrition, healthcare, and skill training come together to rewrite futures.**

# NGOs – The Unsung Architects of Sustainable Change

**A**s the clock ticks toward 2030, the urgency to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) is sharper than ever. While governments and corporates shoulder much of the responsibility, it is the NGOs—often quietly and steadfastly working on the ground—who are emerging as the real changemakers.

Across continents, NGOs are delivering hope, dignity, and empowerment to those left behind by the mainstream development narrative. From remote villages in India to urban slums in Africa and rural communities in Latin America, these organizations are bridging last-mile gaps, innovating solutions, and putting people before profits.

In India, NGOs like the Pratham Education Foundation are rewriting the literacy story for millions of children, while others like the Youngistaan Foundation are mobilizing youth to address hunger and inequality head-on. Women's empowerment has found a powerful ally in programs like Nand Ghar, where nutrition, healthcare, and skill training come together to rewrite futures.

Globally, grassroots movements for climate justice, gender equality, and inclusive growth are gaining momentum, often led or nurtured by NGOs. These organizations are not only addressing symptoms but tackling root causes—with a resilience that matches the scale of the problems they confront.

What makes NGOs exceptional is their deep connection with communities. They listen before they lead. They adapt, evolve, and deliver impact where bureaucracy falters. Their work may not always make headlines, but their results speak volumes—creating ripples that turn into waves of sustainable change.

As we reflect on their contributions, one truth becomes clear: the road to achieving the SDGs will be incomplete without recognizing the pivotal role of NGOs. They don't just support development—they *shape* it.

Let's applaud their courage, support their vision, and strengthen our collective resolve to build a more just, inclusive, and sustainable world.



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## PERSPECTIVE



At *CSR Times* we have been privileged to receive articles and write about a diverse range of NGOs across the country. Their work—quiet, persistent, and often under-recognized—forms the connective tissue between state-led development and community well-being.

The role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) is evolving rapidly as India continues its journey toward inclusive development. There is no denying the fact that NGOs have since long bridged the gap between grassroots communities and top-down policy initiatives, but we need to envision a more participative and engaged future for them. We must call for a more data driven, integrated and collaborative approach in the area of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR.)

The corporates have moved from a simple funding mandate necessitated by the 2013 amendment to the Companies Act to a more interactive approach. They seek measurable impact, transparency and alignment with the SDGs that encompass National and global goals. NGOs too, need to step up and integrate technology, strategy and measurability on their projects. Engaging in meaningful partnerships, be it with other NGOs, multi-stakeholder ecosystems that involve academia, government and the private sector is also a collaborative shift that can be worked on. Capacity building for sustained funding, investment in leadership, data literacy and compliance will ensure long-term relevance. Rethinking of financial strategies especially in the wake of the FCRA norms amendment is also imperative.

From my *Perspective* the future seems bright with India offering NGOs an integral and vital role to play in keeping abreast of the complex socio-economic changes that are unfurling, be it climate change, rural education or beyond. A shift in mindset from charity to strategy, from output to outcomes and from isolated action to systemic changes is the need of the hour. This can be easily accomplished with NGOs becoming more agile, transparent and collaborative to ensure a sustainable impact. The future of NGOs in India does not rest on policies or funding alone, it needs to be reshaped by authentic, respectful and mission aligned tripartite collaboration between the corporate sector, civil society and the government. A functional and effective NGO must rest on the pillars of strength and sustainability, contributing as a vital partner in nation-building reckoned as a key collaborative and impactful force in shaping a stronger, more inclusive India.

*Dr Shabnam Asthana*  
Associate Editor

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A photograph of three young boys in school uniforms, looking intently at a newspaper spread out on a table. The boy on the left is pointing at a section of the paper. The boy in the middle is looking down at the paper. The boy on the right is also looking at the paper. The background is a plain, light-colored wall.

# NGOs: **BRIDGING GAPS BEYOND PROFITS**

CSR TIMES Bureau





## NGOs - The Quiet Force Behind India's CSR Revolution

In the past decade, India has witnessed a transformative shift in how businesses approach their responsibility toward society. This shift was catalyzed by the Companies Act, 2013, which mandated certain companies to allocate 2% of their net profits towards Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). However, executing impactful, ground-level projects across diverse geographies is no small feat for businesses, especially those without a grassroots presence. That's where India's vast and vibrant network of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) steps in—serving as the operational backbone of CSR in India.

NGOs are not just beneficiaries of CSR funds. They are strategic partners, co-creators of social value, and critical actors in implementing large-scale interventions. With expertise, outreach, and a deep understanding of local needs, NGOs today are bridging the critical gaps that lie between corporate intent and social impact.

### The Value NGOs Bring to CSR Execution

Many companies lack the internal bandwidth to independently plan and execute CSR activities across multiple sectors and regions. According to a CRISIL Foundation report, nearly 65% of Indian companies have a CSR team of fewer than five people. This makes it challenging to manage, monitor, and evaluate diverse CSR projects effectively.

NGOs help fill these structural gaps. Their key contributions include:

- **Localized Knowledge:** NGOs often operate within specific



regions or communities and have in-depth understanding of local issues, cultures, and needs.

- **Community Trust:** They have earned credibility among beneficiaries, making them effective in mobilizing people and delivering services.
- **Program Management:** NGOs are equipped with trained staff, proven methodologies, and experience in handling education, health, livelihoods, and other development programs.
- **Impact Reporting:** Many NGOs offer tools and metrics to monitor progress and demonstrate outcomes, aligning with CSR reporting requirements.

However, NGOs also face challenges. The 5% cap on administrative expenses, as specified in CSR rules, limits their ability to scale up operations or invest in organizational development. Despite these limitations, several NGOs have emerged as role models in delivering high-quality, measurable impact.

## Case Studies: NGOs Enabling High-Impact CSR

### 1. Akshaya Patra Foundation – Tackling Classroom Hunger

One of India's most well-known NGO stories is that of the Akshaya Patra Foundation. It collaborates with state governments and corporate partners to serve hot, nutritious





mid-day meals to school children. As of 2024, it was feeding over 2.1 million children across more than 19,000 government schools in 16 states and 2 Union Territories. The initiative aims to reduce school dropout rates, improve nutrition, and promote education.

Akshaya Patra works closely with companies like Infosys, Oracle, and Cisco, leveraging CSR funds to maintain state-of-the-art kitchens, food safety, and logistics systems.

## 2. Deepalaya – Unlocking Potential Through Education

Deepalaya, an NGO operating since 1979, focuses on education, vocational training, and women's empowerment. The organization has reached more than 270,000 children and provided livelihood support to thousands of adults through its centers in Delhi and neighboring states.

Corporate CSR partnerships with firms like Nikon India and Oriflame have helped Deepalaya scale its programs. Whether it is running formal schools or providing remedial education in slum clusters, Deepalaya is helping corporates make measurable educational interventions.

## 3. Goonj – Converting Urban Waste to Rural Resource

Goonj, founded by Magsaysay

Award-winner Anshu Gupta, redefines urban-rural linkages. It collects urban surplus material and distributes it in underserved rural areas as part of its community development initiatives. One of its signature programs, "Not Just a Piece of Cloth," addresses menstrual hygiene by creating cloth

**NGOs are not just beneficiaries of CSR funds. They are strategic partners, co-creators of social value, and critical actors in implementing large-scale interventions. With expertise, outreach, and a deep understanding of local needs.**

sanitary pads from recycled fabric.

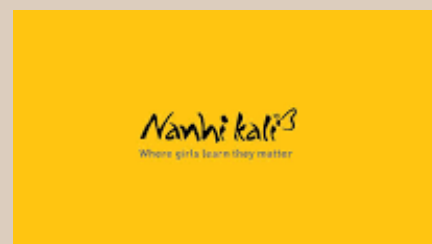
Goonj has partnered with companies like Raymond and Johnson & Johnson to scale its operations.



The organization's strength lies in its unique approach to dignity-based development and resource optimization.

## 4. Project Nanhi Kali – Empowering the Girl Child

An initiative of the Mahindra Group, Project Nanhi Kali supports the education of underprivileged girls across India. The program offers academic assistance and material support like uniforms and stationery to thousands of girls. As of recent data,



Mahindra employees sponsor over 22,000 girls annually through the program, with implementation supported by the Naandi Foundation and KC Mahindra Education Trust.

Project Nanhi Kali is a model for direct corporate-NGO collaboration that delivers results in education, gender equality, and empowerment.

## 5. Nand Ghar – Redefining Rural Anganwadis

Nand Ghar is an initiative by the Anil Agarwal Foundation (Vedanta Group), aimed at transforming traditional Anganwadi centers into modern community hubs. These upgraded centers offer early childhood education,

skill development for women, healthcare services, and nutrition support. Nand Ghar works in partnership with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and is operational in 11 states with over 3,000 centers.

The initiative integrates CSR objectives with government schemes like ICDS (Integrated Child Development Services), creating a sustainable, scalable rural development model.

## Emerging Trends in NGO-Corporate Engagement

### 1. Outsourcing CSR Strategy and Execution

The increasing complexity of social issues and compliance requirements has led more corporates to outsource CSR execution. According to CRISIL, there's a notable rise in companies turning to professional NGOs for project design, execution, and monitoring. This also ensures better alignment with national development goals and SDG targets.

### 2. Tech-Enabled Monitoring and Evaluation

Digital tools are now central to NGO operations. Several NGOs have adopted mobile-based data collection, real-time dashboards, and AI-driven impact assessment models. These technologies help corporates track fund utilization and outcomes more transparently.

### 3. Cross-Sector Collaborations

NGOs are working beyond the



corporate sector by also engaging with academia, government agencies, and international bodies. This allows them to bring multifaceted approaches to complex social problems and enhance scalability.

### 4. Diversification of Funding Sources

Due to CSR fund volatility, especially post-COVID-19, many NGOs are diversifying their income streams. This includes crowdfunding, foundation grants, and social entrepreneurship ventures that reduce their reliance on corporate donations alone.

## Challenges Facing NGOs in the CSR Ecosystem

Despite their increasing importance, NGOs face several operational and structural challenges:

**Stringent Compliance Requirements:** Filing annual CSR impact reports, audits, and FCRA compliance can be burdensome for smaller NGOs.

**Funding Insecurity:** Short-term project-based CSR funds may not ensure organizational sustainability.

**Capacity Constraints:** Many NGOs struggle to invest in talent and technology due to adminis-

trative expense limits.

To overcome these challenges, NGOs are focusing on capacity building, governance reforms, and digital transformation.

## The Road Ahead: Stronger Together

India's development journey is a shared mission involving government, businesses, and civil society. NGOs are the vital link in this chain—translating corporate funds into community transformation. As India strives to meet its Sustainable Development Goals by 2030, the collaboration between corporates and NGOs must become more strategic, inclusive, and data-driven.

Future CSR initiatives will likely prioritize long-term partnerships over transactional grants, focus on co-creating interventions, and invest in institutional strengthening of NGOs. For this to happen, trust, transparency, and accountability must be mutual.

## Beyond Compliance, Toward Co-Creation

The story of CSR in India is incomplete without acknowledging the silent efforts of thousands of NGOs that work relentlessly at the grassroots. They are the architects of change, operating “beyond profits” and often beyond recognition. As businesses evolve from compliance-driven giving to purpose-led partnerships, NGOs will continue to play a pivotal role in shaping a more equitable and sustainable India.

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## Navigating CSR Partnerships: What Indian Companies Must Know Before Collaborating with NGOs

PRADEEP KUMAR PANDEY

**T**he introduction of Section 135 in the Indian Companies Act, 2013, made India the first country in the world to legally mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Since then, thousands of companies have entered the social impact space with an obligation to spend 2% of their average net profits on CSR activities. However, while the intention is clear, the execution is far more complex. Many corporates, especially those without in-house CSR teams, depend heavily on non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for implementing their projects.

But choosing the right NGO part-

ner is not just a matter of identifying a cause or writing a cheque. It involves due diligence, mutual understanding, legal compliance, and strategic alignment. Done right, NGO partnerships can create deep, sustainable impact. Done hastily, they can result in reputational and regulatory risks.

Here's what companies in India must know before engaging with NGOs for CSR execution.

### Understand the Legal Framework and Compliance Obligations

First and foremost, corporates must be familiar with the regulatory frame-

work governing CSR and NGO partnerships. The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) mandates that companies can only collaborate with NGOs that are:

- Registered as a Trust, Society, or Section 8 company.
- Registered with the MCA CSR-1 form approval.
- Having at least three years of track record in executing similar projects (for implementing agencies not directly set up by the company).

Additionally, CSR rules cap administrative expenses at 5% of the

total CSR spend, and companies must ensure that funds are not diverted toward overheads or salaries unrelated to the project.

**Challenge:** Many NGOs—especially smaller, grassroots ones—may not have the required registrations or accounting capacity, making them ineligible partners under current norms.

**Tip:** Maintain a checklist of legal prerequisites and verify the NGO's 80G, 12A, FCRA status (if foreign funds are involved), and past audit reports before onboarding.

## Alignment of Vision and Values

A CSR program's success depends not just on funding, but also on alignment—of vision, values, and strategy. Companies should look for NGOs that share their mission for social impact and have deep expertise in the chosen thematic area—be it health, education, sanitation, women's empowerment, or environment.

**Challenge:** Misalignment of objectives may lead to superficial or tokenistic CSR efforts, damaging both brand reputation and community trust.

**Opportunity:** A value-aligned

NGO can serve as a long-term strategic partner, not just an implementation agency. Collaborating with such NGOs can elevate CSR from a compliance activity to a core business value.

## Evaluate the NGO's Capacity and Track Record

Execution matters. A technically sound, impact-driven NGO with a history of managing projects of similar scale and complexity is a safer bet. Evaluation metrics may include:

- Number of beneficiaries impacted
- Geography and sectoral reach
- Strength of on-ground staff
- Monitoring and reporting systems
- Previous partnerships with corporates or government

**Challenge:** Not all NGOs may have strong documentation or glossy impact reports, especially smaller ones that do excellent work but lack communications resources.

**Opportunity:** Partnering with such NGOs offers companies a chance to fund capacity-building initiatives, helping them scale impact and professionalize operations.

## Checklist for Corporates Before Partnering with NGOs:

- Is the NGO registered and eligible under CSR Rules?
- Do they have a proven track record in the relevant sector?
- Is there alignment in vision, goals, and values?
- Have roles, outcomes, and reporting formats been clearly defined?
- Are financials and impact metrics transparent and auditable?
- Is the partnership long-term and outcome-oriented?

## Clarity on Roles, Responsibilities, and Reporting

Before disbursing funds, companies must formalize roles and expectations through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) or agreement. Key inclusions:

- Objectives and deliverables of the project
- Disbursement schedules
- Monitoring and evaluation plans
- Reporting timelines and formats
- Exit clauses and conflict resolution mechanisms

**Challenge:** Ambiguity in expectations can lead to non-compliance, delays, or misuse of funds.

**Tip:** Create SOPs and review mechanisms jointly. Encourage quarterly reports, impact dashboards, and beneficiary stories to ensure transparency and accountability.

**Use Technology to Enhance Collaboration**



Modern CSR demands real-time data and measurable outcomes. Many NGOs today are adopting tech tools for beneficiary tracking, mobile data collection, and impact dashboards. Companies too can deploy digital platforms to monitor fund utilization, measure KPIs, and showcase results.

**Challenge:** Smaller NGOs may lack digital capabilities, limiting visibility into project progress.

**Opportunity:** Corporates can provide tech support or co-create monitoring platforms to professionalize reporting and improve impact measurement.

## Prepare for Cultural and Operational Differences

Corporates operate in structured, process-driven environments. NGOs, especially grassroots ones, may function in fluid, relationship-based setups influenced by field realities. Bridging this cultural gap requires empathy and patience.

**Challenge:** Mismatch in work styles, reporting formats, or communication frequency can create friction.

**Opportunity:** Encourage regular field visits by corporate CSR teams. These on-ground exposures help build mutual respect and real-world understanding of challenges.

## Invest in Long-Term, Outcome-Based Partnerships

While many companies operate on yearly CSR cycles, sustained impact often requires multi-year investments.



Building toilets is easy; ensuring behavioral change in sanitation practices requires consistent engagement.

**Challenge:** One-off CSR projects rarely move the needle on systemic issues like education or health.

**Opportunity:** Long-term partnerships with NGOs allow for deeper interventions, better scalability, and more robust impact evaluations.

## Watch for Reputational Risks

An NGO's credibility is directly tied to your brand's social image. Any financial irregularities, governance lapses, or ethical breaches on their part may reflect poorly on the company.

**Challenge:** Lack of transparency or improper use of funds by partner NGOs can lead to scrutiny from regulators, media, or stakeholders.

**Tip:** Conduct annual due diligence audits and maintain a grievance redressal mechanism. Work only with NGOs having proper financial accountability systems.

## The Future is in Partnership

CSR is no longer just about cheque-writing. It is about co-creating solutions that make a measurable difference. For Indian businesses, NGOs are not just service providers—they are co-travelers on the road to inclusive development. But this journey requires preparation, due diligence, mutual respect, and shared purpose.

The right NGO partnership can unlock both social value and brand value. As CSR matures in India, the companies that treat NGOs not as vendors, but as strategic allies, will be the ones that leave a lasting legacy.



# The Future of NGOs in India: POISED AT A DELICATE BALANCE OF COLLABORATION AND IMPACT



**DR SHABNAM ASTHANA**  
ASSOCIATE EDITOR

The third decade of the 21st century unveils India standing at a critical juncture of economic ambition and social responsibility. This is indeed a pertinent time to evaluate the role of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), with the country witnessing an unprecedented growth in diverse sectors such as digital innovation, infrastructure and entrepreneurship. What also strikes us, is the uneven distribution of wealth, opportunities and services.

## The Evolving NGO Landscape

The Indian landscape is dotted with over 3 million NGOs that range from the grassroots collectives to internationally recognized institutions. The role of NGOs has expanded from the traditional filling critical gaps in service delivery such as healthcare in tribal belts, education in the underserved rural districts



or disaster responses in crisis situations to that of advocacy, policy research, capacity building and environmental sustainability. It is important to note that this is not an accidental evolution, but the reflection of a changing India. An India that realizes the complex needs of the population, an India where the government schemes are more layered and where communities express their rights and aspirations more vehemently.

From a CSR perspective, I am particularly intrigued by the emergence of *impact-oriented* NGOs. These organizations display a remarkable combination of passion with performance and vision with verifiability. These NGOs feature high on the partner list of the corporates, under their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) mandates.

## CSR and NGO Synergy: A Growing Alliance

Ever since the implementation of the Companies Act 2013, which mandates

the 2% spend of the net profit of eligible companies on CSR activities, NGOs have become their indispensable partners in implementing CSR initiatives. There is a perfect synergy with corporates bringing in funding, scale and managerial discipline and the NGOs providing local knowledge, community trust and implementation capability.

This synergy is still evolving as many corporates are facing the challenge of identifying credible NGOs particularly with regards to transparent governance and demonstrable impact. NGOs on the other hand face issues with the top-down-nature of CSR programs that may not necessarily align with ground realities.

The future in my opinion lies in co-creation, with CSR programs moving beyond cheque-writing exercises to strategic partnerships which gives a platform to the NGOs for an involvement from the planning to the evaluation stages. This will instill the much

- needed partnership approach which will be effective in ensuring that CSR initiatives are not only effective but sustainable as well.

## Technology: The Great Enabler

One of the most significant transformations in the NGO sector has been brought about by the increased use of technology. Technology is enhancing the reach, transparency, and efficiency of NGOs. Whether it is used in mobile-based health diagnostics, digital learning platforms in rural schools, or data dashboards that track project outcomes in real time, technology no doubt, is a great enabler.

The digital platforms are providing a big boost to NGOs in terms of connectivity and engagement with the younger, tech-savvy donors and volunteers. These platforms have redefined how civil society engages with social causes by introducing and popularizing crowdfunding, social media campaigns and virtual volunteering. Based on my interactions with CSR strategists I can surmise that they believe that investing in the digital capacity of NGOs should be a top priority. Technology assists NGOs in delivering better services and helps corporates to monitor and evaluate CSR projects with greater accuracy and precision.

## A Round up of Key Challenges for NGOs

Despite being endowed with an immense potential, NGOs in India are facing insurmountable challenges:

### The recent amendments to the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA):

Have unleashed a regulatory uncertainty that has created a major roadblock for NGOs dependent on international aid. This has compelled many functional NGOs to either shut their operations or scale down drastically.

### Funding vulnerability:

The NGOs encounter a major funding volatility due to over-dependence on a few donors or CSR partners. It is crucial to diversify revenue through fee-for-service models, endowments, and individual giving.

### Attracting and retaining a talented workforce:

In a world where comparisons are inevitable, it's hard to attract skilled professionals and retain them. Lower salaries and limited financial incentives make the task for recruiters in this industry very difficult. In a bid to address this challenge counteractive measures such as building organizational capacity and offering clearly defined career progression paths can be adopted.

### Deficit of public trust and credibility:

The image of this sector has been severely tarnished by a few unethical players. This has resulted in clouding the public perception and creating a huge trust deficit. As corrective measures for restoring trust, greater transparency, third-party audits, and regular impact reporting emerge as non-negotiables.

## A Collaborative Vision for the Future

The future should envision NGOs in India as co architects in the story of India's development instead of limiting them to peripheral players. A transfor-

mational approach needs to be keyed in to enable this. The salient features of which could be:

- The evolution of CSR engagements from a need-based role into long term collaboration that houses shared goals and mutual respect. A shift from transaction to transformation is needed.
- A strong focus on measurement and evaluation. This will happen only with a shift from counting beneficiaries to gauging the outcomes and systemic changes. In the broader context moving from activity to impact.
- A shift from fragmentation to Integration is needed where NGOs can work in consortiums, and CSR programs aim for convergence with government schemes to create a greater impact.

## Conclusion

In a country as vast and diverse as India the next decade will be a defining one for the NGO sector. We must understand that neither the government alone can drive inclusive growth nor the corporate sector however well-intentioned it may be. The vital link in this chain is the NGO, which interacts closely with the villages of India and understands the struggles of the marginalized communities.

It is time for us to take on the mantle of doing more than just funding NGOs, but investing in them, by building their capacities, trusting their insights and co creating a future path that shines with a unique blend of profit and purpose.

We must carve a special role for NGOs as indispensable partners and co-creators, in the equitable, inclusive and sustainable India that we aspire to build!



**DR. K.K. UPADHYAY**

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TECHNOLOGY (BIMTECH)

# CSR IN INDIA: BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN THE MOON AND THE MARGIN

**I**ndia stands at a historic crossroads. On one hand, it is scaling new heights on the global stage—economically, digitally, and technologically. On the other, a vast segment of its population continues to face long-standing challenges that threaten to leave millions behind. This paradox defines the country's developmental narrative today and presents both a call to action and an opportunity for meaningful corporate social responsibility (CSR).

India's recent achievements are inspiring. With the successful Chandrayaan-3 mission, India became the first country to land near the Moon's south pole—a testament to the nation's ingenuity and frugal innovation. Economically, India has overtaken the United Kingdom to become the world's fifth-largest economy, driven by strong domestic consumption and a vibrant service sector. The digital revolution is another shining chapter. With over 850 million internet users, India is one of the largest and fastest-growing online markets in the world. Initiatives like UPI



Photos: Vedanta



have made digital transactions seamless, even in remote villages. Infrastructure growth, a booming start-up ecosystem with over 100 unicorns, and a projected 5.4% annual growth in per capita income from 2024 to 2033 all paint a picture of a country on the rise.

Yet, this progress coexists with deep-seated inequalities. Nearly 234 million Indians continue to live in multidimensional poverty. Malnutrition remains a persistent issue, with millions of children stunted or underweight. Foundational literacy and numeracy—basic building blocks of education—remain alarmingly low, especially in government schools and rural settings. Healthcare access is still skewed, with rural India facing a dire shortage of infrastructure and medical professionals. Climate change compounds these challenges. The poorest communities are also the most vulnerable, bearing the brunt of floods, droughts, and extreme heat events.

This coexistence of unprecedented achievement and persistent deprivation presents a clear case for targeted, thoughtful, and sustained CSR engagement. Businesses must see their role not just as economic actors but as critical partners in India's inclusive development. CSR must go beyond token contributions to become a strategic function—integrating social responsibility into core operations, aligning with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and focusing on long-term impact.

India may have reached for the moon, but our mission is incomplete until the most vulnerable among us rise too. CSR, when done responsibly, can be the bridge that closes this gap.



Photo: Vedanta

## The Promise of CSR under the Companies Act, 2013

India made history in 2013 by becoming the first country to legally mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) through Section 135 of the Companies Act. This ground-breaking legislation requires companies meeting specific financial thresholds—such as a net worth of ₹500 crore or more, turnover of ₹1,000 crore or more, or net profit of ₹5 crore or more—to allocate at least 2% of their average net profits from the preceding three years toward CSR activities. This move signalled a transformative shift from voluntary philanthropy to a structured, accountable approach to corporate social engagement.

Over the past decade, CSR spending in India has witnessed a significant uptick. According to the CSR Portal, the total CSR expenditure increased from ₹10,065.93 crores in FY 2014–15 to ₹29,986.92 crore in FY 2022–23. This growth underscores the corporate sector's increasing commitment to social development, with funds directed toward areas like education, healthcare, sanitation, environmental sustainability, and rural development.

To enhance transparency and accountability, the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) introduced Form CSR-2 in February 2022. This comprehensive 11-page form mandates companies to furnish detailed reports

on their CSR activities, including project specifics, fund allocation, implementation strategies, and outcomes. Applicable from the financial year 2020–21 onwards, Form CSR-2 must be filed separately in addition to the annual financial statements submitted through Form AOC-4 or its variants.

Furthermore, the Companies (CSR Policy) Amendment Rules, 2021, introduced a significant provision for impact assessment. Companies with an average CSR obligation of ₹10 crore or more in the three preceding financial years are now required to conduct impact assessments for their CSR projects. These assessments aim to evaluate the effectiveness and outcomes of CSR initiatives, ensuring that the allocated resources lead to tangible social benefits. Notably, the expenditure incurred on impact assessments can be accounted for as CSR spending, subject to a cap of 5% of the total CSR expenditure for that financial year or ₹50 lakhs, whichever is lower.

These regulatory advancements reflect a maturing CSR ecosystem in India, emphasizing not just the quantum of spending but also the quality and impact of CSR initiatives. By institutionalizing reporting and evaluation mechanisms, India aims to ensure that CSR activities contribute meaningfully to the nation's inclusive and sustainable development goals.

## Strategic CSR in Action: Lessons from Vedanta and LTIMindtree

One of the most compelling illustrations of strategic CSR in India is **Vedanta's Nand Ghar initiative**—a modernized version of the traditional Anganwadi model. Recognizing the deteriorated condition of many Balwadis and early childhood centres, Vedanta collaborated closely with the Government of India

and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to transform these spaces into vibrant hubs of child development, women empowerment, health, and nutrition. What sets Nand Ghar apart is its integrated, technology-enabled approach: smart classrooms for early learning, telemedicine services, e-learning tools, and nutritional support are all delivered under one roof. With over 8,000 Nand Ghars established across multiple states, the initiative exemplifies how CSR can align with national priorities like women and child welfare, foundational literacy, and digital inclusion.

The success of Nand Ghar lies in its strategic execution and transparent governance. Vedanta has embedded CSR into its core business values, adopting real-time digital dashboards for monitoring, forming robust partnerships with NGOs and government bodies, and ensuring full alignment with global ESG frameworks like GRI and DJSI. With over 17 million women and children positively impacted, Nand Ghar demonstrates how identifying systemic issues, fostering cross-sector collaboration, leveraging digital innovation, and building community ownership can overcome key CSR challenges—such as lack of continuity, limited reach, and weak accountability—and instead create scalable, sustainable impact.

In a different yet equally impactful domain, **LTIMindtree's CSR engagement** offers another benchmark for responsible business, demonstrated through its dual-focus initiatives in agroforestry and virtual learning. In Mirzapur, Uttar Pradesh—one of India's most ecologically sensitive zones—LTIMindtree, in partnership with the SGI Foundation, launched an agroforestry project that trained farmers in sustainable land use, planted multi-purpose trees, and improved



Photos: LTIMindtree

soil fertility. Through farmer-led groups, exposure visits, and local engagement, initial resistance was overcome, restoring over 120 hectares and increasing household incomes. This initiative highlights how CSR can contribute to climate action, ecological restoration, and livelihood generation when rooted in participatory design.

In parallel, the company supported a **Virtual Learning program** led by eVidyaloka in remote tribal areas of Jharkhand and Uttarakhand, addressing foundational learning gaps through digital classrooms and volunteer-led teaching. This innovation transformed infrastructure limitations into opportunities through localized, tech-based education. The initiative not only boosted attendance and learning outcomes but also empowered the community to participate as facilitators and coordinators—fostering grassroots ownership.

Together, **Vedanta and LTIMindtree** provide compelling examples of CSR that is strategic, inclusive, and future-ready. They prove that when corporate responsibility aligns with national priorities and global goals, it becomes the bridge between aspi-

ration and access, growth and equity, and ultimately, profit and purpose.

## Conclusion: CSR as a Catalyst for Inclusive Growth

These case studies exemplify the transformative potential of CSR when approached with strategy, sincerity, and a deep understanding of local realities. Whether it is Vedanta's Nand Ghar model revolutionizing early childhood care or LTIMindtree's dual initiatives strengthening climate resilience and education, each reflects how businesses can act as responsible agents of social change.

They also demonstrate that the biggest challenges—geographic remoteness, behavioural resistance, digital gaps—can be overcome through innovation, collaboration, and community trust. In an India that reaches for the moon but still grapples with poverty on the margins, such CSR models serve as guiding lights. They show that corporate responsibility, when aligned with national goals and global frameworks, can truly become the bridge between *where we are* and *who we aspire to be*.



Photo: Ujaas, Aditya Birla Education Trust

# HOW UJAAS IS REDEFINING MENSTRUAL HEALTH AND CHANGING LIVES ACROSS INDIA

**M**enstrual health in India remains a critical public health challenge, deeply entrenched in cultural stigma and a lack of awareness. Despite significant progress in healthcare and education, menstrual hygiene management (MHM) continues to be a pervasive issue, affecting millions of women and girls across the country. In rural and urban areas alike, discussions around menstruation are often silenced, leaving many adolescent girls unprepared for their first period, which becomes a moment of confusion and shame rather than a natural transition.

UNESCO revealed a shocking statistic in 2018 that one in five girls in

India drop out of school annually due to menstruation-related issues. This is often linked to a lack of clean sanitation facilities, unavailability of affordable menstrual hygiene products, and the societal stigma associated with menstruation. This unjust situation is made even more concerning as, even today, we see girls in rural and semi-urban areas being held back from education for the same reason. The scale of this problem reflects a nationwide gap in menstrual health education and product accessibility, calling for a comprehensive, grassroots-level intervention.

A 2023 study published in *Nature*, an online scientific journal, analyzed data from Indian women born

between 1942 and 2006. The study found a declining trend in the age of puberty, with the mean age decreasing from 13.78 years to 13.34 years over the 64 years. This trend was more pronounced in certain regions, such as the Northeastern states, where the mean age was as low as 12.62 years. The report named the factors influencing this decline as socioeconomic status, urbanization, and lifestyle changes. This decreasing age spells even less education for the girls forced to quit school.

## Where Ujaas Steps In

The **Ujaas Menstrual Health Express**, a first-of-its-kind Pan-India initiative, initiated by Ujaas, an initiative by Aditya Birla Education Trust, brought a groundbreaking effort to address this crisis. Unlike previous attempts confined to localized outreach, this campaign took on the monumental challenge of reaching communities across India. The initiative directly addresses menstrual health awareness and accessibility in a manner that bridges socioeconomic and regional divides.

For 103 days, the Ujaas Menstrual Health Express travelled through **25 states, covering 121 locations** and more than 25,000 kilometers. The sheer scale of this journey reflects the determination to address menstrual health issues in even the most remote areas. The campaign's structure was carefully designed to ensure lasting impact rather than fleeting awareness. It was not just about moving from one point to another but about creating sustained change through community engagement and empowerment.

The campaign directly impacted over



1,25,000 individuals, including 25,000 adolescent girls who participated in structured educational sessions. These sessions were interactive dialogues where myths were addressed, scientific facts were discussed, and safe menstrual hygiene practices were demonstrated. The girls and women present learned about managing menstruation with dignity. The initiative also emphasized the need to recognize and overcome the social barriers that perpetuate silence and misinformation.

## **Economic Empowerment and Sustainability**

One of the unique aspects of the Ujaas initiative was its integration of economic empowerment within the menstrual health agenda. The project trained 25 Self-Help Group (SHG) women to manufacture sustainable cloth sanitary napkins. This effort provided a dual benefit: addressing the lack of affordable menstrual products while simultaneously creating livelihood opportunities. These locally pro-

duced, sustainable cloth napkins were distributed during the campaign, reinforcing the idea that menstrual health solutions should be both accessible and environmentally responsible.

## **Community Collaboration as a Driving Force**

The Ujaas Menstrual Health Express worked closely with local NGOs, understanding that sustainable change cannot be imposed from the outside. These partnerships ensured that the campaign resonated with regional practices and beliefs. Local champions were empowered with knowledge and resources, enabling them to continue the conversation long after the van had moved on. This model of collaboration enhanced the campaign's reach and planted the seeds for ongoing community-led efforts.

## **Creating Conversations, Breaking Taboos**

The heart of the Ujaas initiative lay in its

commitment to changing mindsets. In many locations, the campaign marked the first time that menstruation was openly discussed within the community. By fostering dialogue in public spaces, the Menstrual Health Express shattered long-standing taboos and created a safe environment for women and girls to share their experiences without judgment or ridicule.

## **Long-Term Impact and the Road Ahead**

The legacy of the Ujaas Menstrual Health Express goes beyond the kilometers covered or the number of pads distributed. It lies in the stories of transformation. Girls who returned to school with newfound confidence, mothers who started conversations about menstrual hygiene at home, and communities that began to see menstruation as a natural and manageable aspect of life.

The initiative highlights the need for menstrual health education to be integrated into the school curriculum as a mandatory subject. Another crucial aspect is the society at large that needs guidance with regard to myths and preconceived notions of menstruation which create harm. To ensure this change, policy changes that ensure affordable sanitary products are available nationwide could help sustain the progress initiated by the campaign.

The Ujaas Menstrual Health Express stands as a testimony to what is possible when grassroots activism meets strategic planning and community collaboration. As India continues to confront the realities of menstrual health disparities, the lessons from Ujaas serve as a roadmap for future initiatives aimed at achieving true menstrual equity.



Photo: Ujaas, Aditya Birla Education Trust



# HIV & AIDS AWARENESS PROGRAMS BY NGOS

MANISH BHARTIA

**T**he HIV and AIDS (Prevention & Control) Act, 2017 is a central legislation protecting and promoting the rights of persons infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS. The Act came into force on September 10, 2018 with the objective to prevent and control the spread of HIV and AIDS and for reinforcing the legal and human rights of persons infected with and affected by HIV and AIDS. It also seeks to protect the rights of healthcare providers.

The Act addresses stigma & discrimination and strives to create an enabling environment for enhancing access to services. It provides for diagnostic facilities related to ART and opportunistic infection management to people living with HIV and AIDS. Complementing this legislative framework, countless NGOs have played a crucial role on the ground, offering critical support such as free testing, access to ART, awareness campaigns, psychosocial care, and rights-based advocacy. Together, the law and civil

society converge to uphold health, humanity, and hope.

## Alliance India

End AIDS India, a campaign of Alliance India, standing at the forefront of HIV response for the last 25 years has been improving thousands of lives, driven by the vision of an AIDS-free India. The campaign raises funding to PREVENT the spread of HIV, extend access to CARE by ensuring the availability of health services for people living with

with dignity in an environment without stigma and discrimination.

With a goal to end AIDS in India by 2030, they raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and the stigma faced by vulnerable communities and people living with HIV. The team also provides care, support and treatment for people living with HIV and protects the rights of marginalised and affected communities. Partnering with the government, Alliance India strives to influence decision making and policy-level changes to change the social fabric for the vulnerable community. HIV prevention services and treatment programmes aimed at reducing transmission of HIV by building safety around the transmission routes such as – mother to child, sexual contact, sharing needles to inject drugs and blood transfusion etc. The treatment and care services include enabling access and supporting adherence to HIV treatment and managing opportunistic infections. Besides, HIV programmes address stigma and social and eco-



HIV and EMPOWER those vulnerable and affected by the epidemic to live

nomic barriers impeding individuals from accessing quality services.

Despite declining global funding and rising complacency, people at End AIDS India are optimists. Till now Alliance India has impacted 1,778,206 Lives, brought back 816,887 to ART treatment, tested 95,758 Family members for HIV, enabled 442,363 to access welfare schemes, linked 19,319 people to SRH & STI services. By raising awareness, influencing policy, and uniting supporters, the campaign believes a healthier, stigma-free future is within reach.

## Snehalaya

Since its inception in 1989, Snehalaya has grown from a small initiative supporting children of sex workers and providing palliative care for those affected by AIDS into strong force serving over 19,000 beneficiaries each year and running 22 projects across four key areas, education, healthcare, rehabilitation, and awareness, that help beneficiaries thrive in life.

Snehalaya primarily caters to women, children and LGBT communities affected by poverty and the commercial sex industry. They help to fight HIV and AIDS, end human trafficking, improve education for deprived children, and campaign for justice to bring rescue, rights, and rehabilitation to those that need it. Snehalaya provides housing, food, clothes, medi-



cations, education and extra-curricular facilities for HIV+ orphans and semi-orphans (children of sex workers) enabling them to grow up in a regular household. Among its key notable achievements include, a 100% reduction in second-generation prostitution and underage sex work across its district, a drop in STDs among sex workers from 60% to 2%, and a reduction in new HIV cases from 17% to 3.4%. The organization has also eliminated child marriage and child

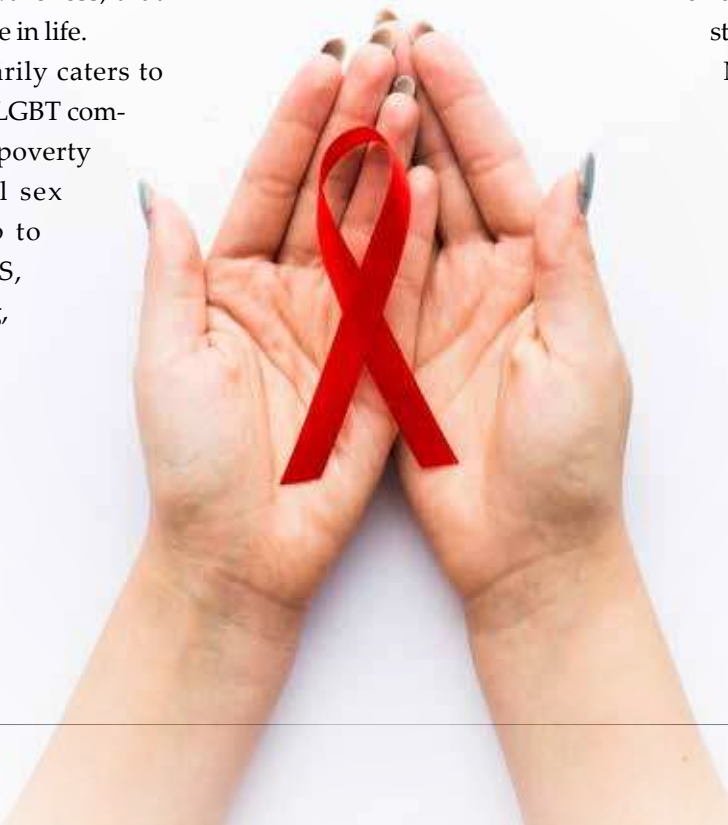
labour in the slums of Ahmednagar and operates the #1-ranked Childline in India.

## The Naz Foundation (India) Trust

The Naz foundation (india) trust (Naz) established in 1994 by Anjali Gopalan, started its work addressing issues of HIV/AIDS and sexuality. Over the years, Naz has conducted thousands of sessions to help individuals and



community based organisations understand sexuality and mainstream HIV in their programmes. Naz has worked to strengthen the care and support services provided to people living with HIV/AIDS (PLWHA) as well as counselling and referral for the LGBTQIA+ community. In 2001, it set up one of the first homes for orphan children living with HIV/AIDS in Delhi. Naz is also known for its strong advocacy efforts, having successfully challenged the archaic law under the Indian penal code under Sec 377 which





criminalised homosexuality.

The years of intense HIV prevention work made Naz clear that adolescent girls and young women were among the most vulnerable to be infected with HIV. Therefore, in 2006, Naz piloted an adolescent girls and young women's empowerment programme using sport and life skills to empower adolescent girls from economically marginalised communities. Over the years, Naz has consolidated its work in the thematic areas of health (HIV and sexuality), gender and rights.

## Mahesh Foundation



Mahesh Foundation has set a powerful example by extending unwavering support to children living with HIV and integrating them back into mainstream society. Early days were extremely difficult while navigating significant resistance and objections from society. People living with HIV often face deep-rooted stigma and discrimination, which isolates them from essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment. These barriers not only affect their well-being but also limit their opportunities for a dignified life. To combat this, Mahesh Foundation launched sus-

tained awareness campaigns aimed at educating the public about HIV and dismantling the stigma surrounding it. These initiatives have helped shift public perception, encouraging support and empathy for those affected.

Over the past 17 years, Mahesh Foundation has positively transformed the lives of thousands of HIV-positive individuals by delivering doorstep healthcare services, nutritional support, quality education, and other essential facilities. Through various initiatives, they raise awareness by presenting accurate facts, figures, root causes, and preventive methods related to HIV. Their medical support programs ensure timely access to treatment and care for those in need. We also raise awareness about relevant government schemes to help HIV-positive individuals access the benefits they deserve.

Their HIV Care & Support Program positively impacted the lives of over 1,500 families. The Foundation has also facilitated access to housing and solar lighting for families who send their children to school. Over 2,000 children have directly benefited, more than 2,000 schools have been engaged through awareness campaigns, and upwards of 2,000 volunteers have joined the cause. The Education Support Program alone has supported over 22,000 children across primary and secondary schools.

## Priyadarshini Seva Mandali

Among all the development workers of our society, Priyadarshini Seva Mandali (PSM) in collaboration with Clinton Foundation, started a proj-

ect addressing a concern that always works to support those numerous people suffering from HIV/AIDS. This HIV/AIDS initiative program has also received support from GiveIndia and generous local donors. What began with just 40 children in the Khammam district has now grown to impact 110 children across the region.



Through this initiative, PSM ensures regular CD4 count monitoring, access to daily ART medication, and comprehensive healthcare support for each child. Equally important is the organization's focus on education—empowering children to attend school regularly, build a brighter future, and break free from the cycle of poverty and illness. The program also includes nutritional support and medical care, with active collaboration from NGOs, community-based organizations (CBOs), and social activists. Beyond addressing physical health, PSM counsels parents to help them overcome stigma, fear, and isolation.

PSM has implemented holistic education and medical support programs across several mandals in the Khammam district, reaching over 60 children with medical aid and 25 children with educational support. All beneficiaries come from underprivileged backgrounds and rely on such support systems to survive and thrive.



# RECENT AMENDMENTS TO SECTION 135 OF THE COMPANIES ACT: A TIGHTER CSR FRAMEWORK FOR INDIAN COMPANIES

SUBRAMANYA SHASTRI

India's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) regime, governed under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, has seen significant tightening in recent years. As of May 2025, Indian companies are working under a more structured and accountable framework for CSR activities, following several key amendments introduced by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) between 2021

and 2024. These changes aim to ensure that CSR funds are not just spent, but spent meaningfully — with measurable social impact and public accountability.

## Form CSR-2 Filing Deadline Extended

One of the most impactful compliance measures introduced is **Form CSR-2**, which companies must file in addition to their standard annual

financial disclosures. This detailed form requires reporting of CSR initiatives, budgets, beneficiaries, outcomes, and partnerships. While the form was introduced in early 2022, the MCA recently extended the filing deadline for FY 2023–24 to March 31, 2025, from the earlier deadline of December 31, 2024. This move gives companies more time to align with the detailed reporting requirements.



## Mandatory Impact Assessment for Large CSR Spends

To push for outcome-based CSR spending, companies with an average CSR obligation of ₹10 crore or more in the last three financial years are now required to conduct third-party impact assessments for individual projects with a spend of ₹1 crore or more. These assessments must be completed within one year of the project's end, and the cost of conducting them is capped at 5% of the CSR budget or ₹50 lakh, whichever is lower.

## Unspent CSR Funds: New Utilization Timeline

Section 135 now mandates companies to treat unspent CSR funds more responsibly. If funds are unspent but earmarked for an ongoing project, they must be transferred to a dedicated Unspent CSR Account within 30 days from the end of the financial year, and utilized within three years. If not used within this period, the amount must be transferred to a Schedule VII fund such

**Companies are now legally required to publicly disclose their CSR policies, approved projects, fund allocations, timelines, and implementing agencies on their websites and in annual reports.**

as the PM CARES Fund. For non-ongoing projects, the unspent amount must be transferred to one of the Schedule VII funds within six months of the financial year-end.

## Administrative Overheads Capped

To avoid CSR fund diversion toward administrative expenses, the updated CSR rules now strictly limit admin-

istrative overheads to 5% of the total CSR expenditure. This ensures that the majority of the funds go directly into project implementation and community benefits, rather than internal costs.

## Greater Transparency Through Public Disclosure

Companies are now legally required to publicly disclose their CSR policies, approved projects, fund allocations, timelines, and implementing agencies on their websites and in annual reports. This move aims to increase transparency and public scrutiny of how CSR funds are used, reinforcing the credibility of corporate philanthropy in India.

The recent amendments to Section 135 have transitioned CSR from a compliance-driven obligation to a results-oriented practice. As companies prepare their FY 2023–24 CSR disclosures over the coming months, the focus will not only be on spending but on impact, integrity, and accountability. The government's approach reflects a maturing CSR landscape where businesses are expected to play a tangible role in nation-building.

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The partnership between NGOs and corporates through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives has become a transformative force in skilling and uplifting women across India. These collaborations directly support Sustainable Development Goal 5 (Gender Equality), addressing barriers that women face in education, employment, and social empowerment.

Several NGOs have made significant strides in this arena. The Self Employed Women's Association (SEWA), a pioneer in women's empowerment, has partnered with Tata Steel under the "Sakhi Shakti" initiative. This project trains women in rural Jharkhand in tailoring, handicrafts, and agro-processing, enabling them to earn sustainable incomes and gain financial independence. SEWA's grassroots approach ensures that training is culturally relevant and accessible, fostering confidence alongside skills.

Another key player is Pratham, which runs the "Pratham Skills" program supported by multiple CSR donors. This initiative equips young women with vocational skills in retail, hospitality, and IT-enabled services, aligning training with market demand. Pratham's focus on employability bridges the gap between education and work, helping women enter formal job sectors.

The Azim Premji Foundation's "Digital Sakhi" program emphasizes digital literacy, teaching women how to use smartphones, access government services, and participate in

# NGOS' ROLE IN SKILLING AND UPLIFTING WOMEN THROUGH CSR INITIATIVES

SUBRAMANYA SHASTRI



e-commerce. Supported by corporate funding, this project empowers women to engage economically and socially in an increasingly digital world.

Additionally, the NGO Nanhi Kali, supported by corporate partners such as Mahindra Group, focuses on education and life skills for underprivileged girls. Their "Empower Her" project provides academic support, health awareness, and mentorship, laying a foundation for long-term empowerment.

Beyond skill development, NGOs integrate awareness campaigns on gender rights, health, and financial inclusion. Many CSR initiatives com-

bine technical training with counseling and mentorship, recognizing that empowerment is as much about mindset as it is about skills.

Despite these successes, reaching women in remote and informal sectors remains a challenge. However, the collaboration between NGOs' deep community roots and corporates' resources offers a scalable model for inclusive growth.

Empowering women through CSR-supported NGO projects not only creates economic opportunities but also strengthens families and communities, moving India closer to equitable and sustainable development.



# SAFEGUARDING INDIA'S NATURAL HERITAGE

The Fight for Biodiversity and Wildlife  
Conservation

VATIKA SINGH

**B**iological diversity, or biodiversity, refers to the variety of life on Earth, encompassing the diversity of species, genes, and ecosystems. It plays a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance and supporting life systems. From forests and wetlands to coral reefs and grasslands, each ecosystem thrives because of the rich variety of species it houses. However, due to rapid urbanization, industrial expansion, deforestation, and climate change, biodiversity is under serious threat worldwide — and India is no exception.

India is among the world's 17 "megadiverse" countries, hosting nearly 7-8% of the world's recorded species, including iconic animals such as the Bengal tiger, Asiatic elephant, Indian rhinoceros, and snow leopard. The country's unique geographic and climatic conditions give rise to a wide range of ecosystems and endemic species. Despite this richness, many species in India face extinction risks, primarily due to habitat loss, poaching, pollution, and climate disruption.

Areas with higher species abundance are generally believed to have more stable and resilient environments than those with lower biodiversity. This highlights the vital role biodiversity plays in maintaining ecological balance. Our dependence on nature further underscores the importance of preserving it—we rely on a wide variety of plant species for food, medicine, shelter, and other needs. Likewise, countless animal species and microorganisms contribute to essential processes like pollination,





decomposition, disease control, and nutrient cycling.

However, biodiversity is under serious threat due to habitat destruction, over-exploitation of natural resources, climate change, pollution, the spread of invasive species, emerging diseases, and illegal hunting. Given the immense economic, ecological, ethical, and aesthetic value that biodiversity offers, its conservation is not just important—it is essential for the well-being of all life on Earth.

### The Importance of Species Conservation

Species conservation is a fundamental component of biodiversity preservation. It ensures that ecosystems remain functional and resilient. The extinction of a single species can trigger a domino effect, leading to the degradation of entire ecosystems.

**India is among the world's 17 "megadiverse" countries, hosting nearly 7-8% of the world's recorded species, including iconic animals such as the Bengal tiger, Asiatic elephant, Indian rhinoceros, and snow leopard.**

For example, the disappearance of pollinators like bees or butterflies can impact food production and plant reproduction.

Conservation efforts also have socio-economic and cultural implications. Many communities in India depend directly on biodiversity for their livelihoods — be it through agriculture, fishing, or traditional medicine. Additionally, species such as the tiger or elephant hold cultural and religious significance in Indian society, reinforcing the need to protect them.

### Challenges to Biodiversity in India

India faces several challenges in biodiversity conservation:

**Habitat Destruction-** Urban sprawl, infrastructure development, mining, and agriculture have led to large-scale deforestation and fragmentation of wildlife habitats.

**Climate Change-** Rising temperatures and changing weather





patterns are altering the natural habitats of many species, threatening their survival.

**Poaching and Illegal Trade-** India is a hotspot for wildlife trafficking. Tigers, pangolins, rhinos, and various bird species are targeted for their body parts or as exotic pets.

**Invasive Species-** Introduction of non-native species can disrupt local ecosystems and outcompete indigenous flora and fauna.

**Lack of Awareness-** A large portion of the population remains unaware of the ecological value of species, reducing community participation in conservation efforts.

## Role of NGOs in Species Conservation

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) play a critical role in conserving biodiversity in India. These organizations work alongside government agencies, scientists, local communities, and international bod-

ies to implement effective conservation programs.

### 1. Advocacy and Awareness

NGOs like WWF-India, Wildlife Trust of India (WTI), and Centre for Wildlife Studies (CWS) conduct widespread awareness campaigns to educate the public about the importance of protecting wildlife and their habitats. They organize workshops, eco-clubs in schools, exhibitions, and community events to engage various stakeholders.



### 2. Research and Data Collection

Scientific research is essential for effective conservation. NGOs often conduct field studies to assess species populations, migration patterns, breeding habits, and threats. For instance, BNHS (Bombay Natural History Society) is known for its ornithological research and monitoring of bird species in India.

### 3. Community Involvement

Conservation cannot succeed with-



out the support of local communities. NGOs such as Aaranyak in Northeast India and Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF) in the Western Ghats engage with indigenous and forest-dwelling communities to promote sustainable practices and provide alternative livelihoods, thereby reducing dependency on forests and wildlife.

#### 4. Rescue and Rehabilitation

Organizations like WTI and Friendicoes SECA are involved in rescuing injured or trafficked animals, rehabilitating them, and, when possible, releasing them back into the wild. They also support the establishment and maintenance of animal shelters and sanctuaries.

#### 5. Policy Influence

NGOs often work closely with government bodies such as the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to advocate for stronger wildlife protection laws, bet-

ter management of protected areas, and improved enforcement mechanisms.

#### 6. Conflict Resolution

Human-wildlife conflict is a growing issue in India. NGOs play a key role in mediating and reducing these conflicts by promoting measures such as compensation schemes, relocation of problematic animals, and awareness about coexistence.

### Successful NGO-Led Initiatives in India

**Project Tiger (WWF-India, WTI):** While originally a government initiative, NGOs have significantly contributed to tiger conservation by monitoring populations, training forest staff, and mitigating poaching threats.

#### **Snow Leopard Conservation (NCF):**

The Nature Conservation Foundation has worked extensively in the trans-Himalayan region to protect snow leopards through research, community partnerships, and tourism initiatives.

**Vulture Conservation (BNHS):** India's vulture population faced a drastic decline due to the veterinary drug diclofenac. BNHS spearheaded awareness and research efforts that led to a ban on the drug and a partial recovery of vulture populations.

The conservation of biological diversity is vital for sustaining life and ensuring ecological resilience. In a country as vast and diverse as India, where development pressures are immense, the task of conserving species is challenging but essential. NGOs have proven to be invaluable allies in this mission, bridging the gap between science, policy, and grassroots action. Their role in advocacy, research, rehabilitation, and community engagement is indispensable to India's efforts in safeguarding its rich natural heritage.

As the threats to biodiversity continue to grow, the collaboration between government, civil society, and the private sector — with NGOs as central actors — will determine the future of wildlife conservation in India.



# HANDS THAT BUILD INDIA

## LABOUR RIGHTS AND CSR IN THE NEW ERA

MAANISA DAS



All manifestations of labour ranging from the production of crops, building schools to ports, and construction of roads to railways etc. has engineered the arc of human civilization from the earliest days to the present. The same hands that have crafted the Taj Mahal continue to construct the infrastructure of today's urban India that we take pride in. Labour isn't confined to structured industries alone. A vast portion of India's workforce are part of the unorganized sector including home-based artisans, street vendors, midday meal staff, cobblers, rag pickers, domestic workers, washer men, rickshaw pullers, construction labourers, agricul-

tural workers, and others engaged in informal or precarious employment. Running parallelly is organized labour, an association of workers united as a single, representative entity to

improve the economic status and working conditions of employees through collective bargaining with company management.

The paradox is the isolation of





# Government Initiatives for Labour Welfare

## Schemes for Unorganized Workers:

- **eShram** portal helps in building a comprehensive National Database of Unorganized Workers (NDUW) in the country. The portal proves to be a huge boost towards last mile delivery of the welfare schemes for crores of unorganized workers for more than 38 Crore workers. The registration is totally free for the workers.
- **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan (PM-SYM)** is a voluntary and contributory pension scheme under which the beneficiary would receive a minimum assured pension of Rs 3000/- per month after attaining the age of 60 years, providing old age protection and social security of Unorganized workers.
- Few of the **Social Security Welfare Schemes** for unorganized workers are National Pension Scheme for Traders and The Self-employed Persons (NPS), Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Yojana (PMJJBY), Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY), Atal Pension Yojana, and others.
- **Employment Schemes** for the unorganized workers include MGNREGA, Deen Dayal Upadhyay – Gramin Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY), Garib Kalyan Rozgar Yojana, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Antyodaya Yojana (DAY), PM SVANidhi, Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme (PMEGP) and others.

the very labour left behind to fend for themselves in destitute social, economic and political conditions, earning meagre wages, alienated from the fruits of their hard work that a privileged few reap the rewards of. This friction rooted in imbalance led to the labor movements for workers' rights. The workers were being forced to work ten, twelve, and fourteen hours a day with a very low wage. They thus demanded for the reduction of working hours to eight a day which would leave working people more time for their families and leisure. The struggle for fair wages, safe workplaces, and basic rights began to echo across fields and factories, streets and homes.

The turning point was the Haymarket affair in Chicago in 1886, where workers rallied for an eight-hour workday. Since then, May 1st has become a powerful symbol of solidarity among laborers. More than 80 countries now officially recognize May Day as a national holiday dedicated to workers. Today May Day serves

## Schemes for Organized Labour:

- **National Career Service Portal:** Job seekers can avail the benefits of this portal by registering themselves where they can find career centres, find skill providers and career counsellors, get local help, etc. Employers can also use this portal to find skilled candidates.
- **Universal Account Number (UAN)** is provided by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). EPFO members can check the status of UAN online.
- **SAMADHAN portal**, a software application for Monitoring And Disposal, Handling of Apprehended/Existing Industrial Dispute (SAMADHAN) allowing online registration with the intent to make justice for workmen simple & quick.
- **Aatmanirbhar Bharat Rojgar Yojana (ABRY)** was announced as a part of Aatmanirbhar Bharat 3.0 package to boost the economy, increase the employment generation in post Covid recovery phase and to incentivize creation of new employment along with social security benefits and restoration of loss of employment during COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY)** has been designed to incentivise employers for generation of new employment, where Government of India will be paying the full employer's contribution towards EPF & EPS (Employee Pension Scheme) for the new employment.

as a solemn tribute to the dignity of work and the workers who mechanise the machines and enrich the human

civilization and to extend a humane treatment to them.

The empowerment of workers is



necessary for an empowered, prosperous and Aatmanirbhar India. With the motto, “*Mehnat Ko Samman, Adhikar Ek Saman*” the Government is focused on the welfare of workers through evidence-based policymaking. The Central Government had taken the historical step of codifying 29 laws into four Codes, (Wage Code, Social Security Code, Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code and Industrial Relations Code) so that workers can get security along with respect, health and other welfare measures with ease.

Apart from government interventions, CSR emphasizes ethical business practices including fair treatment of workers, central to *May Day's* legacy. The hands that power production, progress, and prosperity must be in the right hands of corporates as well who met out good treatment to them.

The corporate sector must move beyond the optics of philanthropy and embed ethical labour practices into its

operational DNA. This means living wages rather than minimum wages, allowing workers to lead dignified lives, health and safety protocols that go beyond compliance to ensure genuine well-being, and inclusion of informal and contract workers in benefits such as insurance and paid leave etc.

CSR requires companies to monitor labor conditions not only internally but also throughout their supply chains, ensuring suppliers uphold fair labor practices. Ethical sourcing and supply chains demand vigilance, transparency, and the willingness to sever ties with suppliers who exploit labor.

Companies practicing CSR often invest in training, skill development, and career growth opportunities for employees that allow workers to grow and adapt in a changing economy.

India's historic consolidation of 29 labour laws into four comprehensive will fall short of its aim to streamline compliance and bring more workers

under the protective umbrella of the law if not implemented properly. CSR policies should actively support the spirit of these reforms like extending coverage, ensuring transparency, and promoting awareness among workers about their rights and entitlements.

CSR initiatives can bridge the gap of organized and unorganized workers by funding programs that identify, register, and support informal workers, many of whom are women and marginalized groups. Partnering with civil society organizations, cooperatives, and government schemes can magnify this impact, ensuring that support reaches the last mile.

May Day is a timely reminder that progress cannot come at the cost of the very people who build it. In the pursuit of economic growth, we must remain anchored to human dignity. CSR provides a powerful instrument to recalibrate our development models by placing people before profits and ethics before expediency.

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# NAVIGATING THE NEW CSR RULES IN INDIA

*Enhancing Accountability, Transparency, and Impact in Business*



**DR. SOMNATH SINGH**  
DEPUTY DIRECTOR

UN GLOBAL COMPACT NETWORK INDIA

## India's Journey Towards Strategic Social Responsibility

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has evolved from a voluntary philanthropic activity to a structured, mandatory responsibility. The turning point came with enacting Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, making India the first country to mandate CSR by law. The Companies (CSR Policy) Rules, 2014 laid down the framework, requiring companies (based on net worth, turnover, or net profit thresholds) meeting certain financial thresholds to spend at least 2% of their average net profits on CSR activities.

This pioneering move laid the foundation for structured corporate contributions to social development. Initially voluntary in spirit, CSR in India gradually evolved into a com-



pliance-driven framework. However, with limited emphasis on transparency, impact measurement, and monitoring, many CSR efforts remained fragmented or surface-level.

Over the years, CSR in India has matured, but challenges remain, ranging from superficial compliance and inadequate impact assessment to opaque reporting and lack of accountability. Recognizing these gaps, the **Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA)**, with support from the **Securities and**

**Exchange Board of India (SEBI)**, introduced a series of amendments to bring about a paradigm shift in how CSR is practiced and perceived.

## Why the New CSR Rules Were Introduced:

The recent changes were introduced to address the following key gaps:

- **Lack of Impact Measurement:** Many projects lacked quantifiable outcomes, leading to questions about their real-world effectiveness.

- **Opaque Implementing Mechanisms:** Several companies engaged unregistered or informal partners, raising concerns about fund misuse and quality control.
- **Unspent Funds:** Absence of mechanisms to track or ensure the utilization of unspent CSR funds hinders long-term programmatic continuity.
- **Need for Greater Accountability:** As CSR spending grew, so did the demand for enhanced oversight and public disclosure.

Recognizing these challenges, SEBI and the MCA aimed to align CSR governance with India's broader sustainable development and ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) goals by introducing a more robust, outcome-oriented framework.

## Key Features of the New CSR Rules

1. **Mandatory Impact Assessment:** Required for companies with CSR obligations of ₹10 crore+ and for projects with a budget of ₹1 crore+, ensuring that outcomes are evaluated independently.
2. **Registration of Implementing Agencies:** NGOs and agencies must be registered with MCA, providing assurance on capability, legitimacy, and compliance.
3. **Utilization of Unspent Funds:** Unspent CSR funds for ongoing projects must be moved to a separate account and spent within three years, ensuring fund discipline.
4. **Enhanced CSR Disclosures:** Detailed project-wise disclosures are now mandatory in the annual CSR report and on company websites, bringing CSR into the realm of public accountability.
5. **Cap on Administrative Expenses:** A maximum of 5% of the total CSR expenditure may be used for administrative purposes, maximizing funds directed to beneficiaries.

## SEBI's Role and Rationale

While CSR falls under the purview of

**Over the years, CSR in India has matured, but challenges remain, ranging from superficial compliance and inadequate impact assessment to opaque reporting and lack of accountability.**

MCA, SEBI has integrated CSR within the broader ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) and Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) framework for listed companies. This ensures that CSR performance is transparently disclosed to investors and stakeholders, contributing to responsible business conduct and improved corporate valuations.

## SEBI's emphasis is on:

- Aligning CSR with sustainability

goals,

- Encouraging transparency through mandatory disclosures, and
- Building investor confidence in social governance.

## Impact: Transforming CSR into a Strategic Development Tool

The new CSR rules aim to shift the corporate approach from cheque-writing to change-making. **The reforms are expected to:**

- **Greater Transparency:** Public disclosures and mandatory registrations make CSR spending traceable and verifiable.
- **Stronger Accountability:** Impact assessments compel companies to design result-oriented projects with clear metrics.
- **Improved Governance:** Structured planning and implementation discourage ad hoc or compliance-only CSR initiatives.
- **Higher Impact:** Strategic, evidence-based interventions aligned with national and global development goals (e.g., SDGs) will drive meaningful change.

## Conclusion: A New Era of Responsible Capitalism

The new CSR rules represent a bold step toward institutionalizing responsible capitalism in India. By promoting transparency, accountability, and measurable impact, these reforms elevate CSR from a mere compliance obligation to a catalyst for sustainable development. As companies adopt these norms, India stands to witness a new wave of collaborative, credible, and high-impact CSR initiatives.

# SANITIZATION DRIVES BY NGOS - A GRASSROOT PLEDGE FOR A SWACHH BHARAT

VATIKA SINGH



**W**hen the Indian government launched the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan in 2014, it was more than a cleanliness campaign—it was a call to action for the entire nation. The initiative, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi’s emphasis on sanitation, aimed to transform the landscape of hygiene and cleanliness across India. But while the government laid out the framework, it has been the collective efforts of citizens, local bodies, and especially NGOs that

truly brought the mission to life.

Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have played a silent yet powerful role in driving the Swachh Bharat movement forward. These organizations, often working behind the scenes and with limited resources, have been instrumental in organizing sanitation drives that go far beyond symbolic gestures. With a hands-on approach and deep community connections, NGOs have made cleanliness a part of everyday life for countless people.

## Reaching the Unreached

One of the most impactful aspects of NGO involvement is their reach. Many of these organizations operate in areas where municipal services are weak or absent. Whether it’s a rural village tucked away from urban centers or a densely packed urban slum, NGOs are often the only organized force pushing for cleanliness and hygiene. Unlike one-time campaigns, these organizations commit to long-term change. They hold regular sanitation drives—





sometimes weekly or monthly —ensuring that cleanliness becomes not just a goal but a habit.

For instance, in several small towns and rural belts, NGOs have formed sanitation committees that bring together villagers to clean their own surroundings. They distribute cleaning tools, provide training, and even organize competitions to encourage active participation. What sets them apart is their ability to make locals feel like stakeholders in their own environment.

## More Than Just Sweeping Streets

Sanitization drives led by NGOs are about much more than just cleaning roads or public spaces. They adopt a holistic approach that includes raising awareness, changing behavior, and ensuring sustainability. Awareness drives often precede cleaning efforts, where the organization educates people about the importance of hygiene, the dangers of open defecation, and proper waste disposal methods.

Workshops on waste segregation are commonly held, especially in urban areas where garbage mismanagement is a pressing issue. NGOs train people to separate biodegradable and non-biodegradable waste, explain how composting can help manage organic waste, and encourage the reduction of plastic usage.

Workshops on waste segregation are commonly held, especially in urban areas where garbage mismanagement is a pressing issue. NGOs train people

to separate biodegradable and non biodegradable waste, explain how composting can help manage organic waste, and encourage the reduction of plastic usage.

One of the most engaging ways NGOs spread awareness is through street plays, puppet shows, and community events. These activities, often conducted in local languages, help people connect emotionally with the message and inspire a sense of responsibility. In schools, NGOs run eco-clubs and cleanliness drives where students participate in making their campus clean, thereby planting the seeds of environmental responsibility early in life.

## Partnerships That Strengthen Impact

A key strategy that has enabled many NGOs to scale up their sanitation work is collaboration with local governments and civic bodies. While governments provide infrastructure and financial support, NGOs bring in manpower, commitment, and a grassroots understanding of community dynamics. These partnerships have led to several successful outcomes—public toilets being built and maintained, installation of waste bins in public areas, and the creation of green spaces where garbage heaps once stood.

In many cities, NGOs have partnered with municipal corporations to implement door-to-door waste collection services. They also assist in monitoring public sanitation facilities and reporting maintenance issues, ensuring that existing infrastructure is actually usable by the public.



## Overcoming Predicaments

Of course, the road hasn't always been smooth. Many NGOs struggle with inadequate funding and rely heavily on donations or volunteer work. Convincing people to change long-standing habits related to waste disposal or hygiene can be a slow and frustrating process. Moreover, a lack of support from local authorities or poor coordination with civic bodies can hamper efforts.

Yet, despite these hurdles, NGOs continue to push forward. Their success lies in their persistence and deep community involvement. Many have adopted innovative methods—like using social media to raise funds, involving corporate CSR programs, and leveraging volunteer networks among students and professionals.

## Visible Change and Lasting Impact

The results of their efforts are becoming increasingly visible. Streets that were once littered with garbage now

remain clean due to regular monitoring by community volunteers. Children are learning to wash their hands before meals, and open defecation has significantly decreased in several regions thanks to awareness and toilet-building initiatives led by NGOs.

Importantly, sanitation drives by NGOs have also created job opportunities. Youths are trained as waste collectors, composting guides, or hygiene educators. This employment not only improves local cleanliness but also uplifts livelihoods.

## A Movement by People

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan is often seen as a government-led movement, but its heart truly lies in community involvement. NGOs, with their reach, commitment, and creativity, have become the backbone of this effort. They have managed to turn what could have been a top-down policy into a bottom-up revolution.

Their work reminds us that true cleanliness doesn't just come from policies or slogans. It begins in neighborhoods, in schools, in markets—and most of all, in minds. A nation becomes truly clean not just when streets are swept, but when every citizen feels responsible for keeping it that way.

As India continues on its path toward a cleaner, healthier future, the contributions of NGOs will remain invaluable. Their broomsticks may not make headlines, but they are certainly sweeping in silent change—one street, one village, one mindset at a time.

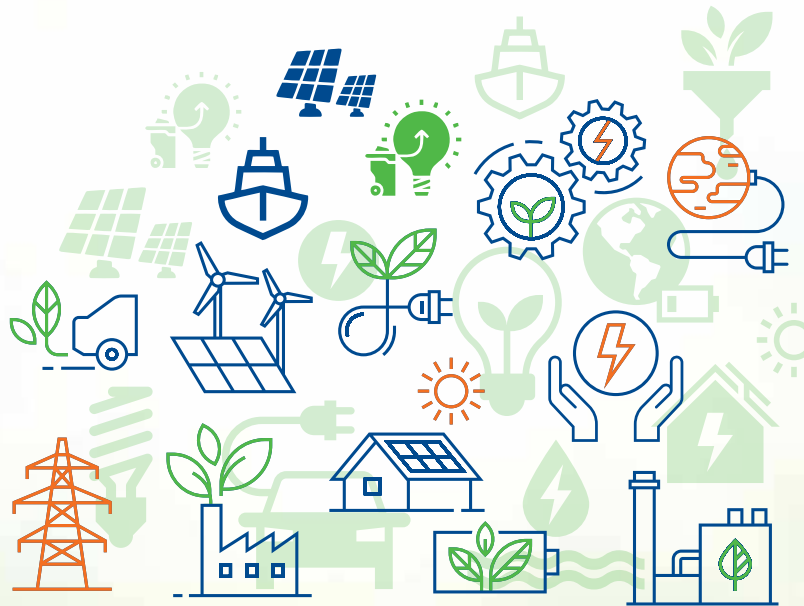


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# CSR Quiz

## NGOs in India

### CHAMPIONS OF CHANGE

Test your knowledge about India's incredible NGOs and their inspiring work! From education to environment, discover how these organizations are shaping lives and communities across the nation. Ready to challenge yourself? Let's begin!

**1. Which Indian NGO is best known for its large-scale mid-day meal program in schools?**

- a) Pratham
- b) Akshaya Patra Foundation
- c) CRY
- d) HelpAge India

**2. What is the full form of CRY, one of India's most prominent child rights NGOs?**

- a) Child Rights and You
- b) Care, Relief and Youth
- c) Children's Rescue Year
- d) Child Rehabilitation Yard

**3. Which Indian NGO is known for organizing the annual 'India Giving Challenge' to promote philanthropy and fundraising?**

- a) GiveIndia
- b) Pratham
- c) Goonj
- d) Akshaya Patra Foundation

**4. Which NGO works extensively with the elderly population in India?**

- a) Smile Foundation
- b) HelpAge India
- c) Pratham
- d) Seva Mandir

**5. The NGO 'Barefoot College' in Rajasthan is globally known for training rural women as what?**

- a) Midwives
- b) Solar engineers
- c) Animal care workers
- d) Microfinance trainers

**6. Which NGO launched the "Joy of Giving Week," now known as "Daan Utsav"?**

- a) Goonj
- b) GiveIndia
- c) Smile Foundation
- d) Teach for India

**7. Who is the founder of the NGO 'Goonj,' which focuses on urban-rural resource gaps using clothing as a development tool?**

- a) Kailash Satyarthi
- b) Venkat Krishnan
- c) Anshu Gupta
- d) Kiran Bedi

**8. Which organization, started by Nobel Laureate Kailash Satyarthi, has worked to rescue over 1 lakh children from child labor and trafficking?**

- a) Save the Children
- b) Childline India
- c) Bachpan Bachao Andolan
- d) CRY

9. Which NGO runs the “Mission Education” program for underprivileged children across India?

- a) Smile Foundation
- b) Akanksha Foundation
- c) Teach for India
- d) Pratham

10. Pratham, one of India’s largest NGOs in education, is known for which popular annual survey?

- a) ASHA Report
- b) ASER Report
- c) SHIKSHA Report
- d) SARAL Survey

11. Which Indian NGO has made headlines for converting old clothes into sanitary pads and was awarded for its work in menstrual hygiene?

- a) Goonj
- b) SEWA
- c) Akanksha Foundation
- d) Chetna

12. Which NGO started the ‘Teach India’ campaign in collaboration with *The Times of India*?

- a) Pratham
- b) Teach for India
- c) Smile Foundation
- d) GiveIndia

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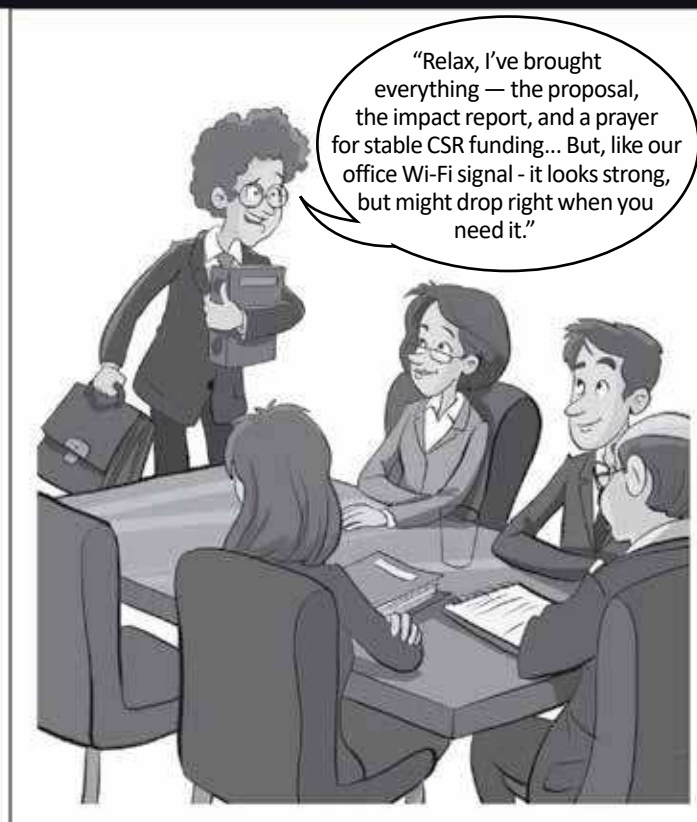
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## NUTSHELL

By P.D.



# How Strategic Roots and Corporate Lessons Shaped CSRL's Growth

In this exclusive interview with Nripendra Kumar Bharali, Director General, CSRL, we witness the journey of Former Director (HR & BD), OIL India Ltd. who successfully transitioned from leading high-impact teams in the energy sector to joining the Centre for Social Responsibility and Leadership (CSRL) as a Board Member and Academic Advisor, offering strategic guidance and contributing to the organization's vision. In his current role, Mr. Bharali oversees the academic vertical, with a strong focus on strengthening the institutional framework and nurturing a dedicated, high-quality faculty base to create a supportive and effective learning environment.

**From Oil India Ltd. to CSRL, your career spans both corporate and social sectors. What inspired your transition from a high-profile role in the energy industry to leading an educational non-profit?**

My innings with Oil India Ltd (OIL) was extremely exciting and fulfilling with ample learning and leadership opportunities. During this journey, I had significant exposure to the Organisation's CSR activities and the impact it was creating in the Society. A bond developed automatically without any conscious effort and also a desire to contribute meaningfully to society. Active association with OIL's different CSR initiatives also helped me realise that, while each CSR initiative if undertaken with sincerity and dedication creates positive impact, education remains the most powerful tool for positive change.

Post superannuation there were opportunities to choose from, but I decided to join the Board of CSRL as the Academic adviser and become an active part of the real impact education creates. Taking on the role of Director General felt like a natural extension of my journey—a chance to use my experience to serve a cause I deeply value.





**You've had the unique experience of working in technical, strategic, and HR roles during your tenure at Oil India Ltd. How did these diverse responsibilities prepare you for your current leadership role at CSRL?**

Each role at Oil India taught me something different, technical roles helped me understand the principle of root cause analysis in problem-solving, HR taught me to appreciate the value of each employee and how to work with them to harness the best outcome, and strategic roles gave me a sense of long-term vision. At CSRL, I find myself drawing from all of these experiences. Whether it's building a strong academic team, planning new centres, or resolving everyday challenges, the fundamentals remain the same: listen carefully, plan wisely, act decisively, and always stay grounded in purpose. My time in the corporate world gave me tools; CSRL gives me the chance to use them in service of something deeply human.

**Under your leadership, CSRL has expanded its footprint across India. What have been some of the key strategies or decisions that have driven this growth and impact?**

The growth has been a collective effort of all stakeholders – the experienced and diverse Board, the functional management and our loyal and committed employees. It is also rooted in staying true to our mission. We focus a lot on understanding local needs—because what works in Kanpur may not work in Guwahati or Chennai. We have made our programmes completely inclusive and follow a zero tolerance

policy on this front. Most importantly we have developed positive as well as deep relationships—with Sponsors, faculty, and partners—who believe in what we do. At the same time, our signature programme **Super 30**, is a unique CSR initiative which enables the Sponsors to see tangible positive outcome of their association within a definite timespan of one year. What I have found is that when people sense genuine intent and see real results, they come forward to support and amplify the impact.

**Quality education for underprivileged students is at the heart of CSRL's mission. What challenges do you face in delivering equitable, high quality coaching at scale, and how are you addressing them?**

The biggest challenge is ensuring the same level of quality everywhere, whether we are operating in a metropolitan centre or a remote town. Quality faculty, consistent processes, and full scale support (financial, technical as well as emotional) systems are critical. We've worked hard to train our teachers, standardise content, and introduce mentorship so that students get more than just coaching, they feel seen and supported. Funding is a major issue, but we are lucky to have partners who trust the work we do. Scaling without losing any of the above, that is the balance we focus on.

**You've overseen international business development in the past. In your view, what parallels can be drawn between managing global business**

**expansion and scaling social impact initiatives in education?**

While the two may look completely apart, there are quite a few. In both spaces, we need a clear vision, a strong sense of commitment, a dedicated team, and the ability to build meaningful partnerships. Assessing risks, understanding different contexts, and building trust with stakeholders are common to both activities. The biggest common factor is people. Whether one is setting up a business abroad or creating a new education centre in a new location, it all comes down to building relationships and aligning values. And in both, the impact needs to be long lasting.

**What is your long-term vision for CSRL, and what role do you see the organization playing in shaping India's educational and social development landscape in the next decade?**

My dream is to see CSRL evolve into a nationwide model of inclusive education—where talent is nurtured regardless of background without any bias or discrimination. We have made a strong mark in JEE and NEET preparation, have contributed positively to nation building by giving the nation a large number of quality Engineers and Medical Professionals. We aim to reach out to students in every nook and corner of India, places which still remain underserved. The ultimate focus is on making CSRL known not just as an education provider, but as a movement that believes in potential, creates opportunities, and drives long-term social change.



# Involvement of NGOs Across the World in Achieving SDGs

CSR TIMES BUREAU

**N**on-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have become indispensable allies in the global pursuit of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). With their deep community engagement, grassroots outreach, and innovative approaches,

NGOs bridge gaps where governments and private sectors often face challenges. Across continents, NGOs are spearheading initiatives that tackle poverty, education, health, gender equality, climate action, and more—core areas within the 17 SDGs.

In India, **Pratham Education**

**Foundation** has made remarkable strides toward SDG 4 (Quality Education) through its “**Read India**” program. By focusing on improving literacy and learning outcomes among children in rural and urban slums, Pratham has reached millions, transforming educational landscapes





and helping close the learning gap for disadvantaged communities.

In Africa, **AMREF Health Africa** champions SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) through initiatives like the “**Mothers and Children First**” project. By training community health workers and improving maternal and child health services, AMREF addresses healthcare access disparities in rural areas, directly contributing to reduced maternal and infant mortality.

For climate action (SDG 13), **350.org** stands out as a global grassroots

movement driving awareness and policy change on climate change. Its campaigns, including the “**Fossil Fuel Divestment Movement**,” pressure institutions to divest from fossil fuels, catalyzing sustainable energy transitions worldwide.

Gender equality (SDG 5) has seen impactful efforts from organizations like **CARE International**. Their “**Village Savings and Loan Associations**” (VSLA) empower women economically by facilitating access to microfinance, enabling entrepreneurship and leadership development in marginalized communities.

In Latin America, **Fundación Paraguaya** is transforming rural education through the “**Microfinance and Agricultural School**” model, integrating SDG 4 and SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by teaching entrepreneurship and providing financial services to young rural women and men.

These examples underscore how NGOs play a crucial role in localizing SDGs—translating global goals into community-specific actions. NGOs’

flexibility allows them to innovate and adapt quickly, reaching vulnerable populations often left behind in large-scale government programs.

Challenges remain, including funding constraints and coordination with other stakeholders, but the synergy between NGOs, governments, and the private sector is key to accelerating SDG progress.

As the 2030 deadline approaches, strengthening NGO capacities and fostering multi-sector partnerships will be vital to ensure that no one is left behind in the global development journey.

#### Sources:

- *Pratham Education Foundation* ([pratham.org](http://pratham.org))
- *AMREF Health Africa Reports* ([amref.org](http://amref.org))
- *350.org Campaigns* ([350.org](http://350.org))
- *CARE International Programs* ([care.org](http://care.org))
- *Fundación Paraguaya Initiatives* ([fundacionparaguaya.org.py](http://fundacionparaguaya.org.py))
- *United Nations SDG Knowledge Platform* ([sdgs.un.org](http://sdgs.un.org))





# BILL GATES' \$200 BILLION PHILANTHROPIC VISION: A COUNTDOWN TO 2045

PRADEEP KUMAR PANDEY

In an era where global crises seem relentless and philanthropic efforts struggle to keep pace, Bill Gates has once again challenged conventional thinking—this time not with a new product or vaccine, but with a countdown clock.

On the occasion of the Bill &

Melinda Gates Foundation's 25th anniversary, Gates announced that the foundation will **spend down its endowment and close its doors by 2045**, pledging to **disburse \$200 billion over the next two decades**. The move marks a definitive shift in global philanthropy, placing urgency and

measurable outcomes ahead of institutional permanence.

## Strategic Philanthropy with a Deadline

The decision to wind down the foundation in 20 years reflects a broader trend gaining traction among mega-donors: "giving while living." Unlike traditional foundations that continue in perpetuity, Gates' approach signals a conscious choice to frontload impact rather than leave legacies to the whims of future boards or political climates.

Gates explained that the challenges facing the world—climate change, pandemics, inequality, and fragile health systems—require "**speed and scale**." This accelerated disbursement strategy is designed to generate immediate, scalable solutions rather than merely planting seeds for future generations.

## Where the Billions Will Go

The Gates Foundation has outlined three broad priority areas for its intensified final phase:

- **Global Health:** Efforts will double down on eradicating diseases like polio and malaria, advancing maternal and child health, and bolstering pandemic preparedness.
- **Education Access:** Emphasis will be placed on equitable education solutions, particularly in under-resourced areas in the U.S., Africa, and South Asia.
- **Poverty Alleviation and Agricultural Development:** Initiatives will focus on sustainable farming, food security, and financial inclusion to empower marginalized communities.

While these areas aren't new to the Foundation's agenda, the **scale, speed, and finality** of the funding cycle are unprecedented.

## Responding to Aid Cuts and Global Volatility

Gates' announcement is not just phil-

anthropic but also political. In recent years, public funding for global aid has come under strain, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Speaking at the foundation's anniversary event, Gates remarked that "philanthropy cannot replace government action, but it can nudge it in the right direction."

By amplifying his foundation's contributions at a time when bilateral and multilateral aid are contracting, Gates is sending a clear message: philanthropy must be agile, ambitious, and above all, accountable.

## What It Means for Global Giving

The announcement could ripple far beyond the Gates Foundation itself. A deadline-driven approach challenges other billionaires and institutions to consider not just how much they give, but **how fast and how effectively**. This could prompt a reevaluation of the common practice of preserving endowments and spending conservatively to ensure institutional longevity.

Critics argue that compressing such vast funding into a two-decade

timeline could lead to inefficiencies or short-termism. But proponents counter that today's challenges—climate displacement, rising extremism, and health inequities—demand precisely this kind of bold, time-bound intervention.

## A Foundation That Ends to Prove a Point

What happens after 2045? According to the foundation's leadership, the intention is to wind down responsibly, ensuring that the programs it funds are either sustainable or have been handed over to governments or local institutions. There will be no scramble to remain relevant—only a roadmap to exit with impact.

Bill Gates has always been a believer in metrics and moonshots. This final philanthropic act may just be both: a bet that the world can be dramatically improved, not someday, but within the span of one generation.

As the global development community digests this announcement, one thing is clear: the age of passive, perpetual philanthropy is under review. And the countdown has begun.

### Sources:

- *Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation 25th Anniversary Blog Post* ([gatesfoundation.org](https://gatesfoundation.org))
- *The New York Times*: "Bill Gates Vows \$200 Billion for Foundation and Planned Closure by 2045" (April 2025)
- *Financial Times*: "Gates Foundation's Final Act: Spend It All" (April 2025)
- *Bill Gates' Personal Blog* ([gatesnotes.com](https://gatesnotes.com))



# NGOs - the foot soldiers of corporate benevolence

MAANISA DAS

If CSR funds were the fuel, NGOs would be the GPS—occasionally recalculating but mostly heading in the right direction. From planting trees (that actually survive beyond the photo-op) to teaching digital skills in villages with more goats than gadgets, NGOs have evolved into the foot soldiers of corporate benevolence.

Consider *Door Step School* in Maharashtra, supported by Tata Motors under its CSR initiative. They converted old BEST buses into mobile classrooms, bringing education to construction site children. It's possibly the only bus where children eagerly queue up. Books, not brakes—who knew?

Meanwhile, *HelpUsGreen*, backed by GAIL and Tata Trusts, found an innovative way to deal with temple flower waste. They train rural women in Uttar Pradesh and Odisha to turn discarded marigolds into eco-friendly incense sticks and biodegradable products. It's recycling with divine blessings—and economic empowerment.

Then there's *RUR GreenLife*, working with Hindustan Unilever and Godrej, turning plastic waste into sleek, colorful furniture for anganwadis. One child's discarded bottle becomes another child's bench—now that's circular economy with style.

*Doctors For You*, in partnership with Abbott and Dell, delivers mobile healthcare clinics in slums across Delhi and Mumbai. They set up makeshift



clinics in community halls and parking lots, serving patients with the kind of discipline that would make any hospital administrator proud. Local chemists may be grumbling, but the people are cheering.

Not every story ends in glory, though. A CSR-backed NGO in rural Bihar built a series of toilets with great intent but overlooked behavioral awareness. The villagers promptly repurposed them as storerooms for grain. Turns out, the need for proper usage training is as urgent as the need for sanitation.

In all this, NGOs are not just “implementing partners”—they’re translators of corporate vision into grassroots action. They decode jargon-filled CSR mandates and convert them into tangible outcomes: clean water,

literacy, health camps, vocational training, green jobs, and most importantly—trust within communities.

Yes, there may be occasional hiccups, like mismatched budget heads or a missing MOU, but NGOs bring a mix of compassion, creativity, and just enough chaos to ensure impact doesn't stop at the inauguration selfie.

As we applaud the glossy dashboards and ESG scorecards, let's not forget the unsung hands that carry the weight of every CSR promise. The next time you attend a corporate event celebrating “impact,” ask: who made it happen, who stayed behind after the photo-ops, and who made sure the last mile was actually covered?

That answer, more often than not, wears no suit—but carries a clipboard and walks with purpose.



**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) today stands at a crossroads — balancing intent and impact, image and integrity. These quotes offer a candid lens into the purpose, pitfalls, promise, and perils of CSR, inviting reflection beyond boardrooms and brochures.**

### The Importance of CSR

“CSR isn’t charity—it’s strategy with a conscience.”

“When business meets responsibility, the result is sustainable impact.”

“Profits are numbers; purpose gives them a pulse.”

“A company’s true value is measured by what it gives back, not just what it earns.”

### The Challenges of CSR

“Doing good isn’t hard—doing it meaningfully, transparently, and consistently is.”

“CSR without community insight is like a GPS with no signal—you’re moving, but lost.”

“Red tape can turn a well-meaning CSR project into a paper tiger.”

“The biggest challenge in CSR isn’t funding—it’s finding authentic intent.”

### The Opportunities in CSR

“Every social problem is a business opportunity in disguise.”

“CSR opens doors where marketing alone cannot enter—into hearts, homes, and hopes.”

“When businesses plant seeds of change, they grow roots of loyalty.”

“Real innovation often begins where a CSR idea meets a local need.”

### The Threats and Misuse of CSR

“CSR is not a photo op; it’s a long-term relationship with reality.”

“When CSR becomes a branding exercise, impact quietly leaves the room.”

“Greenwashing turns good intentions into hollow echoes—accountability must be louder.”

### Quiz Answers

- |                                |                              |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. b) Akshaya Patra Foundation | 7. c) Anshu Gupta            |
| 2. a) Child Rights and You     | 8. c) Bachpan Bachao Andolan |
| 3. a) GiveIndia                | 9. a) Smile Foundation       |
| 4. b) HelpAge India            | 10. b) ASER Report           |
| 5. b) Solar engineers          | 11. a) Goonj                 |
| 6. b) GiveIndia                | 12. b) Teach for India       |

# Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi showcases India's Scalable Healthcare Reforms

in his address at the 78th Session of the World Health Assembly in Geneva

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi addressed the 78th Session of the World Health Assembly in Geneva today via video-conferencing. Addressing the gathering, he extended warm greetings to all attendees, highlighting this year's theme, 'One World for Health,' and emphasized that it aligns with India's vision for global health. He recalled his address at the 2023 World Health Assembly, where he had spoken about 'One Earth, One Health.' He remarked that the future of a healthy world depends on inclusion, an integrated vision, and collaboration.

Emphasizing that inclusion is at the core of India's health reforms, Shri Modi highlighted Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, which covers 580 million people and provides free treatment. The programme was recently expanded to cover all Indians above the age of 70 years. He noted India's extensive network of thousands of health and wellness centers that facilitate early screening and detection of diseases such as cancer, diabetes, and hypertension. He also underlined the role of thousands of public pharmacies that provide high-quality medicines at significantly lower prices. Highlighting the role of technology in improving health outcomes, Shri Modi underscored India's digital initiatives like the digital platform that tracks the vaccination of pregnant women and children and the

unique digital health identity system, which is helping integrate benefits, insurance, records, and information. He remarked that with telemedicine, no one is too far from a doctor. He highlighted India's free telemedicine service, which has enabled over 340

**"The health of the world depends on how well we care for the most vulnerable", underlined the Prime Minister, highlighting that the Global South is particularly impacted by health challenges and stressed that India's approach provides replicable, scalable, and sustainable models.**

million consultations. Reflecting on the positive impact of India's health initiatives, he noted a significant decline in Out-of-Pocket Expenditure as a percentage of Total Health Expenditure. Simultaneously, he emphasized that Government Health Expenditure has increased considerably.

"The health of the world depends on how well we care for the most vulnerable", underlined the Prime Minister, highlighting that the Global South is particularly impacted by health challenges and stressed that India's approach provides replicable, scalable, and sustainable models. He expressed India's willingness to share its learnings and best practices with the world, especially with the Global South. Looking ahead to the 11th International Day of Yoga in June, the Prime Minister encouraged global participation. He highlighted this year's theme, 'Yoga for One Earth, One Health,' and extended an invitation to all countries, emphasizing India's role as the birthplace of Yoga.

Shri Modi extended his congratulations to the World Health Organization (WHO) and all member states on the successful negotiations of the INB treaty. He described it as a shared commitment to fighting future pandemics through greater global cooperation. He emphasized the importance of building a healthy planet while ensuring that no one is left behind. Concluding his address, the Prime Minister invoked a timeless prayer from the Vedas, he reflected on how, thousands of years ago, India's sages prayed for a world where all would be healthy, happy, and free from disease. He expressed hope that this vision would unite the world.

*Press Information Bureau (PIB)*



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# India highlights Forest Conservation and Sustainable Forest Management achievements at the 20th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forests

India participated in the 20th session of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF20), held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York from May 5 to 9, 2025.

India highlighted its significant progress in forest conservation and sustainable forest management, reaffirming its commitment to achieving the Voluntary National Contributions (VNCs) under the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030. India reported a consistent increase in forest and tree cover, now encompassing 25.17% of its geographical area as per the latest India State of Forest Report as a result of key national initiatives like the restoration of land under the Aravalli Green Wall, a 7.86% increase in mangrove cover over the past decade, afforestation of over 1.55 lakh hectares under the Green India Mission, and plantation of 1.4 billion seedlings under the Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam (Plant4Mother) campaign.

A key moment of India's participation was the invitation to all UN Member States to join the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA)—a global platform launched by India to support conservation of the seven big cat species through joint research, knowledge exchange, and capacity-building.

The Indian delegation called for global action on the outcomes of the Country-Led Initiative (CLI) hosted by India in Dehradun in October 2023, which focused on forest fire management and forest certification. India also acknowledged and appreciated CLI efforts led by the Republic of Congo, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Austria, and empha-

sized the importance of integrating CLI outcomes into formal global mechanisms to support priority forestry issues.

India also hosted a side event on "Restoring Degraded Forest Landscapes: India's Approach to Sustainable Forest Management and Climate Resilience." The event showcased India's experience with integrated forest restoration through policy innovation, convergence of resources, active community engagement, and use of technology for monitoring and evaluation. Key achievements and contributions toward global forest goals were presented during the session.

Further, India joined a high-level panel on "Valuing Forest Ecosystems in National Policy and Strategy," where the delegation shared findings from pilot studies in Uttarakhand, Rajasthan, and tiger reserves. These studies quantified ecosystem services such as carbon sequestration, water provisioning, and biodiversity conservation using frameworks such as the System of Environmental-Economic Accounting (SEEA) and the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MEA). While acknowledging challenges in valuing non-market services, India emphasized the need to integrate ecosystem valuation into national planning for informed forest governance and long-term ecological sustainability.

The Indian delegation to UNFF20 was led by Shri Sushil Kumar Awasthi, Director General of Forests and Special Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India.

*Press Information Bureau (PIB)*





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