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PRASHANT DAS

AND SPEAKING OF EMPOWERMENT, FORGET CINDERELLA. GLASS SLIPPERS HAVE BEEN TRADED FOR FINANCIAL LITERACY WORKSHOPS AND ENTREPRENEURIAL BOOTCAMPS. TODAY'S CORPORATE HEROINES ARE MORE LIKELY TO BE FOUND MENTORING YOUNG GIRLS IN 'STEM' OR SETTING UP SELF-HELP GROUPS THAN WAITING FOR A FAIRY-TALE ENDING.

EMPOWERED WOMEN EMPOWER COMMUNITIES

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the March 2025 issue of CSR TIMES! By now, gender equality is no longer just a buzzword in corporate corridors; it's the driving force behind meaningful change. From metro cities to remote villages, women are leading impactful initiatives, proving that CSR is not just about tree-planting photo ops — it's about planting seeds of empowerment.

And speaking of empowerment, forget Cinderella. Glass slippers have been traded for financial literacy workshops and entrepreneurial bootcamps. Today's corporate heroines are more likely to be found mentoring young girls in STEM or setting up self-help groups than waiting for a fairy-tale ending. After all, real magic happens when empowered women empower entire communities.

Take Dr. Swati Piramal, whose commitment to healthcare is changing lives in remote villages. Or Nivruti Rai, who's proving that coding isn't just for Silicon Valley; it's for every ambitious young girl with a knack for problem-solving. Then there's Seema Arora, who's making sustainability the new corporate battleground. Companies are now vying for GreenCo ratings like kids fighting over the last slice of cake. Spoiler alert: the planet wins!

This issue also celebrates the decade-long journey of the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao campaign. Girls who once fought for a seat in a classroom are now winning scholarships, leading debates, and much to the dismay of nosy aunties, becoming CEOs. The ripple effect is undeniable — educated girls mentoring their communities and inspiring the next wave of changemakers.

So, buckle up as we dive into stories of resilience, innovation, and purpose. And remember, in the world of CSR, every act of kindness compounds interest. Happy reading!

Yours socially responsible,

Prashant Das
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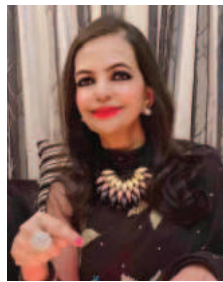
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PERSPECTIVE



Empowering Women Through CSR: A Path to Gender Equality and Economic Inclusion

It may sound cliché to say that CSR has evolved significantly over the years and covered diverse social issues within its ambit, but a realistic evaluation would prove just this. The most inclusive social issue that looms large on the CSR horizon is gender equality. The CSR strategies of companies now consciously seek to integrate gender focused policies that empower women and promote a more equitable society. Rather than limiting themselves to addressing immediate community needs alone, they focus on the long-term empowerment of women with a strong accent on gender equality, skill development, leadership opportunities and economic inclusion.

It is heartening to note that gender diversity is being recognized by many companies as a business advantage contrary to just remaining a moral call to follow and document. Companies with notable CSR impact work towards addressing gender-based discrimination, creating a more inclusive work environment, promoting equal pay for equal work, providing equal training and developmental opportunities as a part of career enhancement, revising their recruitment policies to become broader and more inclusive. Impactful CSR strategies also focus on addressing and challenging social norms that restrict the access of women to education and work opportunities and prove detrimental for a woman's career growth. They attempt to create awareness to educate communities and help bring about positive behavioral changes. Skill development through training programmes, entrepreneurial support and economic inclusion are brought about.

Economic inclusion covers women's access to the same financial resources, opportunities and services that are available to men and that would assist their economic growth. These could include though not remain limited to, accessing financial services, jobs, and rendering support to women owned businesses.

Another significant area where the new CSR Driven gender inclusive approach has made its impact is in the development of leadership opportunities for women. These again include though are not confined to mentorship programmes, boardroom diversity and women empowerment in politics.

As businesses continue to include the intrinsic value of empowering women at all levels, what is the true measure of CSR strategies formulated with that as a focal point? In my opinion it should extend much beyond the workplace to benefit communities and nations as a whole!

Dr. Shabnam Asthana
Associate Editor, CSR Times

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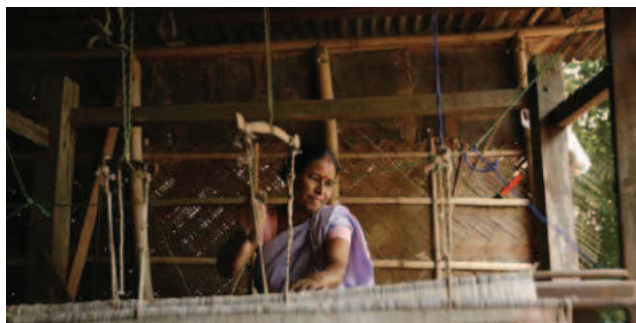
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Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

BREAKING BARRIERS: INSPIRING STORIES OF WOMEN CHANGEMAKERS IN CSR

CSR TIMES Bureau

While skyscrapers and stock exchanges often capture the headlines, it is the stories of resilience, compassion, and innovation that truly shape the world we live in. In India, women are

breaking barriers and leading transformational change, not just within corporate boardrooms but also at the grassroots level through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Their stories echo across continents, proving that the spirit of Indian women knows no bounds.

This year, we celebrate these extraordinary changemakers — leaders who have tackled societal challenges, uplifted marginalized communities, and brought sustainable development to the forefront of corporate agendas. Their journeys are not merely stories of



Dr. Swati Piramal



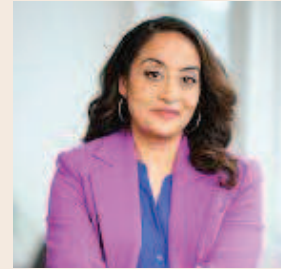
Nivruti Rai



Seema Arora



Chetna Sinha



Geetha Murali



Indra Nooyi

success, but testaments to the power of purpose-driven leadership.

From Boardroom to Bharat: Driving Change Where It Matters

Take the story of Dr. Swati Piramal, Vice Chairperson of Piramal Group, whose dedication to healthcare and education has transformed countless lives. Through the Piramal Foundation, she has championed initiatives addressing maternal and child health, ensuring medical access

in underserved regions. Her efforts have impacted over 112 million people across 27 states in India, making a tangible difference in rural healthcare.

Then there's **Nivruti Rai**, former Intel India head, who has consistently promoted diversity and inclusion through CSR initiatives in STEM education. She actively supported programs encouraging girls to pursue careers in technology, proving that equitable representation in tech is achievable when opportunities are accessible. Through her efforts, thousands of girls from low-income backgrounds have enrolled in engineering courses, breaking generational cycles of exclusion.

Sustainability Warriors: Women Leading the Climate Fight

Environmental stewardship has found passionate advocates in women like Seema Arora, Deputy Director General of the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII). Her leadership in sustainable business practices has



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

driven the adoption of green initiatives across industries. Through the GreenCo rating system, she has enabled companies to measure and reduce their environmental footprint. Her tireless work exemplifies how CSR can align business growth with ecological responsibility.

Similarly, Chetna Sinha, the founder of Mann Deshi Foundation, empowers rural women entrepreneurs by providing them with access to financial services and mentorship. Through sustainable farming and water conservation programs, she has uplifted thousands of women in drought-prone regions, enabling them to achieve financial independence while promoting environmental sustainability.

Global Impact: Indian Women on the World Stage

Indian women have not only changed the narrative domestically but have also extended their influence across the globe. **Geetha Murali**, CEO of Room to Read, has led one of the most successful literacy programs

worldwide. Her commitment to girls' education has resulted in millions of children gaining access to quality learning, particularly in marginalized communities. Geetha's work has been recognized internationally, further solidifying India's contribution to global educational reform.

Then there is Indra Nooyi, former CEO of PepsiCo, who continues to inspire with her advocacy for sustainable business practices and diversity. Her legacy includes groundbreaking initiatives like the Performance with Purpose program, which embedded sustainability into

PepsiCo's operations. She remains a vocal supporter of gender parity in leadership, paving the way for countless women to shatter glass ceilings.

Game Changers: Women in Sports

In the world of sports, **Neeraj Chopra** may have clinched Olympic gold, but it is women like **PV Sindhu** and **Mirabai Chanu** who have redefined resilience. Sindhu, India's badminton star, not only secured multiple international medals but also inspired millions of girls to pursue professional sports. Similarly, Mirabai Chanu's Olympic silver in weightlifting proved that determination can overcome even the toughest circumstances. Both athletes actively engage in social initiatives, encouraging young girls to embrace sports.

Another remarkable story is that of **Harmanpreet Kaur**, the captain of the Indian women's cricket team. Under her leadership, women's cricket has gained unprecedented recognition. Kaur also promotes grassroots initiatives that offer



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

mentorship and opportunities for young girls in rural India to join professional cricket academies.

Tech Pioneers: Breaking Barriers in Innovation

In the ever-evolving tech world, **Debjani Ghosh**, President of NASSCOM, has emerged as a torchbearer. She has led initiatives that drive diversity in technology leadership, urging companies to bridge the gender gap. Her commitment to digital literacy has empowered countless rural women through access to education and entrepreneurial opportunities. Similarly, **Roshni Nadar Malhotra**, Chairperson of HCL Technologies, has been a pioneer in both corporate leadership and philanthropy. Through the Shiv Nadar Foundation, she has funded educational programs for underprivileged students. Her vision is to create a more inclusive education system that nurtures the leaders of tomorrow.

Educators and Social Reformers: The Backbone of Change

Education remains one of the most powerful tools for social transformation. **Dr. Madhuri Sahni**, founder of the Nanhi Kali project, has been instrumental in supporting the education of underprivileged girls. With mentorship and scholarships, she has enabled thousands of young girls to stay in school and pursue their dreams.

On the social front, **Sunitha Krishnan**, a Padma Shri awardee, has devoted her life to rescuing and



PV Sindhu



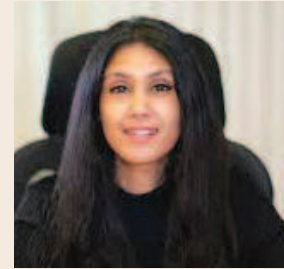
Mirabai Chanu



Harmanpreet Kaur



Debjani Ghosh



Roshni Nadar Malhotra



Sunitha Krishnan

rehabilitating survivors of human trafficking. Through her NGO, Prajwala, she has provided shelter, legal aid, and vocational training to thousands of women, helping them reclaim their lives.

The Road Ahead: Fostering Inclusive Growth

While these stories inspire, the road to inclusive development is still long. The involvement of women in CSR not only ensures a more empathetic approach to problem-solving but also leads to

holistic and sustainable results. More corporates are realizing that empowering women at all levels — from community engagement to corporate leadership — is a crucial driver of success.

We believe that celebrating these changemakers is not just about acknowledging their achievements but also encouraging others to follow suit. With more mentorship opportunities, policy support, and inclusive leadership, the future will witness an even greater wave of women-led impact.

As we salute these remarkable women, let their stories serve as a reminder that no barrier is insurmountable. Every initiative taken, every life touched, and every community empowered stands as a beacon of hope. Through the continued commitment of these changemakers, India's journey toward inclusive and sustainable growth is well underway.

Here's to the women rewriting the narrative of corporate responsibility — one bold step at a time.



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh



SHEROES : WRITING THE FUTURE, ONE STORY AT A TIME

GAIL's recent visit to the **Utkarsh Project in Varanasi**, an **all-girls centre** dedicated to **engineering and medical mentoring**, reaffirmed its commitment to **education, sustainability, and community empowerment**. **Shri Ayush Gupta, Director (HR), GAIL**, along with **Shri Anoop Gupta, ED (CSR)**, and **Shri Hirdesh Kumar, ED (HR)**, interacted with students, faculty, and staff, fostering motivation and encouragement. A key milestone of the visit was the declaration of the **GAIL Utkarsh Centre as a 100% Plastic-Free Clean Campus**, reinforcing GAIL's dedication to **environmental sustainability and responsible practices**.

Enhancing the significance of the occasion, **International Women's Day** was celebrated, recognizing achievements and promoting empowerment. The visit concluded with a joyous **"Phoolon Ki Holi"** celebrating



Rang Bhari Ekadashi, blending cultural heritage with a sense of unity and festivity. Through such impactful initiatives, GAIL continues to drive positive change, fostering a **cleaner, greener, and more inclusive future**.



Nurturing Dreams, Shaping Generations

This Women's Day, as we celebrate the spirit of **strength and transformation**, it's heartening to see how girls at CSRL, hailing from **marginalized communities**, are being supported in their pursuit of JEE and NEET. With 33 residential centres—including dedicated ones in Pune, Kolkata, and Varanasi—we are nurturing not just **aspirations but changemakers**. I truly believe that when a girl is educated, she becomes a powerful force of generational impact.

History is filled with women whose everyday struggles inspired extraordinary solutions—**Josephine Cochrane**, who invented the first dishwasher in 1886 to ease household chores; **Mary Anderson**, who created the windshield wiper in 1903 to ensure safety on the roads; and **Alice H. Parker**, who designed the gas-powered home heating system in 1919, bringing warmth to countless homes. These innovations, though seemingly simple, changed lives in profound ways.

Our girls, too, carry that same spark—the ability to reshape society, if only supported at the right time. I feel proud to contribute in this journey of nurturing hope, courage, and meaningful change.

Educate a girl, and you empower a generation.



Ms. Meenakshi Shahi

Director - Business Development and
Marketing, CSRL



Nidhi Soni

Batch 2010-11
Project Manager CSRL

I am Nidhi, and my story begins in a small village in Uttar Pradesh, where girls' education was a distant dream. Growing up, I never imagined I could achieve anything beyond what was expected of me. But everything changed on May 14, 2003, when my principal told me I was selected for Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV). At just 10 years old, I saw a glimpse of hope in my life—hope I had never thought possible.

However, life had its own plans. When I was 13, in the middle of class 8,

I lost my mother to a heart disease. The pain of losing her was unbearable, yet I had to be strong. My brother was only 6 years old, and I had to step into the role of a caregiver, even as I was drowning in grief. With a broken heart, I returned to JNV, not to heal, but to escape the sorrow. I buried myself in my studies to hide my tears. The cheerful girl I once was turned into a quiet, focused student.

Through my pain, I achieved the second rank in class 10 and first in class 12. But my future still seemed uncertain. My father couldn't afford the fees for JEE coaching, and I felt stuck in a world with no opportunities. Then, by God's grace, I cleared the **GAIL Utkarsh exam**—a free residential coaching program. That was my turning point. With hope in my heart, I joined, and with unwavering

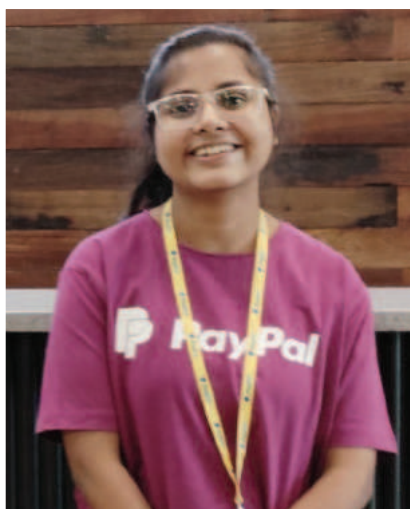
determination, I earned a seat in a reputed engineering college.

But life wasn't done testing me. When I was in my third year, I lost my father to a heart attack. At 20, I was left with no emotional or financial support. My friends rallied together to help me with my final year fees, and I completed my degree and secured a job at TCS. Yet, emotionally, I was shattered. The pressure of family led me into a marriage at 23, which soon ended in heartbreak and separation.

At my lowest point, I decided to return to CSRL—the place that had once helped me rise above my struggles. I joined as a Project Officer in Jaipur, working with 60 girls preparing for JEE. They became my strength, and the CSRL family became my new home. The love and support I received helped me find my way again. I was promoted to Project Manager, and I found my true calling—helping others fulfill their dreams.

Today, as I watch my students succeed and step into top colleges and companies, I find peace and purpose. Success, for me, is not about a high-paying job or a prestigious degree—it's about finding joy in helping others, about healing from pain, and about creating a life filled with love and support. My journey has taught me that no matter how many times life knocks you down, if you keep going, there is always light at the end of the tunnel.





Sonali Gupta

Batch 2020-21

PayPal

Growing up, my family faced financial difficulties, which constrained me to stay motivated and determined to build a better future. I cleared the Navodaya Vidyalaya entrance exam and completed my schooling there. Growing up I heard that once you get into an IIT you will have a good job and be financially stable. However, the cost of preparation was a challenge. But I held onto my faith in God, believing he would show a way.

After 12th grade, I got into Super 100 Kanpur, after clearing the entrance exam and interview. What once seemed like a blurred IIT dream now had rays of clarity and direction. The focused and motivating environment at Super 100 helped me identify my strengths and weaknesses. Although I missed my family, I understood the importance of staying disciplined. Everything was on track—I secured 99.02 percentile in JEE Mains and was preparing hard for JEE Advanced. But, to destiny something else was acceptable. Just three days before the exam (JEE-Advance), I was hospitalized with severe pneumonia, causing me to miss the test as I was kept in ICU for 9 days. This was a tough phase, to battle physically

with illness and mentally with myself but throughout this crisis, my family, teachers and my friends stood by me, providing immense emotional strength and hope, and Super 100 supported me financially as well. Their combined support was crucial in helping me recover physically and mentally.

Eventually, my JEE Mains score helped me to secure a seat in NIT Allahabad for Computer Science. With my family's encouragement and consistent hard work, now I am placed in PayPal with a package of 34.4 LPA. Looking back, this journey taught me that challenges are just part of the path, not the end. I am grateful to my parents, CSRL and Super-100 Kanpur family for their unwavering support.





Pallavi Gupta

Batch 2010-11

Director at Morgan Stanley

CSRL Super 30 was nothing short of a blessing in disguise. It gave me a second chance to reattempt the JEE exam—without any financial burden. That one opportunity became the turning point of my life. I got into one of the top Government Universities in the North East, and soon after, secured a placement with TCS, one of India's leading IT giants.

Life at CSRL Super 30 was not lavish—but it was full of love, learning, discipline, and dreams. The support extended beyond academics—they took care of our boarding, education, and even helped me secure a scholarship for my engineering fees. Because of this, I take pride in saying that after Class 12, I never had to ask my parents—who were already battling a financial crisis—for a single rupee.

Today, I work as a Director at Morgan Stanley, but my journey began with the values and foundation built at CSRL Super 30. From TCS (2015) to Deloitte (2018), Teradata (2021), and finally Morgan Stanley (2022)—each step was driven by gratitude and the desire to grow.

What CSRL Super 30 gave me wasn't just a platform—it gave me purpose. It taught me to stand tall and now, it inspires me to give back. Apart from my job, I actively work as a resume coach, helping my LinkedIn community with interview tips, HR negotiation strategies, and cloud adoption. And when I'm not working, I find joy in dancing and connecting with people—because I believe stories and

smiles can heal the world.

I'm also a proud mother to my son, Atharv, and I wish to raise him with the same values, empathy, and wisdom that have shaped my own journey—so that he too grows up to be someone who believes in uplifting others.

A heartfelt thank you to GAIL, for the most impactful CSR support, — your support helped me turn dreams into reality





Puja Kumari Singh

Batch 2019-20

Data engineer at Lloyds technology centre

Success is never an individual effort—it is shaped by the people, guidance, and opportunities we receive along the way. I owe a significant part of my journey to **GAIL Utkarsh Super 100**—a unit of **CSRL**, a program that provided me with the right mentorship and support when I needed it the most. Today, as a **Data Engineer at Lloyds Technology**

Centre, I look back with immense gratitude for the life-changing impact of this initiative.

What made GUS 100 truly special was not just the high-quality teaching but the round-the-clock mentorship provided by the program managers. While our teachers helped us master the academic concepts, it was the managing team of GUS 100 who ensured we remained disciplined, motivated, and always on the right track. Living in a residential environment with like-minded peers and dedicated mentors was an experience that shaped my work ethic and mindset. The rigorous schedule, structured

learning, and unwavering support from mentors who truly cared made all the difference. Looking back, I realize that this program didn't just prepare me for JEE, it prepared me for life.

I will always be grateful to **GAIL Utkarsh Super 100** for shaping my journey, not just academically but in every aspect of life.

To every student currently part of this program: **make the most of this opportunity, trust your mentors, and give your best effort.** Whether or not things go exactly as planned, every experience here will teach you something valuable and help you grow.





I am Shivani Saraswat, from Chandausi, a small town in Uttar Pradesh. My father is a farmer, and my mother is a homemaker. I studied at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Moradabad, from Class 6 to 12.

I was always good at studies and topped my class, but like most Navodaya students, my focus was mainly on board exams. There wasn't much guidance for competitive exams like JEE, so I didn't know where I stood in that race.

In 12th grade, I got an opportunity to appear for an entrance exam for **GAIL Utkarsh Super 100**, Kanpur, a free residential JEE coaching program. I was selected and moved there for 11 months of rigorous preparation.

That year was tough but life-changing. The study pressure was intense, and the competition was on another level.

I secured 99 percentile in JEE Mains and also cleared JEE Advanced. I had the option to join top IITs with core engineering branches, but my goal was clear—I wanted to study Computer Science in a reputed institute. So, I

Shivani Saraswat

Batch 2019-20

Software Developer at Oracle

chose Motilal Nehru National Institute of Technology (MNNIT), Allahabad, for my B.Tech in Computer Science and Engineering.

My four years at NIT Allahabad were full of learning and growth. In my final year, I got the highest package in my college and was placed as a Software Developer at Oracle India.

Coming from a small town with limited resources, I've realized that

hard work and the right opportunities can change everything. Whether it was studying at Navodaya, preparing for JEE, or making career decisions, I always tried to give my best.

If there's one thing I'd tell students from backgrounds like mine, it's this: Your starting point doesn't define where you can go. Stay focused, keep pushing forward, and believe in yourself.



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ROLE OF WOMEN IN ESG AND CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY



Sustainability has become critically important in today's consumption-oriented society, where environmental degradation often results from so-called development. Caring for our natural environment is part of our traditional practices, yet it has been neglected in the name of modernity. Our scriptures guide us to honour plants, trees, rivers, ponds, mountains, the moon, the sun, and the stars. However, these practices now have become more symbolic than a true respect for nature. Despite the erosion of our values over some time, it is intrinsic for women in our society to maintain a close association and bond with nature. Therefore, women are ideally

suited to undertake ESG responsibilities in today's context, particularly at local governance levels. Unfortunately, many women in remote villages still struggle to find sustainable livelihoods due to a lack of education, training, and resources.

The opening of CSR initiatives and their expansion into remote areas particularly in mountainous regions, have begun to foster development in recent times. In most of these regions, growth directly depends on the skill development and livelihood training of women, who are often the primary breadwinners and managers of their households. It is ironic that in many of these communities, women do not enjoy equal status despite being major

stakeholders in their households. This is primarily because the meagre earnings generated by women's hard work are often controlled by men. Recognising this gap, many corporations prioritise initiatives aimed at women's empowerment through the establishment of self-help groups, women's cooperatives, or entrepreneurial development programs. One of the examples of converging the governmental and non-governmental initiatives for the capacity building of locals in remote areas is enumerated here.

The Himalaya Unnati Mission (HUM), a global initiative focused on the conservation and preservation of Himalayan heritage, also works toward

this cause alongside many other environmental and socio-cultural initiatives. In one such initiative, HUM trained women entrepreneurs in the remote Pangri Valley of Himachal Pradesh, which is situated at an altitude of 8,000 to 11,000 feet and remains cut off due to snow for nearly 5 to 6 months each year. Surrounded by rugged mountains, harsh winters, and limited road connectivity, life in this valley is challenging, particularly for women seeking economic independence.

In 2023, HUM identified Pragati Village Organisation in Pangri valley as a potential self-help group and introduced them to value-added opportunities using hazelnuts, a key natural resource of the valley. HUM organised the capacity-building programmes for these women to develop entrepreneurial leadership. Despite the abundance of hazelnuts in the region, it had never been commercially processed by locals. The mission assisted them in recognising the market potential, as hazelnuts are currently priced at approximately ₹1,000 per kg, with prices steadily rising due to their uniqueness and high demand. To equip the women with essential skills, HUM organised a specialised baking training program for the residents of Sach Village by IHM Kufri. They were also trained in branding and marketing their produce. A total of 36 women participated, learning to make hazelnut cookies and brownies, thereby transforming their local produce into high-value products. Despite the challenges posed by extreme weather and



difficult transportation, most of these women have now begun full-time production, rendering Pragati VO self-sufficient. Today, they are not only earning a stable income but are also training other women, thus creating a ripple effect of empowerment in the Pangri Valley. This initiative is being led by HUM Rural Manager Smt. Sunitra, who has become a source of inspiration for youth leadership for many women in the community.

HUM played a crucial role in identifying opportunities, providing technical support, and helping these women establish market linkages. This initiative has demonstrated that even in the toughest terrains, the right guidance and skills can transform lives and create sustainable livelihoods. The

sincerity of purpose of the women entrepreneurs and their will to take it to new heights is demonstrated in almost all their endeavours which makes them ideal change makers for society.



Air Marshal VPS Rana

PVSM VSM (Retd)

Chief Advisor Himalay Unnati Mission

EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOOD PROGRAMS



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

CSR TIMES Bureau

In recent years, the Indian government has implemented various programs aimed at empowering women by providing sustainable livelihood opportunities. These initiatives focus on enhancing skills, promoting entrepreneurship, and ensuring financial inclusion, thereby enabling women to contribute significantly to the nation's economy.

National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM)

Launched in 2011, the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM), also known as Aajeevika, aims to reduce poverty by enabling poor households to access gainful self-employment and skilled wage employment opportunities. The mission focuses on organizing rural women into Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and federating them at various levels to ensure their financial and social inclusion. As of 2017,

NRLM had mobilized over 45 million women through SHGs, covering more than 40% of rural India.

Kudumbashree

Kudumbashree, meaning 'prosperity of the family,' is a poverty eradication and women empowerment program implemented by the Government of Kerala in 1998. It operates through a three-tier structure: Neighborhood Groups (NHGs) at the grassroots level, Area Development Societies (ADS) at

the ward level, and Community Development Societies (CDS) at the panchayat level. Kudumbashree has been recognized as a National Resource Organization by the Ministry of Rural Development, Government of India, under the National Rural Livelihood Mission, to provide support to other states in their poverty eradication efforts.

Subhadra Yojana

Introduced on September 17, 2024, Subhadra Yojana is a women-centric welfare scheme launched by the Government of Odisha. The program aims to empower women aged 21 to 60 years by providing direct financial assistance. Eligible women receive ₹10,000 annually in two installments of ₹5,000 each, disbursed on Raksha Bandhan and International Women's Day. The scheme intends to benefit over 10 million women across the state, promoting economic empowerment and financial independence.

Beti Bachao Beti Padhao (BBBP)

Initially launched to address the declining child sex ratio and promote the education of girl children, the Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme has expanded its scope to include the skilling of girls in non-traditional livelihood options. This expansion underscores the government's commitment to promoting gender-inclusive education and employment opportunities, encouraging girls to pursue careers in various fields, including STEM (Science, Technology,

Engineering, and Mathematics).

Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF)

The Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) operates a wide network of 1,000 centers across India, digitally empowering girls and women to find livelihood opportunities. By promoting gender-equitable rural employment, DEF helps bridge the earnings gap between men and women, especially in rural areas. Empowering women leads not only to their betterment but also to the upliftment of their families and society at large.

Center for Catalyzing Change (C3)

Through its sustainable livelihood small grants program, the Center for Catalyzing Change (C3) supports community-based organizations that build and enhance the capabilities of girls and women. By providing job opportunities and reducing or eliminating chances of exploitation, C3's strategies utilize locally available natural resources to enable sustainable development.

GlobalGiving Initiatives

GlobalGiving has been instrumental



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

in empowering economically disadvantaged women in India through various projects. One such initiative connects 700 women with banks through Self-Help Groups (SHGs). These women receive training focusing on capacity building, life skills, entrepreneurship development, goat farming, organic manure production, and dairy farming. These efforts aim to boost self-confidence, promote livelihood growth, and foster empowerment among women.

Powering Livelihoods (PL) Program

The Powering Livelihoods (PL) program explores learnings, evidence, and recommendations on creating sustainable livelihood opportunities for rural women. By deploying gender-forward initiatives, the program aims to mainstream women in distributed renewable energy-powered livelihoods, thereby promoting sustainable development and economic empowerment.

The Indian government's commitment to empowering women through sustainable livelihood programs is evident in the variety and scope of initiatives implemented across the country. By focusing on skill development, financial inclusion, and entrepreneurship, these programs aim to uplift women economically and socially, contributing to the nation's overall development. Continued efforts in this direction are essential to ensure that women from all walks of life have the opportunity to lead empowered and fulfilling lives.



THE COMMENDABLE EFFORTS OF 'PRAYAS'

Former DGP (IPS) and Founder, Prayas JAC Society, Shri Amod K. Kanth in an insightful conversation with CSR Times' Maanisa Das

Amod K. Kanth led investigations at the pinnacle of India's tumultuous period of the 1980s - early 1990s that witnessed disastrous crime, assassinations, terrorism, 1984 riots. A policymaker, an author, and a global advocate for human rights, Shri Amod K. Kanth has dedicated his life to justice, child protection, and his work has shaped landmark laws and legislations about children in the country, including the Juvenile Justice Act and POCSO Act. Shri Amod Kanth Ji founded Prayas Juvenile Aid Centre Society at Jahangirpuri with 25 children in 1988, Prayas is now serving nearly 50,000 marginalized children, youth, women, and homeless individuals, everyday across 315 Units in 13 states and union territories.

MD: What are the pressing challenges that children face today in terms of rights and protection?

AK: The children of India, as a whole, you cannot define them, into one one bracket. See, let's say if the country is prospering, India being fifth largest economy, turning third largest economy, and a large number of people in the country having progressed a lot.

Many children from prosperous backgrounds—middle, upper-middle, and upper-class—are well-provided for. They're comfortable. The real issue lies with marginalized children—those who are homeless, working on the streets, or in difficult circumstances. These are the types of children who are deprived of their basic rights and

needs. And, I believe, since I have worked for Prayas and allied organizations for nearly thirty seven years now, besides my work as a police officer, for which I worked for thirty four years. From my experience, the most pressing challenges these children face revolve around the denial of their fundamental rights - protection, survival, development, and participation - all of which are defined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Around 35 million children in India aren't attending school. They're poor, deprived, and in need of care and protection. Their families struggle, and so do they. The media highlights some issues, but rapid changes in society also impact them. Addressing their struggles is crucial.



MD: Prayas began at Jahangirpuri, in 1988, with just 25 crisis-affected children. So how did it evolve over the last thirty seven years?

AK: It was pure chance, I would say. In fact, many voluntary organizations, which serve a purpose, generally have an origin which is, by chance or let's say, on account of disaster or crisis. See, I recall 1988, as you mentioned yourself, that for me as a police officer, the 1980s was the most violent decade - Indira Gandhi's assassination, the 1984 riots, rising drug abuse, and terrorism. As a police officer, I handled crime across Delhi.

A very innocuous thing happened during those times. As a police officer, it was our duty under the Juvenile Justice Act 1986 to care for lost or homeless children. So by evening, forty, fifty such children could be found in various police stations of Delhi. And then, we had no place to keep them. In those times, the juvenile justice system had not developed. These homes and shelters, which are now present

today, were not available. So we had a task in hand, in the shape of these children, what to do with them, how to look after them. That was one side.

The other side was that around the same time, a massive fire in Jahangir Puri left nearly 1,000 children homeless. I visited the site with Lt. Governor H.L. Kapoor, who, along with Police Commissioner Mr. Vijay Karan encouraged me to help. We started a small center to look

after some 25 to 30 children. Then Delhi School of Social Work joined hands, they posted their students of Master in social work with us. Shamik Vidya Peet, which later became Jan Shikchan Sansthan also joined hands with us. And one of my lady inspectors named it Prayas.

So the organization was born out of that fire and partly on account of the needs of the people, and it has grown ever since. Over 37 years, Prayas has established shelters, education, healthcare, and skill development programs for thousands. Today, we partner with the government on multiple initiatives. In Arunachal Pradesh, we run six primary health centers; in Bihar, we support health programs. Through Prayas Institute of Economic Empowerment, we train 16,000 marginalized youth in various skills, working with the National Skill Development Corporation. There were five Jan Shikchan Sansthan, which are connected to the Ministry of Fiscal Development and Entrepreneurship. There's a body



INTERVIEW

called SPSS (Sanjay Priya Swablaman Sansthan), a Section 8 company, to promote economic empowerment and income generation. Today, 768 coworkers serve across 315–316 centers, supporting 40,000–45,000 beneficiaries daily. So that is what Prayas is. We are 80% into direct services for those in need.

MD: That is indeed a gripping story. But as you had mentioned, we also believe that rescuing children from trafficking, abandonment, or abuse is just the beginning. How does Prayas help them heal, rebuild their confidence, and find a place in society again?

AK: See these children, when you rescue them from difficult situations, they come to you. For example, child helpline, +1098. You may know 1098, which happens to be India's most effective child helpline, and +1098 actually started from Prayas. Prayas has run six child helplines, and through them, lakhs of children have reached various organizations. In our full-time homes—like Jahangirpuri for boys and Tughlakabad for girls—children live with us. Across Delhi, Bihar, and other states, Prayas has supported nearly 2.98 lakh children, including trafficked, homeless, and abused kids. All these children were put into the same kind of standard programs carried out for education, health care, child maintenance, counseling, ensuring their lives take a positive turn. And I'm very happy to tell you that 70% of these children have



decisively completely changed their lives. They dream, aspire, and build stable futures like any other young people. So that transformative change through Prayas and allied organizations has worked wonders, I'm sure, for these kinds of children.

MD: What are the biggest policy gaps in child rights and protection that need urgent attention in India?

AK: I think the biggest policy gap is, from my experience, it to be the lack of a comprehensive, well thought out scheme or program for all these 35 million children who are not going to school. Among them, you'll find 80% are child laborers, many trafficked and subjected to abuse - physical, emotional, sexual, and economic. And let me tell you frankly that, we don't have any proper policy with regard to them.

Legally, we are perfect. We have the Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015, which is a very comprehensive law. Our child labor

law also got changed, and now the Child and Adolescent Labor (Prohibition and Regulation) Act, 2016 extends protection to children up to 18 years of age. But there's no clear scheme for working children and India has the highest number of child laborers. Voluntary organizations must be supported by the government to ensure a better future for every child. We need a holistic, actionable policy and not just legal provisions to address child labor and education.

MD: As you mentioned that NGOs have to club hands with the government to bridge this gap, how is Prayas addressing this education gap?

AK: Since 1988, Prayas has been working for socioeconomically disadvantaged children. We have a complete educational program, child maintenance program, child health program, child protection programs. And I don't think any other organization does it so systematically as we do. At any given time, thousands of children are under our care, and many older ones (15–18 years) continue with us as well. Recently, we have decided to work with schools, with not-so-rich socioeconomically clientele. We are integrating CBSE-approved skill development and vocational training programs into the school curriculum to give children a better chance at securing jobs and improving their lives.

But let me inform you once

again, since you belong to a CSR body, I think you must communicate to your members. I know that outstanding MSMEs have been awarded time and time again by your organization. And they are the people, entities and business houses, where people like us come in contact directly. Those eligible for CSR support should prioritize organizations like Prayas, because we are the ones who actually deliver direct services in the most needy areas.

MD: CSR Times acts as that bridge to facilitate this communication between MSMEs and corporates and the NGOs. Since you've already touched on the skill development initiatives, I'll jump to my next question: What role do women play in the leadership and implementation of Prayas' initiatives?

AK: Oh, the women of Prayas, I think they have taken over. On International Women's Day, we hosted a major program featuring eminent personalities like Pinky Anand, one of India's top lawyers, and Chhaya Sharma, an outstanding police officer. Rashmi Singh joined us, who is an IAS officer, a very well known name in the bureaucracy of India, and a very well known journalist. And 500 other girls, ranging from young children to grown accomplished professional women participated. I think I was the only male speaker in the entire group.

And the way things are happening, I can tell you that Prayas is hugely dominated by women and girls. In fact, amidst those 768 coworkers, probably nearly 500 would be women. There is a huge number of girl beneficiaries in all our projects across the country. I mean, our managers, starting from the executive director who happens to be a lady, Indurani Singh. If you go to Prayas office, you'll find senior women professionals like Deepshikha, Jivan Jyoti, Nivedita, and Shalu, at the heart of the organization, across the country. We have Ambreen, and if you go to Andaman and Nicobar, you will find Maria, a brilliant manager, director of Janshik San Sansthan. So you will find the ladies, in most of the higher and, middle level management positions leading Prayas.

MD: Right, sir. In fact, 500 volunteers out of 768 is already 65-70% of the organization. It's women only who are running the organization, I can say. So last but not the least question is what is that one new Parivartan that you're hoping to see for 2025? And what's that one small step that people can take today to contribute to that vision?

AK: See, this perhaps has taken place partly. Earlier, I used to be personally in the executive position of the organization. And now I'm designated as the founder of the organization. Many of our managers and coworkers have been with

Prayas for 15, 20, even 30 years. They have grown with the organization, and now I expect them to take charge. I truly believe they own this organization, and that's how real transformation happens. That is one part of it.

The second part, of course, is very important where you come in the picture. These segments of society, children, marginalized youth, and women, the unskilled, the unemployed, constitute about 25% of India's population. They need a big leap forward. They need to change completely.

A partnership between corporate government and the volunteer organizations is my dream and my earnest desire that real change will come when this partnership is forced. I'm repeating again that, India being fifth or fourth or third largest economy will not serve the purpose unless this 25% of Indian population catches up with this dynamic process of change.

Who doesn't know that India is perhaps the most progressive country, the most dynamic economy? All of us know. But then these people are left behind. These people who are not catching up to that dynamic change, I think they need to catch up. And I expect and we very sincerely believe, and we are really working towards time, then let's say the corporate sector, MSME particularly, and the government and organizations like Prayas will join hands together and change this country in real terms.

EMPOWERING WOMEN, ENRICHING INDIA: CSR AS A CATALYST FOR FINANCIAL INCLUSION & ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE



‘यत्र नार्यस्तु पूज्यन्ते, रमन्ते तत्र देवताः’ मनुस्मृति (Where women are honoured, divinity blossoms; where they are dishonoured, all actions remain unfruitful.) In India, the reverence for women has been deeply ingrained in traditions and cultural heritage. Our society has long worshiped women, nature, and rivers, recognizing their nurturing and life-giving essence. However, despite this historical reverence, women have faced significant socio-economic challenges, particularly in achieving financial independence. While progress has been made, many women, especially in rural areas, still struggle with access

to financial services and economic opportunities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives play a crucial role in addressing these gaps, empowering women through financial inclusion and sustainable livelihood programs.

Financial inclusion is indeed a critical aspect of empowering women and marginalized communities. This is in line with some key initiatives from the Government of India: **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)**: Launched in August 2014, this scheme aims to provide universal access to banking facilities. As of now, over 55% of PMJDY account holders are women,

and 66.69% of accounts are in rural areas. **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY)** and **Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana (PMJJBY)**: These social security schemes provide accident and life insurance cover to account holders, further enhancing financial security. **Atal Pension Yojana (APY)**: This scheme offers a guaranteed minimum pension to subscribers, ensuring financial stability in old age. And **National Strategy for Financial Inclusion (2019-2024)**: This strategy outlines the vision and key objectives to expand and sustain financial inclusion in India. It focuses on providing access to formal financial

services in an affordable manner, promoting financial literacy, and ensuring consumer protection. These initiatives collectively aim to bridge the gap between the financially included and excluded, ensuring that women and marginalized communities have access to essential financial services.

The Role of CSR in Financial Inclusion

Companies through CSR are strengthening these initiatives of the government as activities under mandatory CSR, in line with government and national priorities, ensuring that women, especially those from marginalized communities, can access banking services, credit facilities, and financial literacy programs. Many CSR initiatives focus on:

Microfinance and Self-Help Groups (SHGs): Companies collaborate with NGOs and financial institutions to provide micro-loans to women entrepreneurs, enabling them to start and sustain small businesses. For example, Tata Trusts, through its partnerships with microfinance institutions, has supported over 50,000 women in setting up small-scale businesses in sectors like handicrafts, poultry, and food processing.

Digital Financial Literacy: With the rise of fintech, CSR programs train women in using digital payment platforms, mobile banking, and investment tools, promoting financial security. A notable example is HDFC Bank's 'Parivartan' initiative, which has conducted extensive digital literacy training sessions for rural women, ensuring



they can confidently manage their finances online.

Savings and Insurance Schemes: CSR-driven partnerships with banks help in providing affordable savings plans, pensions, and insurance tailored for women. ICICI Bank, under its CSR program, has introduced customized insurance and pension schemes for women in rural India, ensuring financial security for their families.

Economic Independence Through CSR

CSR initiatives also address economic empowerment by creating sustainable income-generating opportunities. These include:

Skill Development and Vocational Training: Many companies fund training programs in sectors such as handicrafts, textiles, retail, and technology to equip women with employable skills. For instance, Larsen & Toubro's (L&T) CSR program trains women in masonry, carpentry, and electrical work, traditionally male-

dominated fields, enabling them to secure stable employment.

Entrepreneurial Support: Women-led startups receive mentorship, seed funding, and market access through CSR-backed incubators and accelerator programs. PepsiCo Foundation, for example, runs women entrepreneur development programs, providing training, access to finance, and networking opportunities to help scale their businesses.

Employment Generation: Organizations implement inclusive hiring policies, providing direct employment opportunities to women in diverse fields. An excellent example is Infosys' 'Women in Tech' initiative, which focuses on increasing female representation in STEM careers through scholarships, internships, and employment opportunities.

CSR as a Driver of Corporate Sustainability

CSR initiatives focused on women's financial inclusion and economic



empowerment not only uplift communities but also contribute to corporate sustainability and long-term business viability. By investing in women, companies create a stronger, more inclusive economy, enhance their brand reputation, and secure a loyal customer base. One notable example is **Hindustan Unilever's 'Project Shakti'**, which has empowered over 160,000 women across rural India. The initiative trains women as direct-to-home sales agents, equipping them with entrepreneurial skills and a sustainable income source while expanding Unilever's rural market penetration. This model has been instrumental in fostering women's financial independence, enhancing household incomes, and increasing Unilever's rural reach. In turn, it has helped the company build a deeper, more trusted connection with local communities, strengthening its market presence and aligning business success with social progress.

CSR: A Catalyst for a Self-Reliant and Prosperous India by 2047

India is on a transformative journey,

poised to become a self-reliant and prosperous economy by 2047. CSR is playing a pivotal role in this vision, driving financial inclusion and economic empowerment, particularly for women. While progress is evident, challenges such as cultural barriers, lack of awareness, and limited access to capital still persist. However, CSR initiatives are proving to be powerful tools in bridging gender inequality, fostering access to financial resources, skills, and employment opportunities. To deepen their impact and ensure lasting change, CSR programs must:

- Embrace a Multi-Stakeholder Approach:** Stronger collaboration between corporates, government bodies, and civil society will enhance effectiveness and reach.
- Leverage Technology:** Expanding digital financial services can bridge accessibility gaps, equipping women with the knowledge and confidence to manage their finances independently.
- Ensure Sustainability:** Moving beyond charity, programs should focus on long-term empowerment,

integrating women into mainstream economic activities and fostering entrepreneurship.

As businesses align their CSR strategies with gender equity and economic growth, they contribute not just to corporate success but to the nation's progress. Together, with a shared vision and unwavering commitment, we are paving the way for **Viksit Bharat 2047**—a future where every woman stands empowered, every opportunity is within reach, and economic prosperity knows no bounds.



Dr. K.K. Upadhyay

Professor & Chairperson - Centre for Sustainability & CSR Birla Institute of Management Technology (BIMTECH)



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BEYOND WOMEN'S DAY: HOW EXOGENOUS AND ENDOGENOUS EVENTS SHAPE GENDER DISCOURSE



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As we celebrated another Women's Day, it's crucial to reflect not only on the progress we've made but also on the challenges that persist in achieving true gender equality. According to the Human Development Report 2024, India has made some progress, climbing 14 ranks in the Gender Inequality Index. However, despite ranking 108th out of 193 countries with a score of 0.437, a closer look at the 2024 Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum paints a different picture—India ranks 129th out of 146 countries, slipping two places from the previous year. The global gender gap is 68.5% closed, while India has only managed to close 64.1% of its own gap.

This is just one of the many gaps. The 2024 United Nations Sustainable Development Report highlights a persistent global gap in SDG 5: Gender Equality. While India's overall SDG performance is edging closer to the

global average, gender equality remains a significant concern. Despite incremental improvements, India is far from being on track to achieve gender equality by 2030.

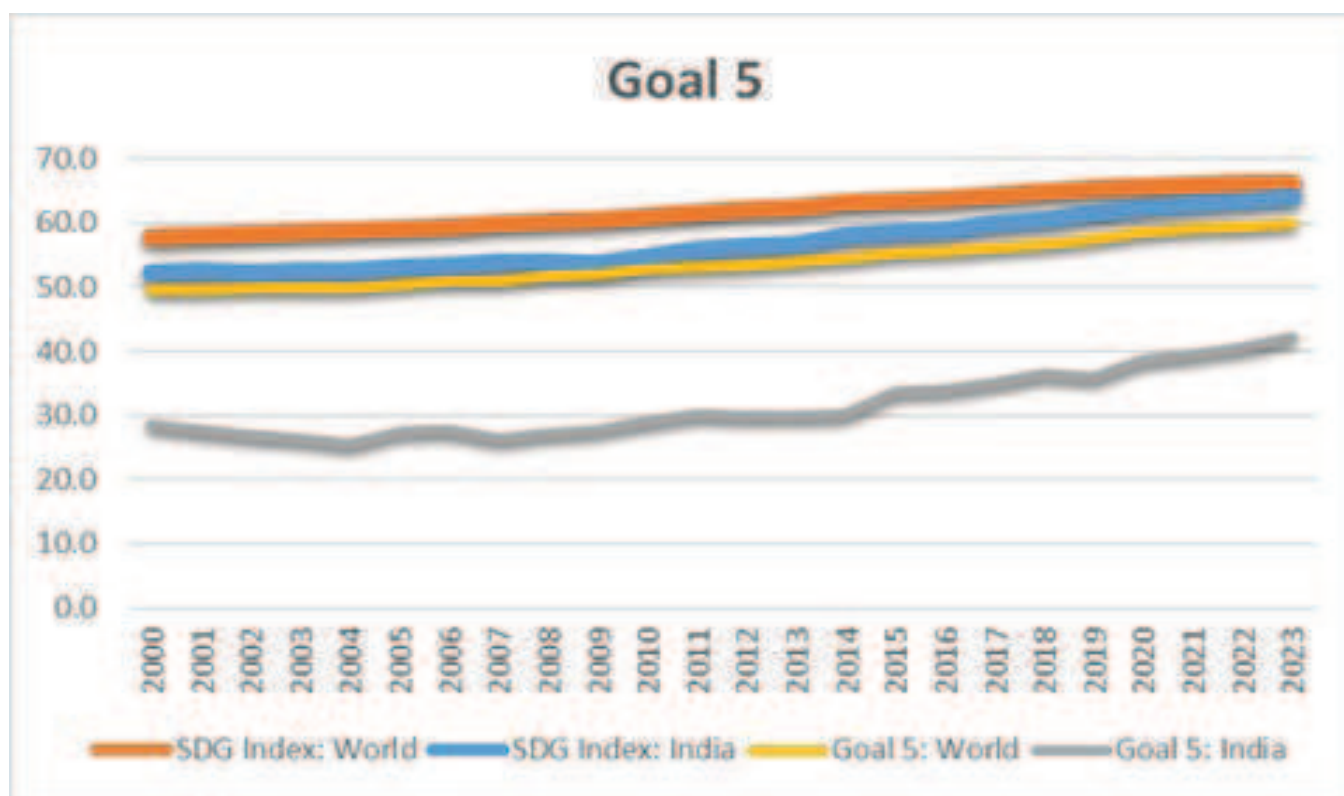
India's performance in SDG 5: Gender Equality is not only below the global average but also lags behind low-income countries, as well as nations in the Middle East and North Africa. Placed in the "Major Challenges Remain" category—alongside countries like Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Somalia, Chad, and Yemen—it underscores a bleak reality.

The SDG India Index by NITI Aayog has consistently shown SDG 5 among the lowest-performing indicators since 2018, highlighting that policy initiatives, while present, have not had the desired impact. This raises essential questions: Are we doing enough to recognize and address gender inequality? And, more importantly, are these issues receiving the media attention they deserve?

To explore this, we analyzed the discourse on gender equality in business dailies using the SCORE (Sustainability Content Occurrence and Relevance Evaluation) Index, developed by the Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Development at the Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon, in collaboration with IndiaDataHub. The SCORE Index tracks the presence of sustainability issues in leading business newspapers, providing insights into the frequency and depth of SDG coverage.

The methodology involves identifying SDG-related terms, assigning weights based on relevance, and measuring their occurrence using advanced technologies like natural language processing and optical character recognition. The final SCORE Index is derived by normalizing term frequencies against the total word count of the newspaper, providing weekly insights across all 17 SDGs.

Our analysis found that while SDG 5



is not the least discussed SDG, it ranks among the lowest. We identified another gap, a “gap in discourse” with discussions on gender equality falling behind the average number of discussions on all 17 SDGs.

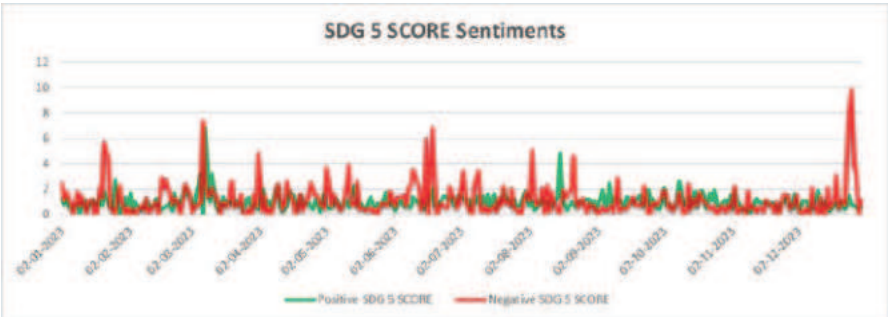
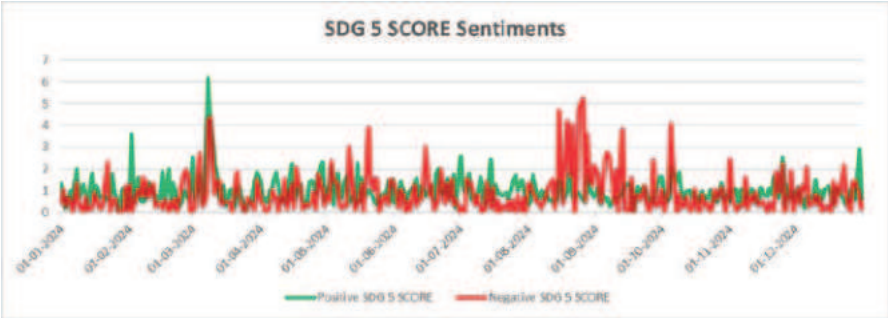
Interestingly, discourse peaks around Women’s Day in March, pointing to a seasonal focus rather than sustained engagement. In 2024, aside from Women’s Day, the highest levels of SDG 5 discourse occurred during Raksha Bandhan in August, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women in November, and a May discussion around Deloitte’s “Women @ Work” report. Similarly, in 2023, significant spikes in discourse were seen around Kerala Tourism’s collaboration with UN Women in March, economist Claudia Goldin’s Nobel Prize win for her work on women’s workforce participation in October, and Prime

Minister Narendra Modi’s Independence Day speech on women-led development. These examples suggest that media attention on gender equality is reactive, rather than proactive, often driven by specific or exogenous events rather than an ongoing, consistent commitment to the issue.

We also analyzed two years of data regarding the sentiments of the discourse. The lexicons of the SCORE Index are categorized as ‘Positive’, ‘Negative’, or ‘Neutral’. For example, phrases such as ‘gender equality’ convey a ‘Positive’ sentiment, while terms like ‘gender disparities’ are classified as ‘Negative.’ Terms like ‘women,’ being neutral, do not imply any specific sentiment on their own.

The sentiments regarding SDG 5 in the SCORE Index show higher positive sentiment values due to greater weight. However, when we proportionally

analyzed the sentiments—by normalizing each term’s value against the average of all sentiment terms (negative terms against the average of all negative terms and positive terms against the average of all positive terms)—we found that overall negative sentiments are marginally higher. In 2023 negative sentiments were marginally higher than positive sentiments and in 2024 positive sentiments were marginally higher than negative sentiments. The sentiment analysis of SDG 5 discourse revealed an increase in positive discussions in 2024. However, after mid-August, a shift towards negative sentiment was observed, peaking on August 26th—Women’s Equality Day in the United States. While the U.S. celebrated the occasion, Indian media was dominated by reports on the RG Kar Rape-Murder case. This divergence highlights



endogenous events, such as gender-based violence, fueling negative narratives.

Similarly, in 2023, negative sentiments spiked in December, largely due to the controversy surrounding the

Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). Protests erupted as female athletes resigned and returned their awards, opposing the appointment of Sanjay Singh, a close associate of Brij Bhushan Singh, who had been accused of sexually

harassing women wrestlers. This incident, followed by the suspension of the newly elected WFI board, intensified negative discourse on SDG 5.

The data underscores a troubling reality—while exogenous events momentarily elevate discussions on gender equality, endogenous incidents are usually related to gender-based violence which drive negative discourse.

To truly advance gender equality, discussions must extend beyond symbolic occasions like Women’s Day. Business dailies play a crucial role in shaping public and policy discourse, and they must integrate gender-related issues into their regular reporting. Achieving SDG 5 requires not only policy interventions but also a media-driven shift that ensures gender equality remains a consistent, year-round conversation, rather than a fleeting topic driven by seasonal events.

EMPOWERING RURAL INDIA: CSR INITIATIVES UPLIFTING WOMEN AND TRANSFORMING LIVES



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Pradeep Kumar Pandey

In the heart of rural India, where opportunities are often scarce and traditional roles restrict women's potential, a silent revolution is taking place. Corporations, through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, are fostering sustainable change, empowering rural women, and providing them with livelihoods that ensure financial independence and dignity. From self-help groups to entrepreneurial ventures, these initiatives are rewriting the narrative of rural India's women, making them powerful agents of change.

Here's how some remarkable CSR programs are making a difference.

Project Shakti: From Homemaker to Entrepreneur

In the narrow bylanes of villages across India, the ripple effect of **Project Shakti** by **Hindustan Unilever** is unmistakable. Launched in 2001, this initiative has empowered over **136,000 rural women** by transforming them into micro-entrepreneurs, called **Shakti Ammas**. With a simple model of distributing Unilever products directly to households, these women earn a steady income while serving as catalysts for local economic growth.

"Earlier, I was entirely dependent on my husband for financial needs. Project Shakti has not only given me financial freedom but also boosted

my confidence," says Meera Devi, a Shakti Amma from Uttar Pradesh.

With its presence in **18 states** and its reach to over **4 million households**, Project Shakti is a stellar example of how corporate-led initiatives can empower women economically while strengthening community networks.

Digital Skills for a Digital India

Recognizing the gender gap in technology, **American Express**, in collaboration with the **NASSCOM Foundation**, launched the '**Women Empowerment Through Technology**' program. This initiative has provided **digital and technical training to 700 women graduates** from underserved



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

backgrounds.

The objective? To enhance employability and ensure women's participation in the booming technology sector. Equipped with skills in **coding, data analysis, and artificial intelligence**, many beneficiaries have secured lucrative jobs and even launched their own ventures.

"Technology is no longer a field dominated by men. With the right training, women from villages can excel and contribute to India's digital growth story," says Shalini, a beneficiary who now works as a software engineer.

Livelihoods with Purpose: Habitat for Humanity and Standard Chartered Bank

In partnership with **Habitat for Humanity India, Standard Chartered Bank** has initiated a program that directly supports **1,104 rural women** in enhancing their livelihoods. From financial assistance to vocational training, the initiative covers it all.

Women are equipped with skills in tailoring, dairy farming, and small-scale entrepreneurship, enabling them to become economically self-sufficient.

The ripple effect is visible as these empowered women contribute not only to their households but also to their communities, creating employment opportunities for others. This program is a testament to the transformative power of CSR initiatives when combined with local engagement and skill-building.



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Sustainable Menstrual Hygiene: Eco Femme's Impact

While corporate CSR programs are creating economic opportunities, social enterprises like **Eco Femme** are addressing critical health and sanitation challenges. Operating from Tamil Nadu, Eco Femme produces reusable cloth pads and promotes menstrual health awareness in rural India.

Since its inception, **over one million reusable pads** have been distributed, reducing plastic waste while empowering rural women through employment. Women are trained to manufacture and distribute these eco-friendly products, breaking both menstrual taboos and financial dependency.

"Eco Femme is not just about pads; it's about dignity, health, and sustainable livelihoods for rural women," says founder Kathy Walkling.

Swayam Shikshan Prayog: Building Women Entrepreneurs

In Maharashtra, the **Swayam**

Shikshan Prayog (SSP) has emerged as a beacon of hope. Supporting **350,000 women** entrepreneurs in sectors like agriculture, clean energy, and health, SSP has been recognized globally for its community-centric approach.

Through **climate-resilient farming** and sustainable agricultural practices, women are not only feeding their families but also generating surplus income. Additionally, the program supports the establishment of **clean energy enterprises** where women sell solar products, contributing to environmental sustainability.

“We are not just farmers. We are entrepreneurs and providers,” asserts Rekha, a farmer-entrepreneur from a drought-prone village in Maharashtra.

Nand Ghar: A New Beginning for Rural Women

Nand Ghar, an initiative by the **Anil Agarwal Foundation**, is redefining the concept of Anganwadis. Beyond providing early childhood education and nutrition, Nand Ghars serve as skill development centers for women. Rural women are trained in tailoring, embroidery, and handicrafts, giving them access to sustainable livelihoods.

Operating across **13 states**, these centers have empowered thousands of women to start their own businesses or secure employment. It’s a holistic model that uplifts entire communities.

MANSI: Saving Lives and Empowering Health Workers

In remote regions where healthcare access is limited, **MANSI (Maternal and Newborn Survival Initiative)** by



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

the **Tata Steel Foundation** is making a life-saving difference. Women are trained as **community health facilitators** to provide prenatal and postnatal care.

By reducing maternal and neonatal mortality rates, MANSI has directly impacted thousands of lives. Furthermore, these facilitators earn an income, ensuring financial stability for their families.

“I used to feel helpless witnessing preventable deaths. Today, I am a source of hope and healing,” shares Sita Devi, a trained health worker.



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

A Brighter Tomorrow

These success stories echo a larger narrative — one where corporations are not just profit-driven entities but agents of positive change. The collaboration between businesses, non-profits, and the government is crafting a future where rural women have access to opportunities, independence, and dignity.

As CSR initiatives continue to expand their reach, the empowerment of women in rural India will undoubtedly remain a critical focus. Through skill development, financial inclusion, and social awareness, the ripple effect will grow — from empowered women to empowered communities and, ultimately, an empowered nation.

India’s rural women are not just beneficiaries of CSR programs; they are their champions. And in their resilience and determination, they remind us all that true progress leaves no one behind.

HOW CSR IS ADDRESSING GENDER GAPS IN EDUCATION & EMPLOYMENT



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Maanisa Das

Let's face it — for centuries, society has somehow managed to convince itself that women belong in kitchens, while men belong in boardrooms. But here's the plot twist: women are now breaking barriers, from classrooms to conference rooms, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is playing a leading role in this empowering story.

With companies realizing that gender equality isn't just good karma but good business, CSR initiatives are tackling the gender gap in education and employment like never before.

School Chale Hum, and So Does She!

In rural India, where the concept of "Beti Padhao" often collides with "Beti Byaah Do" (marry off the daughter), many young girls drop out of school. But CSR programs are turning this tide.

Take **Project Nanhi Kali** by the Mahindra Group, for instance. It supports the education of underprivileged girls, ensuring they not only stay in school but also shine in subjects like math and science. With study kits, mentorship programs, and digital classes, Nanhi Kali has empowered over **5 lakh girls** across India.

And let's not forget **P&G's Shiksha Initiative**. With every Whisper or Tide purchase, a portion goes toward building schools and training teachers. Now that's multitasking at its finest — cleaning your clothes while cleaning up the gender gap in education!

From Sewing Machines to Coding Machines

Education is only the beginning. Once the girls grow up, the question remains — "Now what?" The answer is often found in CSR-driven skill-building programs.

Tata Power's Skill Development Institute has been training women in

unconventional sectors like electrical work and solar panel installation. Yes, you read that right. Who said only men can climb rooftops? These women are not only bringing power to homes but also to their own lives.

Similarly, **L'Oréal's 'Beauty for a Better Life'** trains women in professional beauty and wellness skills. The program not only provides certifications but also encourages entrepreneurship — because when women succeed, their entire communities glow.

Digital Dreams and Breaking Glass Screens

In today's world, coding is the new stitching. Companies like **Microsoft and IBM** are driving digital literacy programs that teach young women coding, artificial intelligence, and cybersecurity. These initiatives ensure that women don't just become consumers of technology — they become creators.

And let's not ignore **American Express and NASSCOM Foundation's digital training programs**, designed to upskill women from underserved communities. After all, every software engineer needs a fair share of coffee, Wi-Fi, and women power!

Jobs Are for Everyone, Not Just for "He"

Now that education and skills are sorted, the next big milestone is landing that dream job. And CSR programs are leaving no stone unturned.

Infosys Foundation's Spark-IT initiative offers training in



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

employability skills, helping young women get placed in IT and software development roles. On the other hand, **L&T's Women in Engineering (WiE)** program ensures more women enter core engineering fields — because why should men have all the fun with cranes and circuits?

Even hospitality brands like **Taj Hotels** run skilling programs that train women from marginalized backgrounds in culinary arts, housekeeping, and management roles. After all, running a hotel is a lot like running a home — just with a lot more beds to make!

Bridging the Pay Gap, One CSR Initiative at a Time

Of course, gender equality isn't just about getting the job — it's also about fair pay and promotions. Companies like **Unilever and Tata Steel** are actively promoting inclusive work cultures through mentorship programs and leadership development for women. And guess what? When women lead,

organizations tend to outperform, proving that diversity isn't just a buzzword — it's a business strategy.

The Ripple Effect of Empowering Women

When a girl is educated, she educates her family. When a woman earns, she uplifts her community. And when organizations invest in women, entire economies prosper. CSR isn't just changing individual lives; it's creating waves of societal transformation.

From classrooms to boardrooms, from villages to tech hubs, women are proving that the glass ceiling was never really unbreakable — it just needed a few well-aimed cracks.

So, next time you hear about a CSR initiative, remember — it's not just about ticking a box. It's about unticking centuries of inequality and making sure everyone, regardless of gender, gets a fair shot at education and employment.

And who knows? Maybe one day, the phrase "Like a girl" will mean coding, leading, inventing, and succeeding.

SPORTS & WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

CSR'S ROLE IN NURTURING FEMALE ATHLETES



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

CSR TIMES Bureau

In a country where cricket is often revered as a religion, the rise of Indian female athletes across multiple disciplines has been nothing short of remarkable. From weightlifting to wrestling, boxing to badminton — Indian women have taken center stage, shattering stereotypes and inspiring millions. But behind these victories lies not just grit and determination but also the significant contribution of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Through focused investments, mentorship programs, and grassroots initiatives, companies are playing a pivotal role in nurturing the dreams of female athletes. Whether it's identifying talent in remote villages or providing world-class training

facilities, CSR initiatives are proving that empowerment through sports isn't just a slogan — it's a reality.

Breaking Barriers, One Goal at a Time

Indian sportswomen like **P.V. Sindhu**, **Mary Kom**, **Manu Bhaker** and **Mirabai Chanu** have become household names, but their journeys were far from easy. Limited access to resources, societal pressures, and



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

financial constraints often hinder the growth of aspiring female athletes. Recognizing this, corporations have stepped in to bridge the gap.

JSW Sports, under its CSR wing, has been instrumental in supporting athletes like Sakshi Malik and Neeraj Chopra. The **JSW Sports Excellence Program (SEP)** provides training facilities, sports science support, and international exposure, ensuring that talent is not lost due to lack of resources. Their state-of-the-art training centers in Bellary have become a nurturing ground for many promising athletes.

Similarly, **Reliance Foundation** has been fostering grassroots talent through its **Young Champs Program**, providing opportunities to young girls passionate about football. By combining education with sports, the

initiative ensures holistic development.

Empowering Through Grassroots Initiatives

Sports in rural India often remain a privilege rather than a right. However, companies like **Tata Steel** and **Vedanta** have been changing this narrative. **Tata Steel's Tribal Cultural Society** organizes football and archery tournaments in Jharkhand, encouraging tribal girls to participate in sports. Many of these girls have gone on to represent India on international platforms.

On the other hand, **Vedanta's Zinc Football Academy** in Rajasthan focuses on developing the next generation of women footballers. With high-quality training facilities and coaching, the academy aims to break social barriers and encourage girls to pursue professional sports careers.

Supporting Champions Beyond the Field

Training and financial support are crucial, but holistic development is equally essential. Recognizing this, companies like Adani Group and ONGC offer comprehensive athlete support programs.

The **Adani Sportsline Garv Hai Initiative** provides mentorship, health insurance, career counseling, and psychological support to women athletes. The initiative has supported over 20 female athletes who have represented India in global events.

ONGC's Sports Scholarship Scheme has also extended financial



aid and world-class training to female athletes across disciplines like athletics, shooting, and wrestling. This program not only recognizes potential but ensures consistent support through long-term development.

Changing Perceptions, Creating Role Models

When companies support female athletes, they are not only nurturing talent but also challenging gender stereotypes. Successful women in sports inspire young girls to dream beyond societal limitations. Every medal won, every record broken, serves as a powerful reminder that gender should never be a barrier to success.

Furthermore, many corporations have been actively promoting inclusivity through campaigns celebrating the success of women athletes. Initiatives like **Nike's "Da Da Ding" Campaign** and **P&G's "Like a Girl"** Campaign have played a significant role in shifting public perceptions about women in sports.

The Road Ahead

While the strides made so far are commendable, sustained efforts are

necessary. Corporations must continue to invest in infrastructure, provide equal opportunities, and ensure women athletes receive fair media representation. Stronger partnerships between the private sector, government bodies, and sports federations can further amplify the impact.

Moreover, incorporating life skills training and financial literacy programs into CSR sports initiatives can ensure long-term stability for female athletes post-retirement.

The story of sports and women empowerment in India is no longer one of struggle alone; it is a story of triumph. With CSR initiatives serving as a backbone of support, female athletes are rising to national and international fame. Each victory echoes a powerful message — that talent knows no gender, and determination knows no limits.

As India marches ahead in its pursuit of sporting excellence, the continued collaboration between corporates and athletes will ensure that the next generation of girls, from the bustling cities to the quiet villages, will have the opportunity to chase their dreams — and win.

QUOTES

Women impact the world at all levels – as farmers, workers, consumers, household managers, activists, leaders, and entrepreneurs. They have been making significant contributions in several fields such as agricultural labor force, health care, entertainment, and the cosmetics industry. Women are responsible for half of the world's food production and improving women's health leads to better well-being for entire families, especially children. In governance, women are more likely to ratify international environmental treaties and have inclusive climate policies.

"International Women's Day" is an opportunity to rejoice in the progress made towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment, but also to

critically reflect on those accomplishments and strive for greater momentum. This day commemorates the beauty, diversity, and achievements of women all across the world. The theme for **International Women's Day (IWD) 2025 is "Accelerate Action"**. This year's campaign emphasises the urgency and importance of accelerating efforts to eliminate systemic barriers and biases that impede women's equality. CSR Times celebrates each and every woman who defies expectations, winds against the grain of male-dominated societies and cultures, and rightfully claims the recognition she merits. CSR Times brings you insights from industry leaders shaping a more inclusive and empowered future for women everywhere.

"Our diverse projects at Himalaya Wellness Company have enabled women at the grassroots level to grow strong and attain economic independence. Project SURAKSHA, a suicide prevention and mass awareness initiative by Himalaya has equipped thousands of women, including ASHA workers, with tools and techniques to promote mental health and wellness. Our tree-planting initiative in the rural hinterlands of India supports women farmers with different species of fruits and vegetable-bearing plants as well as fodder-providing varieties, thereby helping them towards economic upliftment. Our Social Goals at Himalaya are crafted to accelerate action towards a more inclusive and equitable future."

—KG Umesh

Director—HR, Himalaya Wellness Company



"CSR is not charity, it is accountability. Gender equity isn't about helping women, it is about dismantling the systems that hold them back. Businesses must not support change but drive it instead."

—Smita Bharti

Executive Director, Sakshi, a rights based NGO

"Empowering women through CSR isn't just about inclusion—it's about creating real, lasting change. Equitable business practices, from fair wages to leadership opportunities, help women thrive. Community-driven initiatives like education, skills training, and maternal health programs foster long-term progress. By embedding gender-inclusive policies into CSR, businesses can build diverse workplaces, support women entrepreneurs, and enhance economic participation. When companies champion gender equity, they strengthen communities and drive sustainable growth. CSR turns commitment into action, ensuring a future where opportunities are accessible to all—because when women succeed, societies prosper."

—Ms Smitha Shetty

Regional Director, APAC - Achilles Information Ltd.





"At Ashirvad by Aliaxis, we believe true progress happens when communities thrive. This International Women's Day, we reaffirm our commitment to accelerating gender equality through skill development and empowerment. Through our initiatives like the Ashirvad Plumbing School, we equip women with essential plumbing and water management skills, enabling them to build independent careers. This initiative has trained and certified women, providing hands-on learning, tools, safety materials, and government-backed certification. Beyond technical skills, it empowers women towards financial independence, supports their families, and shape their futures. True progress happens when opportunities are inclusive, and we are proud to support a future where women are not just participants but leaders in shaping India's infrastructure and economy."

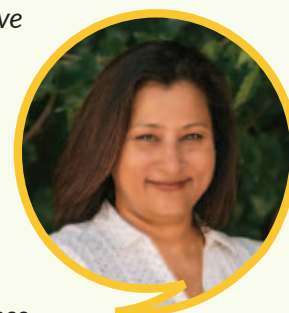
—Partha Basu

Managing Director at Ashirvad by Aliaxis

"CSR investment for women's empowerment is still far from ideal! Coupled with the new wave of geopolitical shift makes it even tougher. Corporates must step up, making gender-lens investing a priority across the different causes they support – WASH, skill development, infrastructure development, climate resilience or any other. We must deliberately ensure that women are an integral part of the communities they wish to impact! Corporate giving has the power to drive real change, ensuring women are at the center of investments, not an afterthought. Further affirmative action by way of ensuring procurement from women led organisations and special accommodation for women employees extend beyond the CSR mandate to create a larger impact!"

—Rati Misra

Executive Director, Milaan Foundation



"Women empowerment is essential for societal progress, and we at Birlasoft firmly believe in the same. We believe that by empowering a woman, you empower the entire family and put them on the path to economic progress. By investing in education, skill development, and health of underprivileged women and girls, organizations can create a more inclusive and dynamic future for women to thrive and build meaningful careers. Empowering underprivileged women through good health and education is a very important theme of Birlasoft's CSR program. This commitment is evident through our numerous impactful initiatives. In FY24, Project Disha empowered 1,100+ women with mentorship and corporate exposure, while Project e-Vidya trained 170+ women in digital literacy and IT skills. In FY23, we partnered with the Rajasthan government to raise awareness and provide cervical cancer screenings. These initiatives not only enable growth but also unlock potential, paving the way for a future where diversity and inclusion fuel innovation and sustainable progress."

—Deepak Dobriyal

Senior Vice President of Global Talent Management and Corporate HR, Birlasoft

ACHIEVERS' WORLD HOSTS INTERNATIONAL WOMEN SUMMIT ON 'ROLE OF WOMEN IN ACHIEVING THE GOAL OF VIKSIT BHARAT BY 2047' IN NEW DELHI



New Delhi, 17 March: Achievers' World, successfully hosted the International Women Summit on Monday, March 17, at the prestigious India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, aimed to recognize and honour women from all walks of life. The summit was a grand celebration aligned with the theme of International Women's Day (IWD) 2025 - "Accelerate Action," to rejoice in the progress made towards achieving gender equality and women's empowerment and to strive for greater momentum.

The occasion was graced by Dignitaries including **Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi**, Former Minister of State for External Affairs of India, **Smt. Dharamshila Gupta**, Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha), **Dr. Lata Wankhede**, Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha). The event also welcomed distinguished international guests and over 200 delegates, comprising business leaders, changemakers, CSR professionals, and industry experts from across India.

The event commenced with the ceremonial lighting of the lamp, followed

by a warm welcome speech of **Ms. Bharti Sharma Director – Achievers' World, Editor-Travel Turtle**. In her summit overview, she expressed the summit's



vision: *"To celebrate the awe-inspiring achievements of women and fortify Nari Shakti.*

The dignitaries shared their valuable insights highlighting the indispensable role of women in shaping Viksit Bharat 2047. The summit detailed engaging conversations providing women a safe platform to share their transformative journeys and experiences. Guest of Honour, **Prof. Madhu Purnima Kishwar**, Founder Editor, MANUSHI, shared her

valuable expertise, while **Prof.**

Pushpanjali Jha, Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi, facilitated an impromptu session, inviting women to take the stage and speak on their challenges, triumphs, and inspiring experiences in breaking barriers.

The event progressed with an engaging panel discussion on the theme 'Role of Women in Achieving the Goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047.' Moderated by Ms Bharti Sharma, Director, Achievers' World, the discussion featured notable panelists who shed light on policy initiatives, societal contributions, and economic inclusion as key enablers of women's progress.

During the summit, some distinguished women in the respective fields were honoured with Women Icon Awards for their outstanding contributions to women's empowerment and their role in shaping a Viksit Bharat. A few of the award winners in the summit were: **Wing Commander Lalita Akhilesh Mishra S**, Indian Air Force, **Ms. Narinder Kaur**, Founder, SURTAJ Special Children Foundation, **Dr. Kawal Deep Kour**, General Secretary Institute for Narcotics Studies and Analysis etc.

Concluding the event, **Ms. Varsha Sharma**, Event Convenor – Achievers' World extended a heartfelt vote of thanks, acknowledging the invaluable contributions of dignitaries, panelists, and attendees and reiterated collective commitment towards empowering women.



"Empowering women (Nari) is not only a social imperative but a strategic move for economic growth and long-term sustainable development."

—Smt. Dharamshila Gupta
Member of Parliament (Rajya Sabha)

"Viksit Bharat cannot thrive if half its population is left behind. Empowering women creates a ripple effect, influencing multiple dimensions of society and catalyzing progress across various sectors."

—Dr Lata Wankhede
Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha)



"Women do not need empowerment—they are already empowered. What they need are opportunities."

—Smt. Meenakshi Lekhi
Former Minister of State for External Affairs of India

"When you educate a woman, you educate a generation. You equip her to uplift families, strengthen communities, and inspire future generations to thrive and succeed."

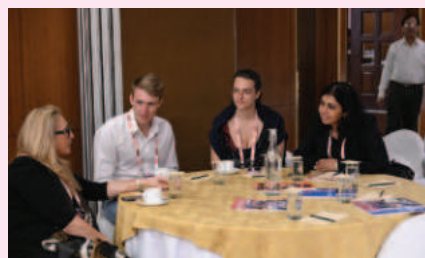
—Ms. V Suprabha
Educational Consultant, Mentor and Trainer



"When women voluntarily step into every sphere of work, they become architects of an inclusive nation, shaping a future of equality and progress."

—Prof. Pushpanjali Jha
Delhi School of Social Work, University of Delhi

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN SUMMIT



A DECADE OF BETI BACHAO, BETI PADHAO: TRANSFORMING MINDSETS AND EMPOWERING GIRLS



Vatika Singh

This year marks the tenth anniversary of the Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP) scheme, a flagship initiative launched by the Government of India on January 22, 2015. Introduced to address the declining child sex ratio and promote girl child education, the program has made significant strides over the past decade in shifting societal attitudes and fostering gender equality.

The BBBP initiative was launched as a response to alarming statistics from the 2011 Census, which reported a child sex ratio of 918 girls per 1,000 boys. The campaign's primary goal was to prevent gender-biased sex-selective abortions, ensure the survival and protection of the girl child, and promote her education. It combined efforts from the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, and Ministry of Education.

Over the past ten years, BBBP has been implemented across districts with a poor child sex ratio, delivering impressive results. According to government data, the child sex ratio has improved in several states, and the enrolment of girls in schools has witnessed a marked increase. Initiatives under the program, including awareness campaigns, girl child scholarships, and the construction of girls' toilets in schools, have further contributed to the positive change.



The campaign's strength lies in its community-driven approach. Local governments, NGOs, and volunteers have played a crucial role in spreading awareness. Stories of girls excelling in academics, sports, and leadership positions serve as testaments to the program's success. For instance,

districts like Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan and Panipat in Haryana, once infamous for their poor child sex ratio, now stand as examples of progress.

Despite its success, challenges remain. Gender-based discrimination and deeply ingrained social norms continue to hinder the scheme's

objectives. Experts emphasize the need for more stringent enforcement of laws against gender-biased practices and continuous monitoring of the program's outcomes.

Looking forward, the government has announced its commitment to expanding BBBP's reach with an enhanced focus on adolescent girls' education and skilling programs. Partnerships with the private sector and civil society organizations will further strengthen efforts to empower young girls.

A decade into its journey, Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao has emerged as a symbol of hope and resilience. It has not only saved and educated countless girls but also challenged societal norms, making way for a more equitable future. As the nation celebrates this milestone, it is a reminder that the path to gender equality requires consistent efforts, unwavering commitment, and the collective will of society.



Adani Foundation at ACC Kymore supports women of Deori Majhgawan in boosting crop yields with rapid soil testing

ACC, the cement and building material company of the diversified Adani Portfolio, in collaboration with the Adani Foundation, has empowered 13 women from Deori Majhgawan's Shakti Peeth Self-Help Group (SHG) to launch an on-the-spot soil testing initiative using the AgroNxt Bhu-Parikshak device. This spectrometer-based device analyzes soil samples across eight key parameters, providing instant results that help farmers make informed decisions about fertilization and soil health management. By eliminating the need for physical soil testing labs, the initiative saves time and resources while promoting sustainable and organic farming practices. This project has also evolved into a thriving micro-enterprise, granting economic independence to the participating women. Recognized for its impact, Shakti Peeth SHG won the Dr. Manibhai Desai Gaurav Puraskar Second Best SHG Award and



reinvested the Rs. 20,000 prize to expand services. Through such initiatives, ACC and the Adani Foundation continue to drive grassroots empowerment and sustainable agricultural development.

Ambuja Foundation hosts a Breast Cancer Awareness Program in Bathinda in association with AIIMS, ABS UK & ABSI



Ambuja Foundation, in collaboration with AIIMS Bathinda, the Association of Breast Surgery UK (ABS), the Association of Breast Surgeons of India (ABSI), and the Punjab Medical Council, hosted a three-day

Breast Cancer Awareness program in Bathinda. Supported by Ambuja Cements, the event included a health check-up camp attended by over 100 women and training sessions for more than 350 Community Health Officers, ASHAs, and 150 medical professionals. Senior oncologists conducted workshops on early detection, self-breast examination techniques, and best practices for identifying high-risk cases. The initiative aimed to address the rising cancer incidence in Punjab, which has seen a 7% increase in cases since 2021. Ambuja Foundation, which launched its cancer awareness initiative in 2023, continues to strengthen healthcare outreach in rural areas by training frontline workers and fostering behavior change. Experts from ABS UK, ABSI, and AIIMS emphasized the need for early detection and improved healthcare accessibility.

Hockey India and Coca Cola India Host the Final Phase of National Women's Hockey League 2024-25

Hockey India, in collaboration with Coca-Cola India and its foundation Anandana, is hosting the final phase of the National Women's Hockey League 2024-25 from March 18 to March 28, 2025, in Ranchi, Jharkhand. Following the first phase in April-May 2024, the league continues to provide a competitive platform for India's top female hockey talent, featuring the top eight teams from the 14th Hockey India Senior Women National Championship 2024. This initiative aligns with Coca-Cola India's #SheTheDifference campaign, aimed at empowering female athletes by providing specialized coaching, training equipment, and nutritional support. Hockey India President Dr. Dilip Tirkey and Secretary General Shri Bhola Nath Singh emphasized the significance of this league in shaping the future of Indian women's hockey, while Coca-Cola India reaffirmed its



commitment to fostering sports development. The league not only nurtures talent but also inspires young women to pursue careers in sports.

Britannia Marie Gold & Inspire Institute of Sport Unveil 'HerSpark' – A Game-Changing Sports Scholarship for Women

Britannia Marie Gold, one of India's leading biscuit brands, in partnership with the Inspire Institute of Sport (IIS), has launched 'HerSpark,' a groundbreaking national sports scholarship program for women athletes in India. This initiative aims to identify and nurture talent in boxing, swimming, judo, athletics, and parasports by offering a fully funded three-year scholarship worth INR 45 lakh. The program covers professional training, coaching, lodging, nutrition, and education, with world-class facilities and guidance from former Olympic and Continental



athletes. Open to female athletes aged 14 and above, the selection process involves multiple stages, including trials and elite training camps. Britannia Marie Gold continues its commitment to empowering women through initiatives like HerStartup and Her. Store, now extending support to the sports domain. IIS President Manisha Malhotra emphasized the significance of this partnership in equipping young female athletes with the skills and mentorship needed to compete at

national and international levels, fostering excellence in women's sports.

Tata Power Led Odisha discoms Launch 'Nua Arambha' to Empower Women Returning to the Workforce

Tata Power-led Odisha DISCOMs, in partnership with the Government of Odisha, have launched 'Nua Arambha', an initiative to support women returning to the workforce after a career

break. The program aims to foster diversity and inclusion by providing employment opportunities across four Odisha DISCOMs. Launched on International Women's Day, the event welcomed selected women candidates in the presence of esteemed guests, including Smt. Usha Padhee, IAS, who emphasized the importance of work-life balance.



This initiative reflects Tata Power's commitment to creating an equitable workplace and inspiring other organizations to implement similar programs. Over the

years, Tata Power has played a vital role in Odisha's power distribution sector, operating under a public-private partnership model. Nua Arambha aligns with Tata Power's broader mission to empower women, drive workplace inclusion, and contribute to sustainable growth, reinforcing its leadership in India's energy and social transformation efforts.

Group Legrand India launches Two Water Table Recharge Projects in Maharashtra

Group Legrand India has launched the Water Table Recharge Project in Bore, Pune, aiming to improve groundwater availability in Wada (Palghar) and Bore (Pune). The project recharges 50 community borewells, adding 10 crore liters of water annually to benefit over 2,500 tribal

and farmer community members. Addressing water scarcity caused by depleting groundwater and rainfall variability, the initiative reduces the daily struggle of walking long distances for water. In collaboration with the Third Planet Foundation and Urdhvam Environmental Technologies, Legrand has



implemented an innovative borewell recharge technique that accelerates natural replenishment. Farmers have already reported improved water availability, positively impacting agriculture and daily life. Inaugurated by Abida Aneez, VP-CSR,

Group Legrand India, the project aligns with the company's commitment to sustainability and social responsibility. With goals to achieve Net Zero emissions by 2050, Legrand continues to drive environmental and community-focused initiatives for a better future.



Test your knowledge about inspiring women who have made a significant impact in various fields across the globe!

- 18-20 Correct: A true champion of women's history!
 - 14-17 Correct: Fantastic! Keep celebrating these achievers.
 - 10-13 Correct: Well done, but time to read more inspiring stories.
 - 0-9 Correct: Every great story starts with curiosity. Keep learning!
- [Try before you look at answers somewhere in this issue itself!]



1. Who was the first woman Prime Minister of India?

- A) Sonia Gandhi
- B) Indira Gandhi
- C) Sarojini Naidu
- D) Pratibha Patil

2. Who became the first female President of India?

- A) Pratibha Patil
- B) Draupadi Murmu
- C) Sushma Swaraj
- D) Meira Kumar

3. Who is the current Finance Minister of India?

- A) Smriti Irani
- B) Mamata Banerjee
- C) Nirmala Sitharaman
- D) Piyush Goyal

4. Which Indian leader played a crucial role in the drafting of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

- A) Hansa Mehta
- B) Vijayalakshmi Pandit
- C) Sarojini Naidu
- D) Aruna Asaf Ali

5. Who was the first Indian woman to travel to space?

- A) Sunita Williams
- B) Ritu Karidhal
- C) Kalpana Chawla
- D) Tessy Thomas

6. Name the ISRO scientist who played a significant role in the Mars Orbiter Mission (Mangalyaan).

- A) Ritu Karidhal
- B) Nandini Harinath
- C) Minal Rohit
- D) All of the above

7. Which Nobel Prize-winning scientist made groundbreaking contributions in the field of radioactivity?

- A) Marie Curie
- B) Jane Goodall
- C) Rosalind Franklin
- D) Ada Lovelace

8. Who is known as the "Missile Woman of India"?

- A) Anuradha T.K.
- B) Tessy Thomas
- C) Ritu Karidhal
- D) Sudha Murthy

9. Who became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic silver medal in badminton?

- A) P.V. Sindhu
- B) Saina Nehwal
- C) Jwala Gutta
- D) Ashwini Ponnappa

10. Which female cricketer holds the record for the highest runs in Women's ODI cricket?

- A) Smriti Mandhana
- B) Harmanpreet Kaur
- C) Mithali Raj
- D) Shafali Verma

11. Who is a six-time world champion and an Olympic bronze medalist in boxing?

- A) Mary Kom
- B) Nikhat Zareen
- C) Lovlina Borgohain
- D) Sakshi Malik

12. Name the first Indian female wrestler to win an Olympic medal.

- A) Vinesh Phogat
- B) Sakshi Malik
- C) Babita Phogat
- D) Geeta Phogat

13. Which classical dancer is a recipient of the Padma Vibhushan and is renowned for her mastery in Bharatanatyam?

- A) Shovana Narayan
- B) Padma Subrahmanyam
- C) Alarmel Valli
- D) Sonal Mansingh

14. Which Indian singer was honored with the Bharat Ratna for her contribution to music?

- A) Asha Bhosle
- B) M.S. Subbulakshmi
- C) Lata Mangeshkar
- D) Kavita Krishnamurthy

15. Who is the founder of the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA)?

- A) Medha Patkar
- B) Ela Bhatt
- C) Arundhati Bhattacharya
- D) Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw

16. Name the youngest Nobel Prize laureate who advocates for girls' education?

- A) Greta Thunberg
- B) Malala Yousafzai
- C) Emma Watson
- D) Priyanka Chopra

17. Which Indian activist is known for leading the Chipko Movement?

- A) Gaura Devi
- B) Medha Patkar
- C) Vandana Shiva
- D) Aruna Roy

18. Who is the first Indian woman to become an IPS officer?

- A) Kiran Bedi
- B) Rani Mukherjee
- C) Sanjukta Parashar
- D) Aruna Sundararajan

19. Who was the first Indian-origin woman to go to space twice?

- A) Kalpana Chawla
- B) Sunita Williams
- C) Ritu Karidhal
- D) Tessy Thomas

20. Who was the Indian-origin woman who served as the CEO of YouTube before stepping down in 2023?

- A) Indra Nooyi
- B) Aruna Jayanthi
- C) Susan Wojcicki
- D) Leena Nair

CSR AND WOMEN'S SAFETY: ADDRESSING WORKPLACE AND COMMUNITY SAFETY CONCERNS



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Vatika Singh

Corporate Social Responsibility (in India has evolved beyond philanthropic activities to become a strategic business approach. Among the critical areas receiving increasing attention is women's safety, both in the workplace and within communities. Business houses are recognizing that ensuring the safety and empowerment of women is not just a moral obligation but also a key driver of social and economic progress.

Despite legal mandates like the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace) Prevention, Prohibition,

and Redressal (Act, 2013), the reality is that many women still face challenges related to safety and security. CSR initiatives can play a pivotal role in bridging these gaps by

implementing targeted safety programs, promoting awareness, and driving systemic change.

To further strengthen women's safety, companies must collaborate



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh



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WOMEN'S SAFETY



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

with local governments ,NGOs ,and communities .Creating safe public spaces ,enhancing street lighting ,and establishing helplines are some measures that can be incorporated into CSR projects .Additionally, leveraging technology for real-time safety monitoring and digital awareness campaigns can drive impactful change.

As India progresses towards a more inclusive and equitable society, the role of CSR in ensuring women's safety remains crucial .Business houses have the resources and influence to create safer environments ,not only for their employees but for society at large .By prioritizing safety initiatives, companies contribute to a culture of respect ,empowerment ,and sustainable growth.

Some Notable CSR Initiatives for Women's Safety



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Tata Power's Abha Program Tata Power has implemented the Abha Program, which focuses on training women as community safety ambassadors. Through self-defense workshops, digital literacy training, and counseling sessions, the program empowers women to take charge of their safety and well-being.

Hindustan Unilever's Project Shakti While primarily a women empowerment initiative, Project Shakti has an embedded focus on safety. The company provides self-defense training to women entrepreneurs under the program, ensuring they feel secure while traveling to remote villages for business activities.

Mahindra Group's Safe Women Safe India Campaign The Mahindra Group launched its Safe Women Safe India Campaign to spread awareness about gender-based violence. Partnering with local NGOs and law enforcement agencies, the initiative promotes legal literacy and self-defense training among women.

Infosys' Anti-Sexual Harassment Measures Infosys has a robust internal complaint mechanism, with regular sensitization workshops under its CSR framework. The company also funds community-based gender sensitization programs, promoting safety beyond its office premises.

Answers

1 B) Indira Gandhi

2 A) Pratibha Patil

3 C) Nirmala Sitharaman

4 A) Hansa Mehta

5 C) Kalpana Chawla

6 D) All of the above

7 A) Marie Curie

8 B) Tessy Thomas

9 A) P.V. Sindhu

10 C) Mithali Raj

11 A) Mary Kom

12 B) Sakshi Malik

13 B) Padma Subrahmanyam

14 C) Lata Mangeshkar

15 B) Ela Bhatt

16 B) Malala Yousafzai

17 A) Gaura Devi

18 A) Kiran Bedi

19 B) Sunita Williams

20 D) Susan Wojcicki

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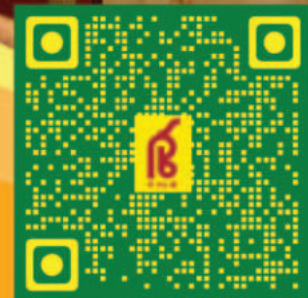
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