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# CSR TIMES

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INDIA'S NO. 1 CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY MAGAZINE



## DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CSR IN INDIA





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FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

## Corporate Social Responsibility in India

Dear Readers,

**C**orporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is evolving rapidly, and digital transformation is playing a crucial role in amplifying its impact. From AI-driven education initiatives to blockchain-enabled transparency, technology is revolutionizing how companies contribute to social good.

India's digital economy is booming, with over 1.3 billion Aadhaar-linked identities, record-breaking digital transactions, and expanded internet access. This transformation offers companies an unprecedented opportunity to enhance efficiency, accountability, and reach in their CSR programs. Whether through telemedicine for rural healthcare, digital learning platforms for education, or AI-driven monitoring for impact assessment, technology is bridging gaps and ensuring resources reach the right beneficiaries.

Additionally, big data analytics is helping organizations measure the long-term effects of their CSR initiatives, allowing them to refine strategies for maximum impact. Social media and mobile applications are enabling real-time engagement with communities, fostering transparency and collaboration. Companies are also leveraging digital payment systems to streamline fund disbursement, ensuring faster and more secure transactions.

However, challenges such as digital literacy and infrastructure disparities remain. Bridging the digital divide requires collaborative efforts between the private sector, government, and civil society. To truly harness the potential of digital CSR, businesses must adopt inclusive, ethical, and innovative approaches. By embracing technology responsibly, corporate India can set new benchmarks in social impact, ensuring a sustainable and equitable future for all.

Warm regards,

Prashant Das  
Editor, CSR TIMES



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PERSPECTIVE



CSR in the Digital Age – Click, Swipe, Impact!

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India is no longer just about cutting cheques and planting a few token trees. It has gone digital—faster than you can say blockchain-enabled transparency!

From AI-powered education programs to telemedicine in remote villages, technology is giving CSR a much-needed turbo boost. Gone are the days of lengthy paperwork and ambiguous impact reports. Today, companies can track their social initiatives in real time—because nothing says accountability like a dashboard with blinking metrics. Blockchain ensures that funds don’t mysteriously vanish, AI chatbots handle beneficiary queries (without tea breaks), and social media amplifies CSR efforts at the speed of a trending meme.

India’s digital leap—1.3 billion Aadhaar IDs, UPI-driven financial inclusion, and the world’s highest digital transactions—offers CSR a unique advantage. But let’s not ignore the glitches—digital literacy gaps, infrastructure hiccups, and the occasional chatbot with attitude. The challenge now? Making sure digital transformation doesn’t widen inequalities but bridges them. Because while technology can revolutionize CSR, a human touch—be it a mentor, a teacher, or a healthcare worker—is still irreplaceable.

To truly harness technology for social good, companies must invest in inclusive digital education, robust cybersecurity, and ethical AI practices. Tech-driven CSR should not just be efficient but also equitable, ensuring that marginalized communities gain access, not just data. The digital future of CSR isn’t about replacing people with automation—it’s about enhancing human impact through innovation. In this era of ‘click, swipe, impact,’ let’s ensure that technology serves the people, and not the other way around!

Dr. Shabnam Asthana  
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Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

# DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND CSR IN INDIA

CSR Team Bureau

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has evolved significantly in India over the past decade. With the introduction of the Companies Act, 2013, which mandates eligible businesses to spend 2% of their profits on CSR activities, companies have increasingly looked for innovative ways to implement impactful social initiatives.

Digital transformation has emerged as a key enabler in this process, allowing businesses to enhance efficiency, transparency, and reach in their CSR efforts. From

artificial intelligence (AI) to blockchain, digital solutions are reshaping how CSR is planned, executed, and measured.

Technology has revolutionized CSR in several ways, making social impact initiatives more effective and scalable. Some key areas where digital transformation is driving change include:

## Data-Driven Decision Making

Big data and analytics help companies identify key social issues, measure the effectiveness of CSR projects, and make informed decisions. Companies can use real-

time data to assess the impact of education programs, healthcare initiatives, or skill development schemes, ensuring that resources are allocated effectively.

## Blockchain for Transparency

Blockchain technology ensures transparency in CSR funding and project implementation. Many Indian corporations and NGOs are exploring blockchain to track fund disbursement and prevent leakages, ensuring that every rupee spent reaches its intended beneficiaries. This technology fosters trust among stakeholders and donors.



### Indian Companies Leading the Way

Several Indian companies have embraced digital transformation to enhance their CSR initiatives. Here are a few notable examples:

- **Tata Consultancy Services (TCS):** TCS has implemented AI-driven literacy programs for underserved communities, ensuring accessible and quality education.
- **Infosys Foundation:** Leveraging technology, Infosys Foundation has created digital libraries and skill development programs for students and professionals across India.
- **Reliance Foundation:** Through Jio platforms, Reliance Foundation has been instrumental in providing digital access to healthcare, education, and financial literacy to rural populations.
- **Wipro's Digital Health Initiative:** Wipro has implemented telemedicine solutions in partnership with NGOs to provide healthcare access to marginalized communities.

### Artificial Intelligence and Automation

AI-powered solutions are helping companies monitor CSR programs with real-time insights. Chatbots, automated reporting systems, and AI-driven project management tools make it easier for companies to track



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

progress, engage with beneficiaries, and measure social impact more efficiently.

### Digital Platforms for Wider Reach

The internet and mobile applications have made it possible to expand CSR programs beyond geographical limitations. Digital learning platforms like BYJU'S and Khan Academy are transforming education accessibility

#### Key points about India's digital journey till 2024

- **Digital Economy Ranking:** India stands as the third largest digitalized economy globally according to the "State of India's Digital Economy Report 2024".
- **Digital Identity:** Over 1.3 billion biometric IDs have been issued through Aadhaar, facilitating digital access for citizens.
- **Digital Payments:** India has recorded over 1644 billion digital transactions in FY 2023-24, the highest volume globally.
- **Internet Penetration:** A significant increase in internet connections, with broadband connections growing exponentially compared to 2014 figures.
- **5G Deployment:** India has one of the fastest 5G rollouts globally, with a large number of 5G BTS deployed across districts.
- **Rural Reach:** Common Service Centres (CSCs) have played a crucial role in delivering e-services to rural India, with over 5.84 lakh operational CSCs.
- **Data Consumption:** Average monthly data consumption per wireless subscriber has increased significantly, with a substantial drop in data costs.
- **Digital Infrastructure Development:** Continuous improvement in mobile broadband speeds, with a median speed significantly higher compared to 2014.

in rural India, while telemedicine initiatives are providing healthcare solutions to remote areas.

### Social Media for Awareness and Engagement

Companies are leveraging social media to spread awareness about their CSR initiatives, engage with communities, and encourage volunteer participation. Platforms like X formerly Twitter, LinkedIn, and Facebook serve as tools to share success stories, mobilize resources, and build stronger connections with stakeholders.

By 2024, India has undergone a remarkable digital transformation, emerging as the world's third-largest digital economy. Key milestones include the issuance of over 1.3 billion Aadhaar biometric IDs, a sharp rise in internet and broadband connections, the swift expansion of 5G, and a record-breaking 1,644 billion digital payment transactions in FY 2023-24—the highest globally. This growth has been fueled by initiatives like Digital India and Common Services Centres (CSCs), which have significantly expanded digital access in rural areas.

While technology offers immense potential to revolutionize CSR in India, challenges remain. Digital literacy gaps, infrastructure limitations, and data privacy concerns need to be addressed for successful implementation. Companies must also focus on ethical AI usage and ensuring that technological advancements do not



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

#### Important initiatives driving India's digital transformation

- **Digital India Programme:** A government initiative aimed at delivering citizen services electronically and creating a digitally empowered society.
- **Aadhaar (Biometric ID):** A unique digital identity for every Indian citizen, enabling secure access to government services.
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI):** A mobile-based real-time payment system facilitating easy digital transactions.
- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA):** Focused on making rural citizens digitally literate.

exclude vulnerable communities. The future of CSR in India is undoubtedly digital. By embracing emerging technologies, corporations can maximize their social impact, ensuring that CSR initiatives become more efficient, transparent, and far-reaching. With government support and continued innovation, India can set a global benchmark for technology-driven CSR initiatives. Digital transformation is reshaping CSR in India, allowing companies to make a more meaningful impact on society. From AI-driven education programs to blockchain-enabled transparency, technology is bridging gaps, improving efficiency, and fostering inclusive growth. As businesses continue to integrate digital tools into their CSR strategies, India is poised to witness a more effective and sustainable approach to corporate social responsibility.



# GAIL UTKARSH

These are the stories of young minds who refused to let their circumstances define them—who dared to dream beyond the barriers of limited resources and scarce opportunities. Their journeys, from humble beginnings to the prestigious corridors of IITs and NITs, stand as powerful testaments to the **transformative impact of education, mentorship, and timely intervention.**

At the heart of their success is **GAIL Utkarsh**, a flagship initiative by GAIL India Ltd., which has been a beacon of hope for talented yet underprivileged students for over **15 years**. This program

has consistently proven that **when opportunity meets determination, even the most ambitious dreams can become reality.** Through **rigorous coaching, personalized mentorship, and an unwavering support system**, GAIL Utkarsh has not only prepared these aspirants to excel in **JEE examinations** but has also instilled in them the confidence and resilience to thrive in an increasingly competitive world. With over **1,300 students** supported so far, GAIL Utkarsh continues to be a force of change, **empowering the next generation of leaders, engineers, and innovators.**



## Amit Mandola

For years, IIT felt like an impossible dream—one that I dared to chase but had no clear path to reach. Growing up in a small town in Madhya Pradesh, with my father working as a security guard and my mother managing our home, the idea of affording top-tier coaching was beyond reach. I had the determination, but not the means.

Then came the turning point—**GAIL Utkarsh SUPER 100.**

An initiative by **GAIL** executed by **CSRL**, this program provides free residential coaching to students like me—bright, ambitious, yet financially constrained. I took the entrance test, cleared the interview, and secured a spot. That moment changed everything.

More than just academic training, GAIL Utkarsh SUPER 100 gave me belief. The teachers weren't just instructors; they were mentors who saw potential in every student. They pushed us, supported us, and instilled the confidence we lacked. Surrounded by peers with the same dreams, I found inspiration and a renewed determination.

With their guidance, I cleared **JEE Mains**, then took the leap and appeared for **JEE Advanced**—securing admission to **IIT Mandi for Computer Science**. It was a dream turned into reality.



Today, I study at **IIT Mandi**, but my journey truly began at **GAIL Utkarsh SUPER 100**. Without their support, I wouldn't be here. GAIL and CSRL are not just educating students—they are **transforming lives and reshaping India's educational landscape, one dream at a time.**

## Arju

I hail from a small town in **Auraiya, Uttar Pradesh**. Our family is a tight-knit one—my parents, two younger brothers, and me. My father works as a labourer, and my mother is a homemaker. Growing up in a modest household, I understood early on that **education** was the key to breaking the cycle of financial hardship.

My journey began in **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV)**, where I completed my **10th grade in 2018 at Taiyyapur, Auraiya**, and my **12th grade in 2020 at Bangalore Urban, Karnataka**. Despite the challenges I faced, I kept pushing forward, knowing that a solid education would help me unlock new opportunities. It was during this period that I came across **GAIL**



### Utkarsh Super 100 Kanpur.

Being selected for the program was a turning point in my life. At **GAIL**



**Utkarsh Super 100**, I found not just a place to study, but a **community of mentors and peers** who were all invested in my success. The entire faculty was there for me at every step, teaching not just academic concepts, but also life lessons in perseverance, self-belief, and discipline. The environment of **dedication and focus** at GUS-100 pushed me to give my best every single day. In 2021, I cleared JEE Advanced and earned my place at **IIT BHU, Varanasi**, to pursue **Electrical Engineering**.

The journey didn't end there. **GAIL India** extended their support to me beyond just coaching, providing **scholarships** of ₹45k in my first year and ₹75k in my second year, which helped me manage my academic expenses at IIT BHU. With their help, I was able to stay focused on my education, undeterred by the financial challenges that could have held me back.

My time at IIT BHU was transformative, not just academically but personally. I dedicated myself to honing my skills and preparing for a future that was full of possibilities. The hard work paid off when I secured an **on-campus placement with GAIL India Ltd.** in the **Contracts and Procurement (C&P)** role.

I owe this success to everyone who stood by me—my **parents, mentors**, and the **GAIL Utkarsh Super 100 team**. Their belief in me, even when I had doubts, was the fuel that kept me going. As I stand here today, I am filled with gratitude for every person who has helped me along the way.





## Govind Singh

I am **Govind Singh**, a proud **IIT BHU alumnus and Chemical Engineer at Reliance Industries Limited**, but my journey here was far from easy. It's a story of resilience, second chances, and the power of the right support at the right time.

I come from **Uttar Pradesh**, where my father toiled as a farmer and my mother managed our home. Education was my only escape from financial struggles, but growing up in a **village with no proper study space, erratic electricity, and minimal resources**, my dreams often felt out of reach.

Despite these challenges, I secured admission to **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV) Taiyyapur, Auraiya**, where I found a structured education system and teachers who encouraged me to dream bigger. My ambition was to crack **JEE Advanced**, but my first

attempt in **2019 ended in a heartbreak**. With no means to afford private coaching, my aspirations seemed to slip away.

Then came a turning point—**GAIL Utkarsh Super 100 Kanpur**. This initiative wasn't just about coaching; it was about **transforming potential into success**. With expert faculty, a well-structured study plan, and the **unwavering motivation of mentors**, I found the **discipline, focus, and belief** I needed to try again.

This time, I succeeded. In **2020, I**



cleared **JEE Advanced** and secured a place at **IIT BHU Varanasi in Chemical Engineering and Technology**. The journey didn't stop there. The values and knowledge I gained propelled me forward, and today, I work at **Reliance Industries Limited**, contributing to one of the world's leading energy giants.

Looking back, I know I couldn't have done this alone. **GAIL Utkarsh Super 100 didn't just help me prepare for an exam—they gave me a future**. Their commitment to empowering students like me is changing the **educational landscape of India**, ensuring that **talent, not financial status, determines success**.

To every student out there struggling with doubt—**keep pushing forward. The right opportunities exist, and when they come, seize them with everything you have. If I could do it, so can you!**



## Sandeep

After **10th grade**, I stood at a crossroads. My dream was clear—to prepare for **IIT JEE**—but financial constraints threatened to hold me back. Giving up was never an option, so I



chose to continue my education at **Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya, Shajapur**, where I could study while striving toward my goal.

Then came a life-changing opportunity—**GAIL Utkarsh Super 100**, a free residential coaching program for

students like me. Getting selected felt like stepping into a world of possibilities. Surrounded by dedicated teachers and a competitive yet nurturing environment, I honed my problem-solving skills and strengthened my conceptual foundation.

With this solid foundation, I secured admission to **NIT Bhopal in Electrical Engineering**. From there, I embraced new challenges, continuously striving for excellence. Today, as I stand on the brink of an exciting career with opportunities that once seemed unattainable, I am reminded of how far I've come.

This journey has reaffirmed that **education, when coupled with the right support, has the power to change lives**. Keep striving, because the right opportunities await those who dare to chase them.





Saurabh

I grew up in a family where financial constraints were a constant challenge, but I always believed education was the key to a brighter future. **My time at Jawahar Navodaya Vidyalaya (JNV)** gave me a strong foundation, but the dream of pursuing higher education seemed out of reach. My parents, though supportive, couldn't afford the hefty coaching fees for engineering preparation.

Then, I came across **GAIL Utkarsh Super 100, Kanpur** - offering a chance to pursue my dreams without the burden of financial strain. I worked tirelessly to qualify, understanding that this was my one shot at turning my aspirations into reality.

Once I joined GAIL Utkarsh Super 100 Kanpur centre, everything changed. The program offered a **holistic approach to learning**—structured lessons, a disciplined

environment, and mentorship from the best **teachers**, whose unwavering belief in my potential inspired me to push harder every day. The **world-class faculty and structured guidance** not only helped me master the concepts but also gave me the confidence to believe in myself.



After months of hard work and dedication, I cleared my exams and secured admission to **MANIT Bhopal**, a significant step toward my engineering aspirations. But the

journey didn't stop there. Throughout my engineering years, I continued to grow, building both my **technical and professional skills**, ensuring I was ready for the next big opportunity.

That effort bore fruit when I secured a position at **JSW**, with an **impressive CTC**. What seemed like a distant dream just a few years ago had become my reality.

Looking back, I can clearly see how **GAIL Utkarsh** played a pivotal role in transforming my life. Their commitment to guiding students from humble backgrounds and **empowering them to reach their full potential** gave me the tools I needed to succeed. Now, as I step into my professional journey, I am driven by a deep desire to **mentor others**—to show them that **with the right guidance and relentless effort**, success is not just possible, but inevitable. **Talent knows no boundaries**, and with the right support, no dream is too far out of reach.



INDIA'S BUDGET 2025-26: A CSR PERSPECTIVE

Prashant Das

The Union Budget is one of the most anticipated financial statements in India, outlining the government's plans for economic growth, social welfare, and corporate governance. The Budget 2025-26 has significant implications for Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, affecting how companies allocate their CSR funds and contribute to national development. In this article, we will analyze key provisions of the budget from a CSR perspective and explore how they impact businesses, NGOs, and communities.

Increased Allocation for Social Sectors

One of the highlights of Budget 2025-26 is the increased allocation for healthcare, education, and rural development. These sectors align closely with CSR objectives, offering companies new opportunities to collaborate with the government and amplify their impact.

For instance, the budget has raised funding for the National Education Mission by 15%, emphasizing skill development programs. Companies in the IT and manufacturing sectors can partner with vocational training institutes to bridge the skill gap among India's

youth, ensuring job-ready graduates. A practical example is how companies like Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) and Infosys have been running skill-building programs for underprivileged students, preparing them for employment in the digital economy.

CSR and Healthcare

With the government's commitment to improving healthcare infrastructure, CSR funding can play a pivotal role in strengthening medical facilities in underserved regions. The budget has introduced tax incentives for companies investing in telemedicine and digital health initiatives. This is a significant boost for organizations looking to enhance



Budget Highlights

Income Tax Relief for Middle-Class Households

- No income tax on monthly earnings up to ₹1 lakh, boosting savings and consumption.
- Salaried individuals in the new tax regime to pay zero tax on annual income up to ₹12.75 lakh.

Key Drivers of Economic Growth Recognized

- The budget identifies four engines of development: Agriculture, MSMEs, Investment, and Exports.

Agricultural Reforms & Farmer Benefits

- ‘PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana’ to benefit 1.7 crore farmers and improve productivity in 100 low-yield districts.
- ‘Mission for Aatmanirbharta in Pulses’ to focus on increasing production of Tur, Urad, and Masoor dal.
- Loans up to ₹5 lakh available through Kisan Credit Card (KCC) under a revised interest subvention scheme.

Fiscal Management & Deficit Reduction

- FY-25 fiscal deficit estimated at 4.8%, with a target to lower it to 4.4% in FY-26.

Support for MSMEs & Manufacturing Sector

- Credit guarantee cover for MSMEs increased from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore.
- A National Manufacturing Mission to promote small, medium, and large industries under the "Make in India" initiative.

Education & Technology Advancements

- 50,000 Atal Tinkering Labs to be set up in government schools over the next five years.
- A Centre of Excellence in Artificial Intelligence for education with a ₹500 crore budget.

Empowering Street Vendors & Gig Workers

- PM SVANidhi scheme enhanced with higher loan limits and UPI-linked credit cards with ₹30,000 limits.
- Gig workers to receive identity cards, registration on the e-Shram portal, and healthcare under PM Jan Arogya Yojana.

Urban Development & Infrastructure

- ₹1 lakh crore Urban Challenge Fund to develop cities as economic growth hubs.
- Modified UDAN scheme to improve regional air connectivity to 120 new destinations.

Energy & Innovation Investments

- ₹20,000 crore allocated for Small Modular Reactor R&D under the Nuclear Energy Mission.
- ₹15,000 crore SWAMIH Fund to fast-track completion of 1 lakh stressed housing units.
- ₹20,000 crore set aside for private-sector-driven research, development, and innovation initiatives.

Cultural & Historical Preservation

- 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' to survey and conserve over one crore manuscripts.

Insurance & Business Reforms

- FDI cap in the insurance sector raised from 74% to 100%.
- Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0 to decriminalize over 100 provisions in various laws.

Taxation & Compliance Ease

- Updated income tax return filing period extended from 2 to 4 years.
- Late payment of TCS decriminalized.
- TDS on rent threshold raised from ₹2.4 lakh to ₹6 lakh.

Customs & Trade Policy Adjustments

- Basic customs duty (BCD) removed on 36 life-saving drugs and medicines for cancer and rare diseases.
- BCD on Integrated Flat Panel Displays (IFPDs) increased to 20%, but reduced to 5% for open cells.
- Exemption on BCD for parts of open cells to promote domestic manufacturing.
- Additional capital goods for EV and mobile battery manufacturing exempted to boost battery production.
- 10-year BCD exemption on raw materials and components used in shipbuilding.
- BCD reduced from 30% to 5% on frozen fish paste and from 15% to 5% on fish hydrolysate.

healthcare access through technology.

A real-world example is the Apollo Foundation, which has leveraged CSR funds to set up mobile medical units in remote areas. With the new budget provisions, more companies can follow suit, ensuring better healthcare access for rural populations.

Environmental Sustainability and CSR

Sustainability is another key focus of Budget 2025-26. The government has introduced incentives for businesses investing in renewable energy and waste management projects. The revised CSR guidelines now encourage companies to support green initiatives such as solar power adoption and water conservation.

For example, companies like ITC have been investing heavily in water conservation projects, helping farmers adopt sustainable irrigation practices. With new budget incentives, more businesses can integrate environmental projects into their CSR strategies, fostering long-term ecological benefits.

MSME and Women Entrepreneurship Support

The government has also announced special financial packages for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and women entrepreneurs. Large corporations can use their CSR budgets to mentor and support small businesses through incubation programs, grants, and training sessions.

Take the case of Hindustan

Unilever, which has been supporting women entrepreneurs in rural areas through its Project Shakti initiative. By training women to become direct-to-home sales agents, the company has empowered thousands of households. With the budget emphasizing women-led businesses, similar CSR initiatives can be expanded to benefit more communities.

While the Budget 2025-26 has introduced several positive measures for CSR, challenges remain. Some companies struggle with proper CSR implementation due to bureaucratic delays and lack of awareness about new policies. To address this, businesses must engage with policy experts and industry forums to stay informed about evolving CSR regulations.

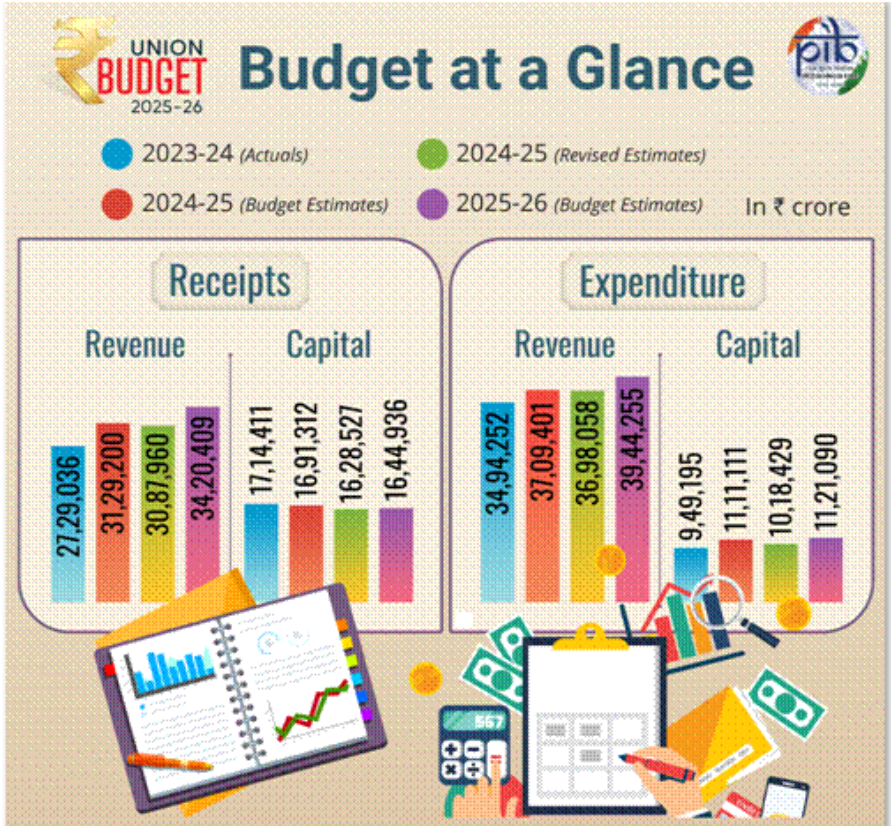


Photo: Press Information Bureau (PIB)

Additionally, collaboration between corporates, NGOs, and the government is essential to maximize impact. Creating public-private partnerships (PPPs) for CSR initiatives can lead to better resource utilization and long-term sustainability.

The Union Budget 2025-26 presents a strong foundation for CSR-driven development in India. By aligning corporate initiatives with national priorities, businesses can contribute to meaningful social change. Whether through education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, or entrepreneurship support, CSR remains a powerful tool for corporate India to give back to society. With strategic planning and collaboration, companies can ensure that their CSR efforts create lasting impact, fostering an inclusive and



# AKSHAYA PATRA'S CSR IMPACT: A VISION FOR A HUNGER-FREE FUTURE



## An Exclusive Interview with Mr. Shridhar Venkat, CEO of The Akshaya Patra Foundation

### How has the Foundation adapted its CSR engagement strategies in response to evolving corporate social responsibility trends?

The Akshaya Patra Foundation has continually evolved its CSR engagement strategies to align with the dynamic landscape of corporate social responsibility. In recent years, we have strengthened our collaborations with the Central and State Governments, alongside fostering robust partnerships with corporate and individual donors. This

multi-stakeholder approach ensures that our initiatives are both scalable and sustainable, allowing us to extend our reach and impact. We focus on creating tailored engagement opportunities that resonate with our partners' goals, emphasizing transparency, accountability, and mutual benefits.

### What role do CSR contributions play in scaling Akshaya Patra's operations to reach more children across India?



CSR contributions are vital to our mission, enabling us to scale operations and enhance our reach across the country. These funds directly support our mid-day meal program, helping us to serve nutritious meals to over 2.25 million children across 16 States & 2 UT's in the country, daily. Moreover, CSR partnerships facilitate capacity building, technological upgrades, and infrastructural development, which are crucial for expanding our service footprint and enhancing operational efficiency.

### What has been the most rewarding part of leading Akshaya Patra? Are there any personal experiences with the communities you serve that have left a lasting impression on you?

Leading Akshaya Patra is immensely rewarding, especially when witnessing the direct impact of our work on children's health, education, and futures. A particularly poignant moment for me was during a visit to

one of our schools, where a young girl told me that our meals are not only her primary source of nutrition but also her motivation to attend school. Such interactions reaffirm our commitment and the profound difference we make in these young lives.

### Can you elaborate on how Akshaya Patra leverages technology to enhance efficiency and transparency in its operations?

Efficiency and scale are critical to our mission. Akshaya Patra's semi-automated kitchens can prepare up to 100,000 meals daily while ensuring hygiene and consistency. Automated recipe adherence maintains taste and nutrition, while ERP systems optimise inventory, logistics and costing. GPS tracking and route optimisation further enhance timely delivery. Our founder-chairman, Shri Madhu Pandit Dasa envisioned these advancements to maximise impact—technology in service of humanity.

The integration of innovation ensures that our meals reach children safely, on time and in the best possible quality.

**As we look towards the next decade, what are the key areas of focus for Akshaya Patra? Are there new initiatives or partnerships that you are particularly excited about?** Looking ahead, our focus will remain on expanding our reach to serve more children and exploring holistic child development programs. We are particularly excited about initiatives aimed at enhancing the quality of education through integrated learning programs. New partnerships, both within India and globally, will be crucial to realizing these goals, enabling us to leverage additional resources and expertise.

### With Akshaya Patra expanding its reach globally, how do you ensure that the organization's core values and mission are upheld across diverse cultural contexts?

As we expand globally, maintaining our core values and mission is paramount. We ensure this by ingraining our philosophy and operational ethos in every new team and partner, supported by rigorous training and orientation programs. Regular audits and feedback mechanisms also allow us to maintain alignment with our mission across all geographies.

### What measurable impact has the mid-day meal program had on children's education, health, and



**attendance in schools?**

Statistically, the mid-day meal program has significantly improved school attendance, academic performance, and health indicators among children. Regular health check-ups and impact assessments validate these improvements, making the program a crucial component of educational infrastructure.

**Beyond mid-day meals, what other initiatives has Akshaya Patra undertaken to address child nutrition and education?**

At Akshaya Patra, while our core mission continues to focus on delivering hot and nutritious mid-day meals to children, we have broadened our approach to include several complementary initiatives. A key area of our expansion is the enhancement of school infrastructure, particularly in developing dedicated areas within schools where children can comfortably consume their meals. This not only dignifies the mealtime experience but also underscores the importance of a hygienic and structured environment for eating.

Furthermore, recognizing that education is the foundation for a brighter future, we have initiated the "Giving Every Dream A Chance" project. This initiative is designed to identify and nurture the unique talents of children across various fields such as sports, arts, and academics, providing them with the resources and mentorship needed to pursue their dreams.



These efforts are all integrated with our ongoing commitment to child well-being, ensuring that our interventions are comprehensive and contribute meaningfully to the holistic development of the children we serve.

**What future goals does the Foundation have to expand its contribution to child welfare and food security in India?**

At The Akshaya Patra Foundation, our vision for the future is deeply connected to our commitment to nourishing the leaders of tomorrow. We aim to significantly scale up our reach by providing nutritious meals to over five million children daily across India. This expansion isn't just about numbers; it's about enhancing the quality of nutrition we offer, ensuring we support the holistic development of each child.

Innovation in meal production

and delivery is another critical area. We are investing in technological advancements to streamline our operations and increase efficiency. This includes adopting sustainable practices that reduce waste and environmental impact, aligning with our ethos of responsibility towards the planet.

**How has Akshaya Patra contributed to employment generation in local communities through its operations?**

Akshaya Patra has been a significant contributor to local employment, across both our centralized & decentralized kitchen models. These models not only aids in employment generation but also in skill development among the youth and women in rural and semi-urban areas. By sourcing ingredients locally, we also support the agricultural sector, creating a sustainable ecosystem of benefits.

#International Women's Day #AccelerateAction #MissionViksitBharat



At The International Women Summit

17th | March  
2025

Role of Women  
in Achieving the Goal of  
Viksit Bharat by 2047

India  
Habitat  
Centre | New  
Delhi

**Highlights**

- Discussion Panel
- Corporate Presentations
- Question & Answer Session
- Knowledge sharing session on Women Empowerment
- Success Stories by Women Achievers
- Awards Ceremony
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The 2025 Partnership Forum of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC Partnership Forum), held on 5 February 2025, at the United Nations Headquarters in New York marked the first major event of the ECOSOC calendar. The one-day mega event, chaired by the ECOSOC President, H.E. Mr. Bob Rae, convened under the theme, *“Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science- and evidence-based solutions for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its Sustainable Development Goals for leaving no one behind.”* The forum placed a special emphasis on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that will be reviewed at the 2025 high-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF), namely Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being); Goal 5 (Gender Equality); Goal 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth); Goal 14 (Life Below Water); and Goal 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

In his opening remarks, H.E. Mr. Bob Rae said, “The Pact for the Future, as well as the SDG Political Declaration of 2023, have offered us opportunities to define a common vision for multilateral action going forward. At the heart of that vision is Partnership. Partnerships are multipliers allowing each of us to go further and amplify individual efforts and make them collective ones.”

The 2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum highlighted and discussed forward-looking actions by governments and other stakeholders through innovative partnerships aimed at mobilizing commitments and advancing the 2030 Agenda for



Photo: 2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum | Department of Economic and Social Affairs

## 2025 ECOSOC PARTNERSHIP FORUM

Sustainable Development while addressing new challenges. Discussions reflected insights from previous global engagements, including the 2023 SDG Summit and the 2024 High-Level Political Forum, where it was observed that, despite persistent challenges, effective multi-stakeholder partnerships continue to drive progress in sustainable development.

The Pact for the Future, adopted by the UN General Assembly as Resolution 79/1 in September 2024, further reinforced the critical role of partnerships in addressing global challenges. With multiple references to

partnerships, the document highlights their importance in tackling technical challenges related to UN-affiliated partnerships, engaging diverse stakeholders, and leveraging specialized expertise to advance sustainability efforts across various thematic areas. In this spirit, the 2025 ECOSOC Partnership Forum provided an early opportunity in the ECOSOC cycle to rally Member States and stakeholders, fostering an environment of continued dialogue and accountability-driven collaboration.

**SDG 8: Promote sustained, inclusive**

**and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all**

A number of partnerships have been launched to address key challenges and advance SDG 8. The Global Accelerator on Jobs and Social Protection for Just Transitions was launched to promote decent work opportunities in the green, digital, and care economies while extending social protection to marginalized populations. Similarly, the Productivity Ecosystems for Decent Work initiative focuses on overcoming barriers to productivity growth and facilitating job creation. Additionally, the UNIDO Learning and Knowledge Development Facility (LKDF), structured as a public-private development partnership, aims to enhance industrial skills training, with a particular emphasis on supporting youth and women in developing

countries. Another significant effort, the Global Coalition for Social Justice, brings together over 300 partners to strengthen multilateral cooperation and advance SDG implementation. Complementing these endeavors, the ILO Observatory on Artificial Intelligence and Work in the Digital Economy serves as a knowledge hub to guide governments and social partners in navigating the digital transformation of the workforce.

**SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

A key area of focus during the forum was gender equality, with discussions on leveraging gender-disaggregated data to craft more effective policies and interventions. Strategies for mobilizing financial resources, including public funding mechanisms and governance frameworks, were explored to strengthen gender equality efforts, with a particular emphasis on feminist funds and grassroots initiatives. Local partnerships were recognized as crucial drivers of change, demonstrating how community-based collaborations can significantly advance SDG 5 at the grassroots level. Case studies showcasing successful multi-stakeholder partnerships further illustrated the tangible progress being made toward gender equality.

**SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**

Health remained a central theme at the forum, with calls for renewed commitment to accelerating SDG 3 as both a fundamental component and an indicator of sustainable

development. Effective cross-sectoral and multi-stakeholder partnerships were deemed essential for addressing health inequalities, securing sustainable financing, and strengthening universal health coverage through primary healthcare approaches. Additional discussions highlighted the importance of pandemic preparedness, health innovations, and equitable access to medical technologies. Recognizing the role of digital transformation, participants underscored how artificial intelligence and digital health solutions can contribute to improving health care delivery, particularly in fragile settings. These efforts align with broader commitments outlined in the 2023 SDG Declaration and the 2024 Pact for the Future, as well as key UN health-related agreements. Effective multi-stakeholder and cross-sectoral partnerships are essential for accelerating progress on SDG 3, including by tackling inequalities and other determinants of health, mobilizing sustainable financing for health, advancing UHC through PHC, enhancing pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, promoting research, innovation and access to health products and technologies, addressing health needs in fragile settings, and leveraging artificial intelligence and digital health.

**SDG 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development**

Addressing SDG 14 the forum highlighted the importance of innovative partnerships to drive action.





# THE MAHAKUMBH EFFECT: EXPLORING HOW MEGA EVENTS LIKE KUMBH MELA INFLUENCE CSR

Vatika Singh

Mega events like the Kumbh Mela are more than just spiritual and cultural gatherings; they are platforms that drive economic growth, infrastructure development, and significant Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The Mahakumbh, held every 12 years in India, attracts millions of pilgrims, making it one of the largest human congregations in the world. This

mass movement presents unique opportunities and challenges, prompting businesses and organizations to contribute towards social welfare, sustainability, and public service.

### CSR and Kumbh Mela: A Symbiotic Relationship

The sheer scale of the Kumbh Mela necessitates vast resources for sanitation, healthcare, transportation, and waste

management. This is where CSR plays a pivotal role. Companies could see it as an opportunity to align their social initiatives with a cause that impacts millions.

### Infrastructure Development and Long-Term Impact

CSR investments during the Mahakumbh are not just short-term interventions but contribute to long-lasting benefits. Roads, bridges, and sanitation facilities built for the event often continue to serve the local population even after the

## How businesses could leverage the Mahakumbh for CSR

- Sanitation and Hygiene Initiatives
  - ✦ Installing mobile toilets and bio-toilets to ensure cleanliness.
  - ✦ Awareness campaigns on hygiene and waste segregation to promote responsible behaviour among pilgrims.
- Healthcare and Medical Assistance
  - ✦ Setting up free medical camps, offering emergency care, vaccinations, and disease prevention awareness.
  - ✦ Distribution of first-aid kits, while hospitals deploy mobile health units for immediate medical assistance.
- Drinking Water and Food Distribution
  - ✦ Providing safe and hygienic drinking water stations.
  - ✦ Organizing community kitchens (langars) and food distribution for underprivileged pilgrims.
- Environmental Sustainability
  - ✦ Investment in waste management, ensuring that non-biodegradable waste is collected and recycled.
  - ✦ Providing renewable energy solutions, such as solar-powered lighting and water purification systems, to reduce the carbon footprint of the event.

pilgrims depart. Public-private partnerships help in:

- Smart City Initiatives: Digital payments, app-based navigation services, and tech-driven crowd management.
- Water Conservation Efforts: River cleaning projects and rejuvenation of water bodies.
- Skill Development Programs: Training and employment opportunities for locals in event management, hospitality, and security services.

### Despite numerous CSR efforts, some challenges remain:

- Scalability and Coordination: Managing such a vast influx of people requires better coordination between government bodies and corporations.
- Sustainability: Ensuring that initiatives extend beyond the event duration.
- Waste Management Compliance: Encouraging pilgrims to actively participate in keeping the environment clean.

Going forward, businesses must adopt a more structured and tech-driven approach to CSR at events like the Mahakumbh. Digital monitoring of CSR initiatives, real-time crowd management, and sustainable urban planning will enhance the long-term impact of these efforts.

The Mahakumbh Effect is a testament to how mega events can drive social responsibility and sustainable development. When businesses align their CSR initiatives with large-scale public gatherings, the result is a harmonious blend of cultural preservation, economic progress,



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

### Case Studies of CSR Success Stories at Kumbh Mela

Several corporations have set benchmarks in leveraging the Mahakumbh for impactful CSR:

- ITC's Waste-Free Kumbh Initiative: ITC launched large-scale waste collection and recycling programs, ensuring a cleaner event.
- HUL's Handwashing Campaign: Hindustan Unilever installed handwashing stations and conducted hygiene awareness programs for pilgrims.
- Tata Trust's Medical Camps: Tata Trust provided free healthcare services, including eye check-ups and general medical assistance to thousands of visitors.

and social upliftment. As India continues to host monumental events, integrating CSR into their fabric will remain crucial in shaping a responsible and inclusive future.



# STEERING NEW LANDSCAPES TOWARDS INCLUSIVE GROWTH



“**T**he only constant in life is change,” said Heraclitus, and nowhere is this more evident than in the landscape of corporate social responsibility (CSR). From Charity to philanthropy to strategic CSR; as one navigates the winding hills, the scenery transforms before our very eyes, each turn offering a new vista of possibility and challenge. In the era of **rapid technological advancements**, digital transformation is the vehicle propelling businesses through this dynamic terrain. With India emerging as one of the fastest-growing digital economies, enterprises are driving slowly and cautiously, yet remain agile

enough to negotiate the rapid shifts in the digital landscape. **Leveraging technology, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation**, they are not only enhancing sustainability efforts but also promoting ethical business practices and driving profound social impact. It is a journey of learning and adaptation, where businesses are continually steering through the evolving expectations of societal impact, and they are doing so with remarkable innovation and commitment.

**Promoting digital literacy** is one of the key initiatives that companies are spearheading to foster inclusive growth. Take Infosys, for instance.

Through its Infosys Springboard initiative, the company has been a beacon of hope, offering free digital and life skills training to students and professionals alike. By doing so, they ensure that underserved communities are not left behind in the digital economy's wake but are prepared to seize the opportunities it presents.

**Access to technology** is another critical area where corporations are making significant strides. **Telus**, a Canadian telecom giant, exemplifies this with its Connecting for Good program. By providing affordable internet access and refurbished devices to low-income families, Telus is bridging the digital gap and enabling

these communities to participate in the digital economy. This initiative is a testament to how thoughtful CSR programs can drive tangible social impact.

**Financial inclusion** remains a major focus in India, and the digital payment revolution is playing a crucial role in this regard. The **Paytm** Foundation has emerged as a champion in supporting UPI adoption among small vendors and rural entrepreneurs. By training over 10 million street vendors on UPI payments, Paytm Foundation is empowering these individuals with the tools for cashless transactions and financial independence, thus contributing to a more inclusive economy. **HDFC Bank's SmartUp Program** supports startups working on financial inclusion. **RBI's Digital Banking Push** aligns with CSR efforts to bring banking services to rural areas.

Lastly, as **digital transactions** become more prevalent, ensuring cybersecurity awareness is paramount. **Google India's** 'Internet Saathi' initiative stands out as an exemplary effort in this direction. By training rural women to use the internet safely and securely, the program not only promotes digital literacy but also indirectly strengthens cybersecurity awareness in remote areas. This initiative highlights the importance of equipping first-time digital adopters with the knowledge to navigate the digital world securely.

I was honoured to be invited by **ARCH Foundation** to witness two inspiring CSR initiatives. In **Dadri**,



with support from **TELUS**, we inaugurated a coding lab at a local inter-college—once home to former Chief Minister **Ms. Mayavati**. The spark in the girls' eyes held a universe of dreams, waiting to take flight. In another initiative, backed by **Microsoft**, government school teachers and students took the stage, confidently demonstrating digital technology. Their enthusiasm was electric, their aspirations soaring—**proof that knowledge is the wind beneath their wings. And the journey forward is being paved by CSR, harnessing the power of digital transformation to turn dreams into reality.**

As **Prime Minister Narendra Modi's INDIA FIRST** vision (Inclusiveness, Nationalism, Democracy, Integrity, Accountability, Friendship, Investment, Reform, Security, and Technology) shapes India's growth, CSR efforts are evolving alongside digital transformation. **Businesses are no longer just donors; they are change**

**makers, harnessing technology to drive sustainable and inclusive progress.** The road ahead is like a winding hill—each turn presents challenges, but also opportunities. **By embracing digital tools, companies are bridging the gap, empowering communities, and creating a future where every initiative leads to a SMILE on every face.**



**Dr. K.K. Upadhyay**  
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Birla Institute of Management  
Technology (BIMTECH)



# INDIA ENERGY WEEK 2025 - PRIME MINISTER MODI'S REMARKS



The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, addressed the India Energy Week 2025 at Yashobhoomi via video message today. He emphasized that the attendees are not just part of the Energy Week, but are also integral to India's energy ambitions. He extended a warm welcome to all participants, including distinguished guests from abroad, highlighting their crucial role in this event.

Highlighting global perspectives that the 21st century belongs to India, Shri Modi remarked, "India is driving not only its growth but also the growth of the world, with the energy sector playing a significant role". He emphasized that India's

energy ambitions are built on five pillars: harnessing resources, encouraging innovation among brilliant minds, economic strength and political stability, strategic geography making energy trade attractive and easier, and commitment to global sustainability.

Stressing that the next two decades are crucial for realizing a Viksit Bharat, Shri Modi noted that several transformative milestones will be achieved in the coming five years. He noted that many of India's energy goals are aligned with the 2030 deadline, including the addition of 500 gigawatts of renewable energy capacity, achieving net zero carbon emissions

for Indian Railways, and producing five million metric tons of green hydrogen annually. He acknowledged that these targets may seem ambitious, but the achievements of the past decade have instilled confidence that these goals will be attained.

"India has grown from the tenth largest to the fifth largest economy in the past decade", remarked Shri Modi. He highlighted that India's solar energy generation capacity has increased thirty-two times in the last ten years, making it the third-largest solar power generating nation in the world. He noted that India's non-fossil fuel energy capacity has tripled and that India is the first G20 country to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement. The Prime Minister emphasized India's achievements in ethanol blending, with a current rate of nineteen percent, leading to foreign exchange savings, substantial farmer revenue, and significant reductions in CO2 emissions. He highlighted India's goal of achieving a twenty percent ethanol mandate by October 2025. He remarked that India's biofuels industry is ready for rapid growth, with 500 million metric tonnes of sustainable feedstock. He further noted that during India's G20 presidency, the Global Biofuels Alliance was established and is continuously expanding, now

involving 28 nations and 12 international organizations. He highlighted that this alliance is transforming waste into wealth and setting up Centers of Excellence.

Shri Modi emphasized that India is continuously reforming policies to maximize its hydrocarbon resources, leading to major discoveries and the expansion of gas infrastructure. As a result, India is witnessing significant growth in its gas sector, with natural gas becoming an increasing part of the energy mix.

India, currently the world's fourth-largest refining hub, is working to expand refining capacity by 20%. Additionally, India's vast sedimentary basins hold immense untapped hydrocarbon potential. To attract investment, the Government has introduced, the Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) to facilitate oil and gas exploration, a single-window clearance system for streamlined approvals, and amendments to the Oilfields Regulation & Development Act, ensuring policy stability, extended leases, and better financial terms for stakeholders. He emphasized that these reforms will facilitate the exploration of oil and gas resources in the maritime sector, increase production, and maintain strategic petroleum reserves.

With a strong push for *Make in India*, the Prime Minister highlighted significant opportunities in local energy manufacturing. He noted that India's solar PV module production capacity has surged from 2 GW to approximately 70 GW in

just a decade. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has further accelerated the sector, promoting the manufacture of high-efficiency solar PV modules.

"India's major focus is on Make in India and local supply chains", exclaimed Shri Modi. He highlighted the significant potential for manufacturing various types of hardware, including PV modules, in India. The Prime Minister noted that India is supporting local manufacturing, with the solar PV module manufacturing capacity expanding from 2 gigawatts to approximately 70 gigawatts in the past ten years. He emphasized that the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has made the sector more attractive, promoting the manufacturing of high-efficiency solar PV modules.

Highlighting the significant opportunities for innovation and manufacturing in the battery and storage capacity sector, the Prime Minister remarked that India is rapidly advancing towards electric mobility and emphasized the need for swift action to meet the demands of such a large country in this sector. Shri Modi noted that the current year's budget includes numerous announcements supporting green energy. He highlighted that the Government has exempted several items related to the manufacturing of EV and mobile phone batteries from basic customs duty. This includes cobalt powder, lithium-ion battery waste, lead, zinc, and other critical minerals. He remarked that

the National Critical Minerals Mission will play a crucial role in building a robust supply chain in India. He also highlighted the promotion of the non-lithium battery ecosystem. The Prime Minister emphasized that the current year's budget has opened the nuclear energy sector, and every investment in energy is creating new jobs for the youth and generating opportunities for green jobs.

"To strengthen India's energy sector, the Government is empowering the public", emphasised the Prime Minister. He highlighted that ordinary families and farmers have been made energy providers. He remarked that the PM Suryagarh Free Electricity Scheme was launched last year, and its scope is not limited to energy production. He noted that this scheme is creating new skills in the solar sector, developing a new service ecosystem, and increasing investment opportunities.

Concluding his address, the Prime Minister reiterated India's unwavering commitment to sustainable energy solutions that drive growth while preserving nature. Expressing confidence that India Energy Week 2025 will yield meaningful outcomes, he encouraged global stakeholders to seize the immense opportunities emerging in India's dynamic energy landscape. With optimism and resolve, he extended his best wishes to all participants, urging them to be a part of India's journey towards a cleaner, greener, and more prosperous energy future.



# BRIDGING THE GAP: PUBLIC-PRIVATE COLLABORATION IN CSR IN INDIA



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

Vatika Singh

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in India has seen significant evolution over the years, with both public and private sectors playing a crucial role in addressing socio-economic challenges. With the implementation of Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, businesses above a certain threshold are mandated to allocate a portion of their profits toward CSR initiatives. However, to maximize impact, collaboration between the

government and private enterprises is essential.

Public-private collaborations help pool resources, expertise, and strategic vision to drive large-scale social initiatives. The government, with its vast reach and policy framework, provides the necessary infrastructure and regulatory support, while private enterprises bring innovation, efficiency, and financial resources.

Despite its potential, collaboration between the public and private sectors faces challenges such as bureaucratic red tape,

## Ideas for effective Public-Private CSR collaborations:

- **Creating Synergistic Policies:** The government should facilitate smoother partnerships by introducing policies that incentivize joint initiatives.
- **Encouraging Multi-Stakeholder Engagement:** NGOs, local communities, and academic institutions should be involved to ensure holistic and impactful projects.
- **Leveraging Technology:** Digital platforms can enhance monitoring, reporting, and transparency in CSR projects.

misalignment of objectives, and lack of transparency. Ensuring accountability, streamlining approval processes, and fostering open communication can help overcome these barriers.

Public-private partnerships in CSR have the potential to create sustainable and large-scale social impact in India. By fostering cooperation, ensuring transparency, and aligning goals, these collaborations can bridge developmental gaps and drive inclusive growth. The future of CSR lies in integrated efforts where businesses and governments work hand-in-hand to build a more equitable society.

### Some successful Public-Private collaborations include:

- **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan:** Numerous corporations have aligned their CSR efforts with the government's sanitation mission, funding toilet construction, waste management, and hygiene awareness programs.
- **Skill India Initiative:** Many companies partner with this program to provide vocational training and skill development opportunities, enhancing employability among youth.
- **Digital India Mission:** Tech firms contribute by offering digital literacy programs and infrastructure development in rural areas, bridging the digital divide.



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# FASHION FORWARD



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

## Choose a lifestyle that neither burns your pockets nor the planet

Maanisa Das

The discounted prices you relished on black Friday sales may have cost the planet gasping for air and workers earning less than a thread on your sleeve. The new religion of online shopping has eased the retail shopping experience by bringing runways of fashion to the palm of your hand but at a social and environmental cost, not to be realised in the glittery malls and shopping plazas but in the mounting landfills and in the hands of underaged and underpaid workers bleeding in to keep

up with the pace of consumerism.

The \$2.4 trillion-dollar global industry, employing approximately 300 million people across the value chain, is the third largest polluting industry after fuel and agribased businesses. According to the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), the industry is the second-biggest consumer of water and is responsible for about 10% of global carbon emissions – more than all international flights and maritime shipping combined, and 2% to 8% of global greenhouse gas emissions. The industry generates 92 million tonnes

of annual textiles waste, consumes 215 trillion liters of water consumed per year, ships back 85% of textiles in landfills, and demands grueling 75-hour work weeks to keep up with soaring demand. The 2023 Global Slavery Index reports that 50 million people live in modern slavery, with the garment industry being a significant contributor.

Having these numbers in mind, it's also crucial to note that this industry also impacts ten UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). United Nations Alliance for Sustainable Fashion, seeks



Photo: Geneva Environment Network

coordinated action in the fashion sector by UN bodies, policy makers, industry leaders and everyone involved in the fashion ecosystem. However, a watered down commitment from national and international fashion brands to meet climate targets falls short of the accountability needed to address the true scale of environmental damage and unethical practices in the fashion supply chain. The industry needs to pace up with the accelerated technological change, pressing demands for sustainability and fair labour practices, and the shifting sands of consumer preferences.

### Apparel Supply Chain

Fashion supply chain consists from the production of raw materials and the manufacturing of garments, accessories and footwear, to their distribution, consumption, and disposal. In the wake of eco-conscious consumers' priorities, lack of CSR reporting on fashion is the first feature of this defining crisis. According to the campaign group's recent What Fuels Fashion? Report 2024, nearly one

quarter (24%) of the world's largest fashion brands disclose nothing on decarbonisation, 86% of brands lack a public, time-bound and measurable coal phase-out target and 95% of major fashion brands do not publish breakdown of the energy-mix in their supply chains.

The demand of consumers and stakeholders for transparency is pushing brands, and thus their manufacturers, to scrutinize their supply chains to ensure fair wages, safe working conditions, and ethical sourcing of materials. Several companies are turning to isotopic testing, a scientific method to peer into the atomic makeup of materials in their products, to closely look out for any traces of environmental abuse or forced labour. End-to-end visibility not only enables tracking supply chains but also secures data transparency for consumers and regulatory bodies alike.

### Environmental Impact

The list of environmental consequences within the fashion industry is staggering. This resource-

intensive industry uses massive amounts of water, energy, and natural resources, driven by mass production and low-cost institutions. Dyeing and finishing, yarn preparation and fibre production are among the largest contributors to environmental damage. The absurd quest of fast fashion brands "to take only 15 days for a garment to go from the design stage to being sold in stores"- leaves behind an equally absurd trail of waste. The systemic animal cruelty and horrors of factory farming—for skins (leather), wool, down, cashmere, mohair, and fur—to create the sense of exclusiveness claim lives of billions of animals every year.

Many players in the fashion industry are turning to be sustainable fashion stops, utilising upcycled materials, low impact production, and investing in craftsmanship. Stella McCartney stood in the vanguard of successful sustainable luxury brands that produce products with recycled polyester, vegan leather, and organic cotton. Brands are routing close to consumers to reduce the travel distance and hence the carbon





Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

emissions. Slow fashion is rising as a reactive consumption model to reduce individual carbon footprints, and vegan fashion is replacing the traditional animal derived fabrics.

Ethical labour practices

The social impacts equally run on par with the environmental impacts within the fashion industry. To lower the production cost, fast fashion brands have often been accused of employing child labour and offering lower than living wages in developing countries. As a labour-intensive industry employing over 300 million people, fashion brands need to do more than paying lip service to address exploitation and abuse of the human rights of millions of garment workers. Ethical labour practices include decent work employment, fair wages, occupational health and safety, diversity and equal opportunity, and grievance mechanisms throughout the supply chain. H&M has striven hard in not only considering the wellbeing of the employees but also customer’s health and safety through careful sourcing fabric they use. Fabindia, is an Indian brand deeply rooted in promoting

traditional Indian crafts and artisan communities, offering sustainable livelihoods to over 55,000 artisans and craftspeople.

Product lifecycle management

Influencers posting ‘haul’ videos to show off their purchases on social media and an unhealthy amount of ‘returns’ just to get extra luxury coupons on online shopping carts might be fueling the throwaway culture. These trends shed light on the need for product circulation and product longevity. Adopting a sustainable Product Lifecycle Management (PLM) thus becomes an imperative to manage a product’s entire lifecycle to produce sustainable clothes. From initial concept and design to material selection, sourcing, production planning, and distribution and disposal. According to McKinsey’s “The State of Fashion 2024” report, the luxury sector has outperformed, again, suggesting leading brands’ sincere take on circularity and building better products that last longer. For instance, Ralph Lauren’s pilot

“recirculation” programmes stand out as a leading contributor in eco-friendly initiatives to keep their products living on, from resale and repair to recycling and rental initiatives. Other key fashion brands are also relocating their production hubs closer to customers to promote textile-to-textile recycling and reduce emissions on transportation.

Improving consumer engagement

As consumers and shareholders alike have become more socially conscious, the demand for brands to act responsibly has only intensified. Covid 19 pandemic has shifted consumers’ sentiments on environmental and social commitments and individual lifestyle preferences accordingly. According to the 2015 Global CSR Study, 90% of consumers have pledged to boycott companies that engage in unethical practices. And as per Fashion Revolution’s consumer survey, 72% believe it’s important that fashion brands have ethical certifications. Consumers are now citing ‘newness’ as one of the last important attributes and are open to purchasing more durable fashion items. Their purchasing decisions indicate a significant shift in fashion-cycle mindset. For fashion brands, this presents an ideal opportunity to scale circular business models tuned according to the consumer preferences. Companies with subpar environmental and ethical practices risk tarnishing their brand image and even lead to mass boycott and loss of profitability.



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Photo: India Climate Week 2025 - Carbon Markets Association of India

## INDIA CLIMATE WEEK 2025: GLOBAL LEADERS UNITE FOR CARBON MARKETS; SHRI NITIN GADKARI CALLS FOR SYNERGISING AGRICULTURE WITH ENERGY

India Climate Week 2025, organized by the **Carbon Markets Association of India (CMAI)**, from February 3 to 7, 2025, at Le Meridien in New Delhi, was a landmark event aimed to advance climate action, foster innovation, and build collaborative solutions for a sustainable future. The summit brought together visionaries, policy-makers, and industry leaders, serving a transformative platform to ignite progressive discussions on carbon markets, sustainable investments, and policy frameworks that shape a greener future. The event featured the inauguration of the India Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Alliance and the India Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) Alliance, a high-level session uniting global industry leaders from 30 countries to champion net-zero solutions, and recognized leaders in climate action with India Climate Samman Awards.

On 4 February, in a landmark initiative to decarbonise aviation and position India as a global leader in **Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)**, the India SAF Alliance was officially launched by **Shri Nitin Gadkari, Hon'ble Union Minister of Road Transport and Highways, Government of India**, along with the leadership of India SAF Alliance.

In his speech for building sustainable transport and green infrastructure for a sustainable future, the Hon'ble Minister emphasised the need for transformative policies to integrate SAF into India's aviation industry. *"The futuristic vision, futuristic development and futuristic planning is very important. Presently we are the importer of energy and our dream is to be an exporter of energy."* Shri Nitin Gadkari also shared his vision on biomass, biofuels, corn methanol and

government efforts on waste utilisation in various sectors.

The Carbon Markets Association of India (CMAI) hosted a high-level session, **"Global Cooperation in Carbon Markets,"** on 6 February, that convened representatives from 30 countries, senior government officials, and global industry leaders to advance international collaboration on carbon markets and drive urgent climate action. This was one of the first big global gatherings by representatives of nearly 30 countries after COP29 on climate solutions. Several ambassadors shared their vision of what global cooperation means in their view. Among the key international dignitaries present was the Ambassador of Brazil to India, H.E. Mr. Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega, marked his presence representing his country at a massive global stage ahead of COP30 to be held there.

The session focused on strengthening global carbon trading frameworks, enhancing market credibility, and ensuring transparent cross-border transactions. The discussion was held on international collaboration, strengthening collective global efforts to align carbon markets with climate goals, carbon market mechanisms, examining Article 6 of the Paris Agreement and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) as tools for effective emissions reduction. The discussion also threw light on the challenges and opportunities to global carbon market implementation and identifying pathways for innovation along with best practices and green technology partnerships to showcase successful initiatives to drive carbon market efficiency. This session is particularly significant in the wake of COP29, as it will serve as a critical platform for accelerating carbon finance and climate action, underscoring the urgent need for global alignment in achieving Net Zero objectives. *"India will be our key partner in setting narratives at COP30. We also look forward to our cooperation within India in the field of other Renewable Energy,"* Mr. Kenneth Félix Haczynski da Nóbrega reflected.

In a significant milestone in India's journey towards sustainable waste management and climate action, the Carbon Markets Association of India also officially launched the **India EPR Alliance**. *EPR is a policy approach that holds producers, importers, and brand owners responsible for managing the entire lifecycle of their products, from design to disposal, encouraging sustainable practices and reducing*

*environmental impact.* The alliance aims to drive the adoption and effective implementation of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) across industries, promoting a circular economy and addressing India's waste management challenges. The Alliance was launched in the presence of Shri Jitin Prasada, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce & Industry; Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology; Mr. Dhanish Goyal, Chair, India EPR Alliance; Mr. Vipul Tyagi, Co-Chair, India EPR Alliance, Mr. Rohit Kumar, Secretary General, CMAI; other dignitaries including industry leaders in New Delhi.

*"I congratulate CMAI for this theme 'Uniting the World for Climate Action'. It's been a talk and debate for quite something on how to deal with the menace of global warming and climate change. We are reaching the level that is required but at the same time India has just begun. Some other countries that have gone ahead and led to the situation where we are today (climate change) and under the leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as far as commitment to is concerned, India has taken bold steps in implementing the solutions,"* said Shri Jitin Prasada, Hon'ble Minister of State, Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Another highlight of the event was the **India Climate Samman 2025 awards**, celebrating exceptional contributions to climate leadership, carbon market innovation, and sustainability. The prestigious ceremony recognised individuals, organisations, and state entities driving India's transition towards a

greener, more resilient future. The event featured Shri Praveen Khandelwal, Member of Parliament and National Secretary General, CAIT, as the Guest of Honour. Dr. VK Saraswat, Member, NITI Aayog, delivered a special address, underlining the role of carbon markets in India's net-zero journey.

*"This conference is going to be a historical conference as far as and carbon credits are concerned. This conference can set the basic fundamentals for and carbon credits especially,"* said Shri Khandelwal while addressing the esteemed gathering.

India Climate Samman 2025 recognised leaders and organisations across multiple categories, acknowledging achievements in policy, carbon markets, entrepreneurship, green infrastructure, and climate journalism. The ceremony also honoured innovators in carbon sequestration, circular economy leadership, and climate entrepreneurship, recognising Amrut Nature Solutions Pvt. Ltd., CEID Consultants and Engineering Pvt. Ltd., and Mr. Manvendra Yadav, among others. With India positioning itself as a global leader in carbon trading, renewable energy, and sustainable development, India Climate Samman 2025 stands as a corroboration to the country's commitment to achieving Net Zero. The winners of this year's awards resent the pioneers and changemakers shaping India's low-carbon future. India Climate Samman is one of the first awards in the country to be given exclusively for environmental work.





# INSTRUMELODIES 2.0 - A CELEBRATION OF PASSION, TALENT, AND MUSICAL DREAMS

*A First Step Foundation initiative to promote music*

Music has the power to transcend barriers, and Instrumelodies 2.0 proved just that on the evening of February 15th, as amateur yet passionate instrumentalists took center stage at Lajpat Bhavan Auditorium. The second edition of this unique musical extravaganza was a testament to the fact that talent, when given the right platform, can mesmerize and inspire beyond expectations.

Unlike conventional concerts featuring trained professionals, *Instrumelodies* was a heartfelt celebration of self-taught

musicians, proving that dedication and passion are often the greatest teachers. The event featured a diverse lineup of performers, each bringing their unique styles and interpretations, ranging from flute, guitar, accordion, saxophone, harmonica to keyboards, sitars, tabla, drums, darbuka and more. Some musicians performed solo, while others collaborated in impromptu duets, making the evening even more dynamic and engaging.

The list of performers included : Tabassum, Dr. Arvind, Pritam Chandel on Saxophone; Gandharv

Rajoria on Accordion; Shakti Kohli, Aditya Srivastava, Sajal Dhiri, Inder Sharma, Anil Oberoi on Harmonica; Hemant Joshi, Arun Sharma, Raja Guha, Prashant Das on Bansuri; Debanjan Chakraborty on Kalimba; Pankaj Sharma and Peter Baker on Guitar; Kanishk Bakshi on Darbuka; Anish Giri on Tabla; Utsav Misra on Keyboard and Ngatik on Drums. Creative Strings group led by Ratna Lahiri presented a group performance on Sitar while a unique fusion - Yamanica - composed by Nilanjan Sengupta with amateur musicians gathered thunderous applause.

One of the most remarkable highlights of the evening was 16-year-old Gandharv Rajoria, who, in an inspiring display of commitment, rushed to the venue immediately after finishing his 10th class examination to perform on the Accordion. His enthusiasm and dedication truly exemplified the spirit of the event. Another memorable moment was the debut of the Kalimba, a lesser-known African thumb piano, played by 20-year-old Debanjan Chakraborty. The audience was left awestruck by its ethereal, soothing tones, proving that music has endless possibilities beyond mainstream instruments. 70-year-old Anil Oberoi enchanted the audience with a ghazal - kisi nazar ko tera... on his harmonica.

The initiative, spearheaded by Notesandsargam and its visionary Prashant Das, was highly praised for its commitment to nurturing hidden talents. Many participants expressed their gratitude for having a stage to perform, particularly those who never had the



opportunity to formally learn music. *Instrumelodies* has now become a beacon of hope for individuals who have long harbored musical aspirations but lacked a formal

Started in 2012 as a passion project for instrumental music enthusiasts, NotesAndSargam began as a free web resource, helping music lovers play their favorite melodies using Sargam notations. Over the years, it has evolved into a vibrant platform dedicated to promoting instrumental music and inspiring people—especially children—to embrace music over mobile screens and gadgets. With a treasure trove of over 600 easy-to-play notations, NotesAndSargam.com proudly holds the largest collection of Sargam-based song and tune notations online. Beyond just a repository, it has become a movement—hosting online instrumental music competitions and live performances to spotlight hidden musical talent and inspire a new generation of melody makers.

platform to showcase their skills.

The audience was enthralled throughout, lauding the efforts of every musician. One attendee remarked, "The performances were captivating from start to finish. The musicians showcased incredible talent, creating an intimate atmosphere that drew everyone in." Another noted, "It's heartwarming to see amateurs, who learned instruments on their own, perform with such confidence and passion."

Beyond just being a musical event, *Instrumelodies 2.0* carries a greater vision—to revive public interest in instrumental music, especially among children who often get lost in the digital world of gadgets and screens. By showcasing amateur musicians of all ages, it sends a powerful message: it's never too late to learn, pursue, and share the joy of music.

With two successful seasons now in the books, *Instrumelodies* is steadily growing as a movement rather than just an event. Many are already eagerly looking forward to the next edition, hoping for an even grander celebration of passion-driven music.



# ROLE OF CSR IN BUILDING A HEALTHIER INDIA



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

CSR Team Bureau

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has emerged as a pivotal tool in addressing India's healthcare challenges. Despite significant advancements in the healthcare

sector, vast inequalities persist, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Limited access to medical services, inadequate healthcare infrastructure, and the stigma around mental health continue to hinder progress toward a healthier India. Recognizing these challenges,

Indian companies are increasingly channeling their CSR initiatives to contribute to the healthcare sector, providing medical access, raising awareness about mental health, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure in rural areas.

## Access to Medical Services

Access to quality healthcare remains a pressing issue for millions in India, especially those living in remote regions. CSR initiatives are stepping in to bridge this gap by providing free or affordable medical services to underserved populations.

Tata Steel has been at the forefront of healthcare CSR, operating mobile medical units in rural areas of Jharkhand and Odisha. These units offer basic health services, diagnostics, and medication to communities that lack access to hospitals or clinics. Similarly, Reliance Foundation's Health Outreach Program provides free consultations, diagnostic tests, and medication to underserved populations through mobile health vans and community health centers.

In addition, companies like Wipro and Infosys have partnered with NGOs and government agencies to organize health camps in remote areas. These camps provide

not only general check-ups but also specialized services such as eye care, maternal health, and immunizations. Such initiatives significantly enhance access to essential healthcare services, improving the overall well-being of rural communities.

## Supporting Mental Health Awareness

Mental health, often overlooked in India's healthcare narrative, is gaining attention thanks to targeted CSR initiatives. Stigma, lack of awareness, and insufficient resources have long plagued mental health care in the country. Corporate India is now playing a crucial role in changing this scenario.

ITC Ltd. has launched the "Wellness Program," which includes awareness campaigns to promote mental health among its employees and communities. Through workshops, counseling sessions, and partnerships with mental health organizations, the program addresses stress management, depression, and anxiety.

The Mind Matters Initiative by the Hindustan Unilever Foundation is another commendable effort. This program focuses on creating awareness about mental health in schools and workplaces. It conducts sessions for students, parents, and professionals, encouraging open conversations and providing access to mental health resources.

Furthermore, Dr. Reddy's Foundation has been actively working to integrate mental health

awareness into its healthcare initiatives. The foundation collaborates with local NGOs to offer counseling and psychological support in rural areas, where mental health services are nearly non-existent.

## Strengthening Healthcare Infrastructure in Rural Areas

A robust healthcare infrastructure is the backbone of any successful healthcare system. Rural India, home to 65% of the population, faces acute shortages of hospitals, clinics, and trained medical professionals. Addressing these gaps is a priority for many CSR programs.

Apollo Tyres, through its Health Care Program, has established rural health centers to provide preventive and curative healthcare services. These centers also serve as hubs for educating communities on hygiene, nutrition, and disease prevention.

Mahindra Group has set up

several rural clinics under its "Nanhi Kali" initiative, focusing on maternal and child health. By building and supporting healthcare centers, the company ensures that rural families receive necessary medical care without having to travel long distances.

Another significant example is the Aditya Birla Group's Swasthya Kutumbam Program, which has built and modernized hospitals and clinics in rural and semi-urban areas. These facilities are equipped with advanced diagnostic tools and staffed with trained medical professionals, offering quality healthcare to those who previously lacked access.

## Tackling Disease Prevention and Awareness

CSR initiatives are not just reactive; they are also proactive in addressing public health issues. Programs aimed at disease prevention, vaccination



Photo: Shekhar Ghosh





Photo: Shekhar Ghosh

drives, and awareness campaigns have been instrumental in reducing the burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases.

Pfizer India, for instance, has partnered with NGOs to run vaccination campaigns against preventable diseases such as hepatitis and pneumonia. These campaigns focus on reaching children and pregnant women in remote areas, significantly reducing mortality rates.

Cipla Foundation has launched extensive campaigns to combat non-communicable diseases like diabetes and hypertension. The foundation runs awareness drives, offers free diagnostic camps, and provides medication to those in need. By focusing on early detection and management, Cipla's initiatives help reduce the long-term impact of these diseases on individuals and families.

## CSR's Role During the COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic underscored the importance of CSR in healthcare. Companies across India mobilized resources to support the healthcare sector during this crisis. From setting up oxygen plants and COVID care centers to distributing vaccines and PPE kits, corporate India played a crucial role.

For example, Tata Group contributed significantly by building COVID care facilities and supplying medical equipment to hospitals. Similarly, Infosys Foundation provided financial support to NGOs and healthcare institutions to manage the pandemic's impact. The collective efforts of these companies not only saved lives but also demonstrated the potential of CSR in addressing public health emergencies.

## Challenges and the Road Ahead

While the impact of CSR in healthcare is commendable, challenges persist. Limited scalability, lack of coordination among stakeholders, and regulatory hurdles often hinder the effectiveness of CSR programs. To overcome these challenges, companies must focus on collaborative models involving government agencies, NGOs, and local communities.

Furthermore, there is a need for greater emphasis on sustainability. Programs should be designed to empower local communities, ensuring that healthcare improvements continue even after the CSR initiatives end.

CSR has become a cornerstone in India's journey toward building a healthier nation. By improving access to medical services, promoting mental health awareness, and strengthening healthcare infrastructure, Indian companies are addressing critical gaps in the healthcare system. Their efforts are not only alleviating immediate healthcare challenges but are also laying the foundation for long-term health and well-being.

However, the true potential of CSR in healthcare can only be realized through collaborative, scalable, and sustainable initiatives. As more companies integrate healthcare into their CSR strategies, India moves closer to achieving its vision of equitable and quality healthcare for all, paving the way for a healthier and more prosperous future.

# INSIGHTS ON HOW DIGITAL TOOLS, AI, AND AUTOMATION ARE DRIVING SUSTAINABILITY, ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES, AND SOCIAL IMPACT EFFORTS



Ms. Santhi Periasamy  
Head, RYTHM Foundation

In an increasingly interconnected world, the intersection of technology and social responsibility is becoming more crucial than ever. At RYTHM Foundation (RF) and QI Group, we have always believed that innovation and purpose go hand in hand. As we strive to transform lives and uplift communities, digital tools, artificial intelligence (AI), and automation have emerged as powerful catalysts driving sustainability, ethical business practices, and social impact efforts.

## Enhancing Sustainability Through Digital Transformation

Sustainability is at the core of RYTHM Foundation's mission. By aligning with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), we are committed to creating long-term positive change. Digital tools and automation play a pivotal role in this journey. Through data analytics and AI-driven insights, we can monitor and evaluate the impact of our programs with greater accuracy and efficiency.

This allows us to identify gaps, measure progress, and make data-backed decisions that enhance the sustainability of our initiatives.

For instance, our community development projects benefit from automated monitoring systems that track key performance indicators (KPIs) in real time. This not only ensures transparency but also helps us respond swiftly to the evolving needs of the communities we serve.

## Promoting Ethical Business Practices with AI and Automation

Ethical business practices are fundamental to the ethos of QI Group. By integrating digital tools into our operations, we enhance governance, compliance, and accountability. AI-powered risk assessment tools enable us to identify potential ethical challenges and address them proactively. Automation streamlines internal processes, reducing the margin for human error and ensuring consistency in ethical standards.

Moreover, digital platforms facilitate greater stakeholder engagement. Through virtual consultations and collaborative tools, we can involve diverse voices in decision-making processes, fostering a culture of inclusivity and transparency.

## Driving Social Impact with Innovation

Technology has the power to amplify

the reach and impact of social initiatives. At RYTHM Foundation, we leverage digital education platforms to empower underprivileged youth through programs like the Maharani School Program. AI-driven learning modules provide personalized educational experiences, helping students unlock their potential and build confidence.

Similarly, our Jaguh RF program uses data analytics to track the progress and development of young athletes. By identifying strengths and areas for improvement, we can provide targeted support and mentorship, nurturing future leaders both on and off the field.

## The Road Ahead: Balancing Technology with Humanity

While digital tools, AI, and automation offer immense potential, it is essential to maintain a human-centric approach. Technology should be an enabler, not a replacement, for empathy and human connection. At RYTHM Foundation and QI Group, we remain committed to using innovation responsibly, ensuring that our efforts are guided by compassion and a genuine desire to make a difference.

As we embrace this digital evolution, we invite like-minded partners to join us in creating a more sustainable, ethical, and inclusive world. Together, we can harness the power of technology to drive meaningful social impact and build a brighter future for generations to come.



# DIGITAL CSR: THE CONVERGENCE OF TECHNOLOGY AND ETHICAL BUSINESS PRACTICES



**Dr. Somnath Singh**

Deputy Director

UN Global Compact Network India

Digital technology is rapidly transforming Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), allowing businesses to enhance sustainability, transparency, and ethical governance. With advancements in artificial intelligence (AI), automation, big data, and blockchain, companies can optimize operations while strengthening corporate accountability, social impact, and environmental sustainability. This shift is revolutionizing the way organizations engage with CSR, making it more efficient, measurable, and impactful.

One of the key benefits of digital transformation in CSR is improved governance and ethical business practices. Blockchain technology ensures transparency by maintaining immutable records that help track and verify CSR initiatives.

AI-powered analytics can detect unethical practices, allowing businesses to mitigate risks and uphold ethical standards. Automated compliance systems ensure companies adhere to legal and regulatory frameworks, reducing corruption and improving governance.

Sustainability is another area where technology plays a crucial role. Internet of Things (IoT) devices enable real-time monitoring of energy consumption and carbon footprints, helping companies achieve their sustainability goals. AI-driven waste management optimizes resource usage, minimizes waste, and promotes circular economy practices. Cloud-based sustainability dashboards provide real-time insights into emissions and environmental impact, ensuring accountability in corporate commitments.

Transparency and accountability in CSR initiatives have been significantly enhanced through digital tools. Companies use real-time data analytics to provide accurate and up-to-date CSR reports to stakeholders. Blockchain and AI-powered tools help trace product origins, ensuring ethical sourcing and preventing labor exploitation. Digital platforms allow businesses to publicly share their CSR initiatives, fostering stakeholder trust and accountability.

Technology also enhances social impact and community engagement. AI-driven insights help companies analyze and predict the effectiveness of their CSR projects, ensuring maximum impact. Digital inclusion initiatives, such as online learning platforms and AI tutors, provide educational opportunities in underserved communities. Crowdsourcing platforms enable communities to participate in decision-making, promoting inclusivity in CSR efforts.

However, while digital transformation brings numerous benefits, it also presents challenges. Data privacy must be prioritized to maintain trust, and companies need to address the digital divide to ensure all communities can benefit from CSR initiatives. Additionally, cybersecurity risks require robust security measures to prevent data breaches and fraud.

Ultimately, digital transformation is reshaping CSR by fostering transparency, accountability, and ethical governance. Companies that leverage AI, blockchain, and automation in their CSR strategies not only drive positive social impact but also enhance stakeholder trust. As businesses continue integrating digital solutions, combining technology with good governance will be key to building a sustainable and responsible corporate future.



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### Bajaj Foundation joins hands with UNICEF YuWaah for E-waste Awareness and Reduction Campaign



Bajaj Foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) and the Department of School Education and Literacy (DoSEL), has launched a large-scale initiative to promote e-waste awareness and responsible disposal. The campaign will engage over

100,000 students across 650 schools in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu, fostering sustainable behavior change.

Supported by UNICEF YuWaah, the initiative includes awareness workshops, school-based e-waste collection points, and centralized recycling hubs. This effort aligns with the National Education Policy (2020) and Prime Minister Modi's LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) mission.

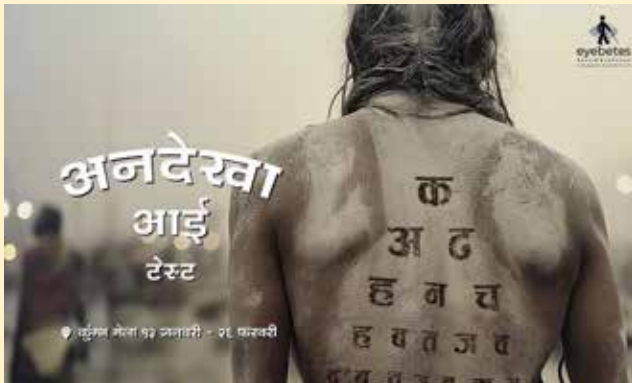
Mr. Pankaj Bajaj, Founder & Director, Bajaj Foundation, emphasized the campaign's role in empowering students to take climate-conscious actions. With India's e-waste projected to rise dramatically, this initiative sets a benchmark for scalable environmental solutions, equipping young Indians to lead a greener future.

### The Undekha Eye Test: Ash-clad mystics and a non-profit join forces at the Maha Kumbh Mela

The Eyebetes Foundation, in collaboration with the Naga Akhara, has launched the "Undekha Eye Test" at the Maha Kumbh Mela, merging spirituality with a life-changing public health mission. Using the striking presence of ash-clad Naga sadhus as living billboards, the initiative raises awareness about diabetes-induced blindness, a preventable yet largely overlooked crisis affecting millions of Indians.

A free eye camp at the Sangam site, staffed by over 100 personnel, offers screenings and distributes 50,000+ pairs of eyeglasses to those in need. With over 400 million expected attendees, this campaign transforms spiritual devotion into an opportunity for mass health intervention.

Led by renowned ophthalmologist and philanthropist, Dr. Nishant Kumar, the Eyebetes



Foundation aims to diagnose early diabetes cases, ensuring timely medical intervention. The initiative exemplifies the power of unconventional awareness campaigns, blending tradition, social responsibility, and innovation to fight preventable blindness across India.

### Flipkart Foundation Launches the Second Phase of Project Udaan with Pinkishe Foundation to Promote Menstrual Health and Hygiene Among Adolescent School Girls

Flipkart Foundation, in partnership with Pinkishe Foundation, has launched the second phase of Project Udaan to improve menstrual health and hygiene among adolescent schoolgirls in Ahmedabad and Varanasi. This initiative will provide 1,606 schoolgirls with eco-friendly reusable sanitary pad kits and menstrual health education, benefiting 3,212 individuals directly and indirectly.

Through interactive sessions, the project aims to break period-related stigma, improve school attendance, and encourage sustainable menstrual practices. Pre- and post-training assessments will track knowledge gains and attitude shifts.

Sarah Gideon, Vice President - Corporate Affairs Communications, CSR & Flipkart Foundation, emphasized the initiative's role in fostering self-empowerment and challenging societal taboos. Arun



Gupta, President of the Pinkishe Foundation, highlighted the collaboration's impact in ensuring menstrual health does not hinder education.

Building on previous success, Project Udaan continues to drive menstrual awareness, hygiene education, and sustainability, reinforcing gender equality and well-being for young girls in underserved communities.

### Signify Partners with FISS to upgrade 100 Schools in Udalguri with Energy-Efficient and Sustainable Lighting Solutions



Signify, in partnership with FISS, is transforming education in Udalguri, Assam, through its Jagmag Pathshala CSR initiative. The project is upgrading 100 government schools with 2,800 inverter-powered LED lights and 1,400 ceiling fans, ensuring a well-lit, comfortable learning environment for over

10,000 students and educators.

By enhancing lighting and ventilation infrastructure, the initiative promotes sustainable energy solutions and improves classroom experiences, empowering young minds for a brighter future. The project also includes capacity-building workshops to ensure long-term impact, reinforcing Signify's commitment to quality education, sustainability, and community development.

Speaking on the initiative, Nikhil Gupta, Head of Marketing, Strategy, Government Affairs & CSR - Signify, Greater India, emphasized the company's mission to unlock the extraordinary potential of light for a better world. This partnership with FISS marks a significant step toward educational upliftment, aligning with India's goal of improving rural school infrastructure and fostering holistic student development.



## IIL Organizes Product Stewardship Day, trains more than 25000 farmers in 500 meetings nationwide on safe and responsible use of crop protection chemicals



Insecticides (India) Limited (IIL) organized Product Stewardship Day on February 19, 2025, conducting over 500 nationwide training sessions to educate 25,000+ farmers on the safe and responsible use of crop protection chemicals.

Through collaborations with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs), the initiative reinforced best

practices such as using correct doses, reading instructions, wearing safety gear, and proper spraying techniques to ensure higher yields, safer food production, and environmental sustainability.

Commenting on the endeavor, Mr. Rajesh Aggarwal, Managing Director, Insecticides (India) Limited, emphasized that responsible farming is key to sustainable agricultural growth, while CMO Dushyant Sood highlighted that stewardship is a shared responsibility.

This initiative aligns with IIL's commitment to empowering farmers through knowledge, supporting soil health, and promoting sustainable agriculture. With an extensive network of 2.5 million farmers and 70,000 dealers, IIL continues to drive innovation and positive change in Indian agriculture.

## Hyundai Hope Scholarship Program Empowers 783 Students with INR 3.38 Crore Scholarships



Hyundai Motor India Foundation (HMIF) has awarded scholarships worth INR 3.38 crore under the Hyundai Hope Scholarship Program, benefiting 783 talented students from underprivileged backgrounds. The initiative, launched in August 2024, reached over 44,000 students across 23 states, supporting 440 aspirants preparing for Civil Services and CLAT exams, along with 343 IIT students working on impactful innovation projects.

Commenting on the significance of the Hyundai Hope Scholarship Program, Shri. Kiren Rijju,

Honorable Union Minister of Parliamentary Affairs and Minister of Minority Affairs, Government of India, said, "By supporting underprivileged yet talented students, this program goes beyond providing financial aid, well towards enriching lives, nurturing ambition and empowering young changemakers. Education and technological advancements are key to India's growth, and initiatives like this help build a skilled and self-reliant nation." Gopalakrishnan Chathapuram Sivaramakrishnan, Trustee - HMIF, emphasized Hyundai's commitment to empowering future policymakers and innovators, fostering social and economic progress.

Implemented by BharatCares, this initiative aligns with Hyundai's vision of Progress for Humanity, ensuring bright opportunities for the next generation of leaders in India.

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## Muthoot Finance announces scholarships worth INR 1 Crore to support meritorious 8th and 9th grade students

Muthoot Finance has pledged INR 1 crore in scholarships under the Muthoot M George Excellence Awards, supporting talented 8th and 9th-grade students across 788 districts in India for FY26. Celebrating 15 years of this initiative, the company has already benefitted 10,000 students nationwide, reinforcing its commitment to educational empowerment.

At the Excellence Awards Ceremony in Ernakulam, Smt. R. Bindu, Minister for Higher Education & Social Justice, Kerala, and other dignitaries applauded Muthoot Finance's role in bridging educational gaps for deserving students.

Since 2010, the Muthoot M George Foundation has disbursed over INR 3 crore, ensuring financial constraints do not hinder academic aspirations.



Managing Director George Alexander Muthoot reaffirmed education as a pillar of Muthoot's CSR, aiming to uplift young minds and build a stronger future. The initiative continues to transform lives, fostering a more equitable society through education.

## 1 vision, 1 mission: Avaada Foundation's CSR initiatives are powering communities and delivering sustainable progress across 5 key focus areas

Avaada Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Avaada Group, is driving transformative change across education, empowerment, environment, health, and rural electrification. Through initiatives like appointing 41 teachers, renovating schools, providing scholarships, and launching coaching centers, the Foundation has uplifted 10,000+ students nationwide.

Women's empowerment remains a priority, with stitching centers and skill training programs benefiting 160+ women. Environmental efforts include 30,000 tree plantations under the "Avaada Harit Yogdaan" initiative. In healthcare, oxygen plants, ambulance services, and health camps have supported 20,000+ lives, while customized tricycles aid individuals with disabilities.

Through solar power installations, the Foundation is lighting up rural areas, ensuring



sustainable growth. Mr. Vineet Mittal, Chairman of Avaada Group, emphasizes Avaada's commitment to a greener, equitable future, with every initiative reflecting a pledge to uplift society. Avaada Foundation continues to empower communities, fostering lasting social and environmental impact across India.

# एनएचपीसी का हरित ऊर्जा नेतृत्व स्वर्ण जयंती वर्ष

- ⚡ **180 मेगावाट से 7,232.90 मेगावाट तक की यात्रा :** अनेक चुनौतियों का सामना करते हुए 28 नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा पावर स्टेशनों के माध्यम से उल्लेखनीय प्रगति ।
- ⚡ **सुदृढ़ वित्तीय प्रदर्शन:** अपनी स्थापना के बाद से निरंतर सुदृढ़ परिणाम प्रदर्शित कर रही है ।
- ⚡ **16 सक्रिय परियोजनाएं:** संधारणीय भविष्य के लिए, 10,000 मेगावाट से अधिक क्षमता का निर्माण कर रही है ।
- ⚡ **एनर्जी ट्रांजिशन को बढ़ावा देना:** वर्ष 2032 तक 23,000 मेगावाट और वर्ष 2047 तक 50,000 मेगावाट नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा का लक्ष्य ।
- ⚡ **भारत की दो सबसे बड़ी जलविद्युत परियोजनाओं का निर्माण:**
  - ⚡ दिबांग बहुउद्देशीय परियोजना: 2,880 मेगावाट अरुणाचल प्रदेश में ।
  - ⚡ सुबनसिरी लोअर परियोजना: 2,000 मेगावाट अरुणाचल प्रदेश और असम में ।
- ⚡ **नवरत्न का दर्जा:** कार्यनीतिक महत्व को मान्यता देते हुए 30 अगस्त, 2024 को प्रदान किया गया ।
- ⚡ **भविष्य के लिए विजन:** एनएचपीसी संधारणीय ऊर्जा और वर्ष 2047 तक विकसित भारत के विजन के प्रति समर्पित है ।

आइए,  
हम सब मिलकर हरित ऊर्जा में नेतृत्व की विरासत का उत्सव मनाएं !

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