



ISDM

Centre for Philanthropy
for Inclusive Development

Research Fellowship Report Compendium

2024

*Community Philanthropy in
India*

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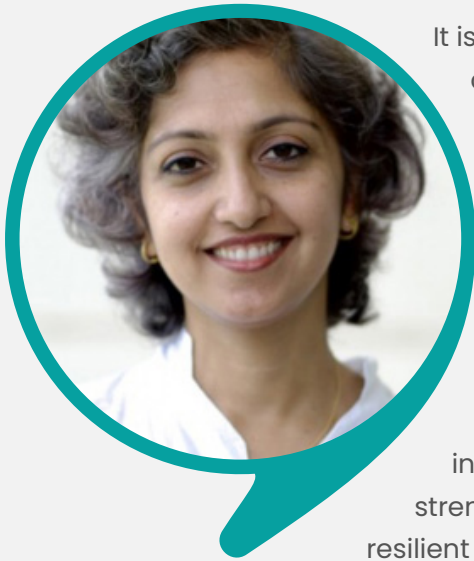
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Foreword



It is with great pleasure that I present this compendium—a collection of research papers produced by the Centre of Philanthropy for Inclusive Development (CPID) for the second cohort of the Research Fellowship Program run by the Centre.

The Global Knowledge Hub (GKH) is committed to advancing practice-oriented research and cultivating a robust body of knowledge in Development Management. Our mission is to strengthen this discipline in ways that empower resilient and impactful social purpose organisations. As part of this endeavour, CPID was established as the first Centre of Excellence, reimagining philanthropy as a catalyst for inclusive development and sustainable change.

At ISDM, we believe that fostering a community of researchers is essential to building the domain of Development Management. The CPID Research Fellowship was founded to bring this vision to life, providing a dynamic space where scholars and practitioners engage in deep inquiry and collective learning. Over the past two years, this initiative has flourished, supporting two cohorts and nine Fellows in their structured explorations of philanthropy's evolving role in social impact. This compendium stands as a testament to that vision—a curated collection of research by our Fellows, each offering critical insights into the complexities of philanthropy and giving.

This publication would not have been possible without the commitment of many. We extend our deepest gratitude to our Fellows for their intellectual rigour and dedication, to our mentors and reviewers for their invaluable guidance, and to the CPID team for their steadfast support. Special thanks also go to the communications team for their meticulous efforts in shaping this collection with clarity and impact.

More than an academic resource, this compendium represents a growing body of knowledge with the potential to inform philanthropic practices and influence mindsets of stakeholders within the funding and philanthropy universe. We hope these insights will not only enrich our collective understanding of giving in India but also inspire future research and drive meaningful, action-oriented change.

We invite you to engage with these studies and reflect on their findings.

Warm regards,



Trisha Varma
Director, Global Knowledge Hub, ISDM

| About the Fellowship



In 2022, we launched the CPID Research Fellowship with a simple yet powerful vision—creating a vibrant community of scholars and practitioners exploring the evolving landscape of philanthropy in India. Two years in, with two cohorts and nine dedicated researchers, this community has grown into a space of shared learning, meaningful inquiry, and deep engagement.

This 12-month, part-time, non-residential fellowship is designed for those passionate about understanding the complexities of giving in India. Fellows receive a stipend, access to structured mentorship, and opportunities for peer learning. Their research contributes to open-access knowledge, ensuring that insights remain accessible to the larger ecosystem.

Each fellow is paired with a dedicated mentor, guiding them through their research journey over the past 12 months. Fellows engage in quarterly virtual check-ins, exchanging ideas and receiving feedback from peers and their mentors.

We invite you to explore the Research Fellowship Compendium, a collection of insights and learnings from our incredible fellows of the 2024-25 cohort. We hope it sparks curiosity, reflection, and meaningful conversations.

Urvi Shriram,
Lead, Centre for Philanthropy for Inclusive

Introduction

When we established the **Centre for Philanthropy for Inclusive Development (CPID)**, our goal was clear: to catalyse philanthropy as a force for inclusive development to tackle the root causes of social and economic inequities, and empower marginalised communities. The intention has been to enhance the understanding and implementation of more inclusive philanthropic strategies. Over the last four years, we have been curating, creating and disseminating knowledge while also fostering communities of practice that have provided many insights on how philanthropy can help address complex development challenges.

While the country's growth remains steadfast, we continue to face stark economic and social inequalities. At the same time the philanthropic landscape in India is evolving rapidly and contributing significantly in supporting social change. Yet, significant gaps persist. Our research at CPID has uncovered several bottlenecks that inhibit the role of private philanthropy from reaching its full potential. Lack of data, geographical and sector preferences, restrictions on time horizons of programs, requirement for excessive quantitative measures of impact, power imbalances between grantees and donors– all limit the impact of philanthropic capital in creating long-term change. One key challenge that stands out is the lack of involvement of local communities – those who are closest to the social issues the philanthropic strategies are trying to address – into the equation.

This clash between ground realities faced by the communities, field experience of non-profits working for them and the funders' worldview of challenges, often leads to many unintended consequences. Community philanthropy that entails "Local people helping each other by sharing resources for the common good," is an inclusive practice that has historically been tackling many complex social issues in many cultures. However, despite its potential benefits, there is limited knowledge and guidance available on models that work or on how to invest in community philanthropy approaches. CPID's part-time fellowship program 2023–24, enabled the selected research fellows to spend 12 months conducting research on different aspects of community philanthropy. Their work has provided valuable insights on innovative community philanthropy models, practices, challenges and its impact in India.

¹Link to CPID's Unleashing the power ... report

²<https://globalfundcommunityfoundations.org/resources/what-is-community-philanthropy/>

The research papers in this compendium highlight the importance of integrating local knowledge, active community engagement, and ownership in generating sustainable social change. Ankit's work on uncovering the challenges faced by cross-regional women in Haryana and enabling them to form a solidarity forum is a first-of-its-kind community-driven intervention to address the issues faced by this marginalised group. Anurag's work highlights how collaborative efforts of philanthropic organisations, the state, the communities and other non-state actors are influencing the education landscape in Jharkhand. Pankaj's research explores the nuances of how a Trust functions, how decision-making processes work and its engagement with the community to serve the underprivileged sections of the society. Raju's work unravels the intricate ways in which caste dynamics influence community driven philanthropy, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on equitable social development and philanthropic practices. The aim of this compendium is to highlight their learnings with the hope that these insights encourage many of us to critically reflect on our understanding of the role community philanthropy plays in creating just and equitable societies.

I hope that in the years to come, there will be more such knowledge and communities of practice on how philanthropy can truly be inclusive, supporting the lives of marginalised communities and addressing the critical challenges facing us. CPID through its fellowship program will continue to encourage scholars and practitioners to join hands in contributing to meaningful knowledge creation in the philanthropy sector.

Urvi Shiram

Urvi Shiram
Lead, Centre for Philanthropy for Inclusive Development

From Margins to Centre:

The Role of Community
Philanthropy in Addressing
Discrimination and Exclusion Faced
by Cross-Regional Women in
Mahendragarh District, Haryana

Ankit

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Mentor: Safeena Husain

Abstract

This year-long study investigates the situation of cross-regional women in Narnaul block, Mahendragarh district, focusing on their capability deprivations and the emergence of a community-driven intervention. The research uniquely combines comprehensive data collection with action-oriented solutions, making it the first of its kind in addressing the challenges faced by this marginalized group.

The study began with collecting socio-economic and demographic data from 497 identified cross-regional women across 52 villages. Initial interviews with 20 women confirmed significant capability deprivations, prompting the women to recognise the need for external support. Consequently, the non-governmental organisation Empower People was engaged to implement their SEAL (Social Integration, Entrepreneurship, Assistance, and Leadership) project. Additionally, an interview with the founder of Empower People was conducted to understand the barriers to funding, which is also one of the study's objectives.

The other research objectives encompass: (1) Profiling cross-regional families using collected demographic data; (2) Analysing women's experiences, particularly regarding discrimination and exclusion; (3) Evaluating the SEAL project's implementation and its potential impact; and (4) Identifying elements of community philanthropy within the

women's efforts and the intervention model.

Notably, the women demonstrated various components of community philanthropy: volunteering time and effort, arranging meeting venues, engaging with local leaders, fostering shared camaraderie, and supporting peers in overcoming social barriers. These actions facilitated the formation of a solidarity forum, which shows promise in addressing their capability deprivations.

The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative demographic analysis with qualitative assessment of women's narratives and intervention outcomes. Early findings suggest that the women-led solidarity forum, supported by the SEAL project, has the potential to enhance participants' capabilities and address their multifaceted marginalisation.

This research contributes to the discourse on community philanthropy by highlighting the agency of marginalised groups in initiating and shaping interventions. It underscores the effectiveness of combining rigorous data collection with timely, community-driven solutions in addressing complex social issues.

Key words

cross-regional marriages, Haryana, community philanthropy, solidarity forum, discrimination, exclusion.

Acknowledgements

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the entire ISDM-CPID team for their unwavering support and belief in my project from its inception, despite its initial divergence from community philanthropy themes. Their encouragement facilitated the organic integration of community philanthropy concepts into the research, contributing significantly to its current form. I am profoundly thankful to the CPID team members with whom fellows maintained regular contact: Pratyush Singh, Mallika, Komal, and Urvi Shriram. Their consistent cooperation, timely organisation of monthly and quarterly meetings, and meticulous attention to deadlines were crucial to the project's progression.

My deepest appreciation goes to my research mentor, Dr. H.C. Safeena Husain, founder of the esteemed Educate Girls NGO. Her attentive guidance and invaluable suggestions were instrumental in refining and elevating this project. I also wish to acknowledge the camaraderie and support of my fellow colleagues, Pankaj Mishra, Anurag, and Raju Kendre, whose collaborative spirit enriched this research journey. Above all, I am profoundly grateful to the women in cross-regional families who agreed to be interviewed, generously gave their time, took the initiative to form the solidarity forum, and demonstrated remarkable courage in all aspects, particularly in venturing beyond their homes. Their contributions are

immeasurable, and I can never thank them enough. The Block Development and Panchayat Officer of Narnaul block also assured her support throughout the data collection phase. It helped in reaching out to villages smoothly through elected leaders (sarpanches) with her issued letter of support. I am grateful to her for her dedicated support.

This project would also not have been possible without the dedication of my field research assistant, Dayawati, who's honest and diligent efforts in collecting vital demographic data across all 52 villages of Narnaul block were invaluable. Her role in conveying the project's message to cross-regional women was pivotal. I am also indebted to Shafiqur Rahman Khan of Empower People for his commitment to strengthening the solidarity forum for these women in Narnaul. I am also thankful to my friend and colleague, Manisha from the International Institute for Population Sciences (IIPS), Mumbai, for co-authoring a paper based on the initial results of this research project and publishing in the reputed "Asian Ethnicity" journal. I am also grateful to her for her help in deciphering the quantitative data. Lastly, my sincere appreciation extends to my wife, Sarita, whose unwavering support, including assistance with data entry and her shared passion for the project's goals, was fundamental to its completion.

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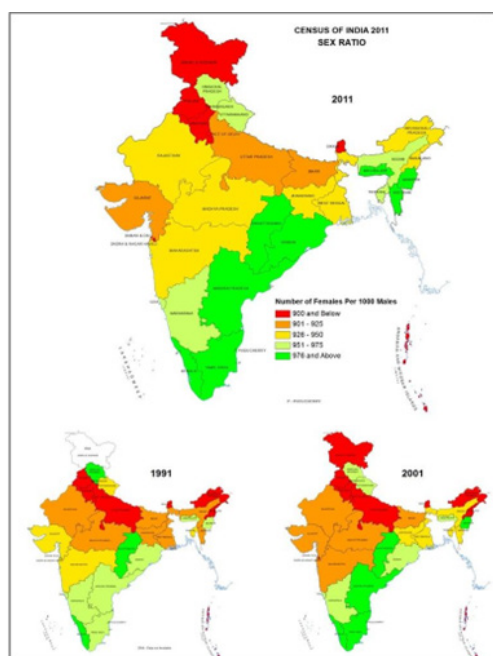
1. Introduction

1.1 Context and Background

The demographic landscape of Haryana, a state in northern India, has been influenced significantly by a chronic gender imbalance. Haryana has historically had one of the most skewed sex ratios in India, with 877 girls for 1000 males as recorded in the 2011 Census (Census of India, 2011; see Appendix 1). This demographic anomaly is the consequence of profoundly ingrained cultural practices that prioritise male children, including female infanticide, sex-selective abortions, and societal conventions that diminish the worth of girls (Agnihotri, 1995).

The preference for males is often driven by economic and social factors, including the dowry system and the perception of daughters as a financial obligation. The lopsided sex ratio in Haryana is the consequence of a number of interrelated issues (see Figure 1). The socio-economic fabric of the region is heavily influenced by cultural preferences for male children. Sons are usually perceived as the bearers of the family name, providers in old age, and performers of final rites, whereas daughters are frequently perceived as financial burdens as a result of the dowry system. The gender imbalance has been further exacerbated by the increased accessibility of sex-selective abortions, which has been facilitated by advancements in medical technology (Arnold et al., 2002; Arnold & Parasuraman, 2009).

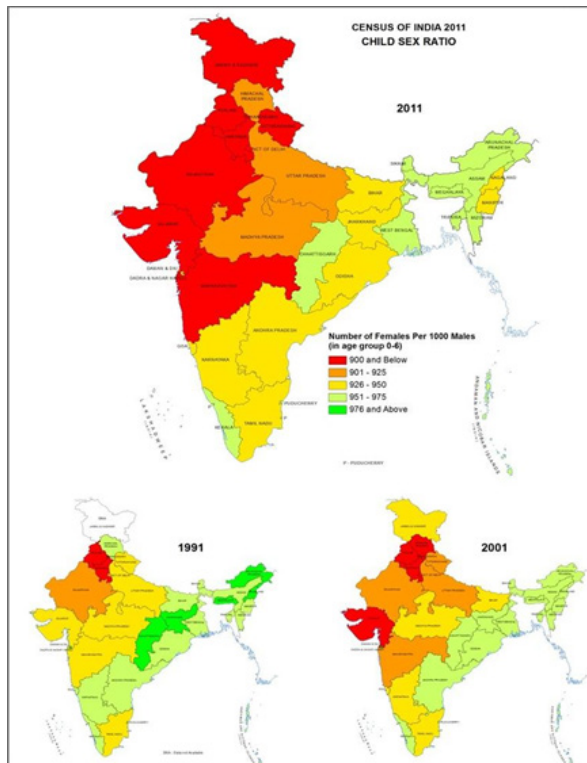
Figure 1: Overall Sex Ratio Recorded in Census, 2011



Source: censusindia.gov.in

This predilection for boys has resulted in worrying actions, including sex-selective abortions and female infanticide, which have drastically skewed the child sex ratio. For instance, in 2011, the child sex ratio in Haryana was 834 girls per 1000 boys, which is among the lowest in India (Census of India, 2011; see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Child Sex Ratio Data Recorded in Census 2011



Source: censusindia.gov.in

This demographic imbalance has resulted in a “marriage squeeze,” in which the number of marriageable males greatly exceeds the number of females. This has resulted in increasing competitiveness and difficulty for men seeking wives within their own communities (Guilmoto, 2012).

Cross-regional marriages, a phenomenon in which males from Haryana marry women from other, frequently distant regions of India, have resulted from the significant shortage of marriageable women (Kaur, 2004; Ankit, 2023). As local men encounter difficulties in locating wives within their communities, these marriages have become more prevalent. Although cross-regional weddings resolve the immediate issue of locating marriage partners, they also present a variety of obstacles for the women involved. In their new communities, these women frequently encounter substantial marginalisation, prejudice, and social isolation, which are further aggravated by linguistic and cultural disparities (Mishra, 2013).

1.2 Cross-Regional Marriages: Motivations and Consequences

As mentioned, cross-regional marriages evolved as a remedy to the “marriage squeeze” in Haryana, due to the significant dearth of eligible women for marriage. In general, these unions involve women from economically impoverished districts in eastern India, such as West Bengal, Bihar, and Odisha, who relocate to Haryana to marry local males (Ankit, 2022). These unions are frequently, facilitated by marriage brokers, for a fee.

There are other reasons for these cross-regional marriages. They not only offer a remedy to the scarcity of native brides for the men of Haryana but can also provide women with the opportunity to improve their economic conditions and escape poverty. Nevertheless, the reality is frequently considerably more intricate and difficult. Women in cross-regional marriages often encounter substantial social and cultural obstacles. Their new communities time and again perceive them as outsiders and expose them to prejudice and marginalisation. These women are further isolated by language problems and cultural differences, which restrict their capacity to engage in communal life and integrate.

The marginalisation of women in cross-regional marriages frequently results in discrimination and abuse. These women are particularly susceptible to exploitation, emotional abuse, and domestic violence as well as physical abuse, forced labour, and mobility restrictions. It is challenging for many of these women to seek assistance or

flee abusive situations due to restricted access to resources and support systems. (Dheer, 2019).

In their new communities, these women frequently lack social networks and support systems. In contrast to local brides, who may have the support of family and friends, cross-regional brides are isolated and lack a local agency to assist them. Their situation is frequently disregarded in political and social debate, and they are not regarded as a political priority. Rather than addressing the underlying issues of gender imbalance and discrimination, local politicians and community leaders usually perceive these weddings as a solution to the gender imbalance. Politicians have been known to make promises to facilitate cross-regional weddings for unmarried males as part of their electoral campaigns, which has further commodified these women.

A visual reminder of the demographic catastrophe is the presence of several unmarried bachelors in villages in Haryana. The significant shortage of women is underscored by the frequent sightings of these men congregating in public areas. Cross-regional brides are frequently derogatorily referred to as “Bihari” because of their darker skin tones and regional origins, which contribute to their added stigmatisation (Kukreja, 2021). This stigma also affects their children, who are frequently disparaged and subjected to prejudice within their communities.

1.3 Research Gaps and the Need for Intervention

Despite the high incidence of cross-regional marriages in Haryana, there has been restricted academic research and policy involvement in specific regions, such as Mahendragarh, which has a high prevalence of cross-regional marriages and an exceedingly low sex ratio, is mainly unexplored. The absence of research and action is a substantial deficiency that necessitates attention.

No systematic efforts have been undertaken to collect thorough socio-economic and demographic data on families involved in cross-regional marriages in Mahendragarh to date. It is essential to comprehend the backgrounds of these individuals, the nature of their marriages, and their experiences in order to create effective solutions. To ascertain if these unions

are consensual agreements or instances of trafficking, it is also necessary to investigate the extent to which these women maintain contact with their native families.

Community philanthropy is a promising strategy for tackling the problems that women encounter in cross-regional marriages. The importance of local knowledge, engagement, and ownership in generating sustainable social change is underscored by community philanthropy, which entails the pooling of resources and efforts by community members to address local challenges (Evers & Laville, 2004). Community philanthropy is “a practise in which local individuals utilise their own resources to enhance the social and economic well-being of their community,” as defined by DH Doan (2019).

1.4 Research Problem

The objective of this research project is to address the existing gaps in the comprehension of cross-regional marriages in Mahendragarh district by performing a thorough examination of the socio-economic and demographic features of the families involved in these partnerships. The research will also investigate the experiences of women in cross-regional marriages, with a particular emphasis on the concerns of violence, exclusion, and prejudice. Furthermore, the research will investigate the possibilities of community

philanthropy as a means of empowering these women and resolving challenges associated with their marginalisation.

The objective of the research is to discover effective interventions to support women in these relationships and to provide a deeper knowledge of cross-regional marriages in Mahendragarh. The results will enhance the broader conversation on gender, migration, and community-driven social change, providing scholars, practitioners, and policymakers with useful insights to enhance the conditions of marginalised populations in rural India.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Distinguishing Cross-Regional Marriages— From Bride Buying and Trafficking

Although they share some superficial characteristics, cross-regional marriages in Haryana are a complex sociocultural phenomenon that is distinct from human trafficking and bride purchasing. It is imperative to distinguish these activities to guarantee precise analysis and suitable intervention measures. The aspect of agreement and agency is the major distinguishing factor between cross-regional marriages and exploitative activities such as bride buying or trafficking.

The phrase “bride trafficking” has been frequently employed to denote the exploitation of women in marital arrangements in which they are regarded as commodities. The forced sale, purchase, and resale of women under the premise of marriage is known as bride trafficking. The victims of this crime are exposed to harsh exploitation, treated as commodities, and stripped of their basic rights and freedoms (Singh, 2017). These women are frequently pressured or duped into these marriages and are subjected to dreadful conditions, including physical and emotional abuse (Blanchet, 2005; Huda, 2006). In these instances, the agency of women is either wholly missing or substantially compromised. In a six-year analysis, Empower People, an

NGO that is committed to the prevention of human trafficking, discovered that West Bengal is the source of 23% of girls trafficked for marriage. Bihar, Assam, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Kerala accounted for 17%, 13%, 11%, and 6% of the trafficked girls, respectively. Derogatory phrases, like “Paro” (outsider), “Jugaad” (adjustment), and “Molki” (one who has been purchased), are frequently used to refer to these trafficked brides, which illustrates their commodified status and the humiliation they face.

The formalisation of these weddings through traditional or legal ceremonies frequently confers a degree of social and legal validity (Chaudhry, 2018). Some cross-regional marriages may entail aspects of coercion or fraud, although many are lawful partnerships that involve proper marriage ceremonies recognised by their respective communities (Kaur, 2004). While these marriages are frequently pragmatic responses to the demographic imbalances in Haryana, they should not be simplistically classified as trafficking (Kaur, 2008a, 2008b; Chaudhry, 2016). Conversely, victims of bride purchase and trafficking are not afforded this legal and social recognition. In many cases, trafficked women are exposed to severe exploitation and abuse, with little to no

legal protection or societal recognition of their position (Nair & Sen, 2005). Although economic transactions may be present in cross-regional marriages, they are typically consensual arrangements made with the intention of establishing a genuine marital relationship (Kukreja, 2018). The decision-making process is often a collaborative effort between the bride and her family, even though they frequently operate within limited constraints. In contrast, bride buying and trafficking are the acquisition of women under false pretences, pressure, or deception, with the primary objective of exploiting them for labour, prostitution, or slavery.

2.2 Motivations and Arrangement Mechanisms for Cross-Regional Unions

The state of Haryana's skewed sex ratio is the primary factor driving cross-regional marriages. This ratio is associated with a cultural preference for male children, which has resulted in female foeticide and infanticide (Ahlawat, 2009; Kaur, 2004). This demographic imbalance has led to a scarcity of marriageable women, which has compelled men to seek brides from regions with more equitable sex ratios. Economic issues are also crucial, as cross-regional marriages are more inexpensive for men from underprivileged families than local partnerships, which frequently necessitate substantial dowries (Mishra, 2013). These marriages are an appealing alternative for families due to their ability to reduce financial burdens.

Cross-regional marriages provide social mobility and stability for certain individuals, as brides from other regions are frequently viewed as adaptable and hardworking, which are highly appreciated qualities in rural areas (Kaur, 2004). These weddings are

perceived by families from regions with extravagant dowry expectations as a means of avoiding financial burden, as dowries are generally not required in cross-regional relationships (Mishra, 2013). In contrast, women perceive these marriages as a means of escaping poverty, providing them with the opportunity for social mobility and stability, despite the difficulties associated with adjusting to a new environment (Mukherjee, 2013).

The role of prior brides in facilitating these unions is an expanding trend. New brides from their communities are frequently assisted by women who have already established themselves in Haryana, thereby establishing a support network that facilitates the move (Mukherjee, 2013). Middlemen are also heavily involved in the organisation, negotiation of agreements, and the coordination of logistics in these cross-regional weddings (Ahlawat, 2009; Mishra, 2013). Some settled brides serve as mediators, facilitating weddings while simultaneously establishing their own

support networks and generating cash (Mukherjee, 2013). Cross-regional unions are financially advantageous as they often include payments to middlemen or the bride's family to cover travel and wedding expenditures, in contrast to traditional local marriages, which need substantial dowries.

2.3 Challenges and Emerging Themes from Literature

Cross-regional brides frequently experience substantial domestic violence and abuse because of their vulnerable status within new households and the perception of them as commodities.

Their isolation is further exacerbated by the absence of a social network. These brides have feelings of isolation and disconnection as a result of language challenges, cultural differences, and social standards that impede the formation of meaningful connections. The adjustment remains challenging, even when surrounded by friends or family. The isolation of many brides is aggravated by restricted mobility, which limits their social interactions and confines them to their homes. This restriction exacerbates their sense of entrapment by preventing them from forming friendships or seeking support (Mukherjee, 2013).

Another challenge is economic marginalisation, as numerous brides have limited control over financial

resources despite being expected to contribute to household labour. Their vulnerability to exploitation is augmented by their dependence on husbands and in-laws, which is a result of their lack of economic autonomy. Social stigma and discrimination based on skin colour and ethnic background are widespread, particularly in regions where fair skin is regarded as desirable. Brides from regions such as Bihar and West Bengal are subjected to derogatory remarks and exclusion, not only from society but also from their own households. Their adjustment is further complicated by cultural differences. Many brides experience feelings of displacement and alienation as they attempt to adjust to new practices, including the wearing of a ghunghat (veil) and the observation of local rituals. Discrimination based on caste continues to exist even after marriage. Brides from lower castes frequently experience exclusion and restricted access to resources, both within the household and the broader community, which perpetuates social hierarchies.

2.4 Community Philanthropy Approach

Community philanthropy prioritises the promotion of community development and the transformation of society.

To aid Haryana's cross-regional bridges, it is imperative to use Doan's community philanthropy approach (2019). "Community philanthropy entails the utilisation of community resources, the solicitation of assistance from community members, and the utilisation of external resources to address issues or improve the quality of life. Internal assets, capacities, and trust are developed through shared authority, cooperation, and participation in decision-making."

This method entails the usage of community resources, external assistance, and engagement to improve quality of life. It is crucial to mobilise local resources, including donations, time, and talent (Hodgson & Knight, 2016). The community should have the authority to make decisions, as they possess the most comprehensive understanding of the local challenges (Doan, 2019). Communities fortify themselves through shared power and participation by establishing trust, assets, and capacities (GFCF, 2018). Although local resources are the primary focus, external resources also contribute to the empowerment of community leadership (Hodgson & Pond, 2018).

Throughout history, community philanthropy has been founded on the

principles of collaborative action and mutual aid. Native American tribes in the United States implemented resource pooling as a means of fortifying their settlements (Sacks, 2014). The Cleveland Foundation in 1914 was a critical point in the development of the contemporary concept of organised community resource pooling, which evolved during the Progressive Era (Sacks, 2014).

Community philanthropy has undergone a transformation and has assumed a variety of forms on a worldwide scale, such as informal crowdfunding platforms, community foundations, giving circles, and identity-based funds. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise that not all programs that wear these labels necessarily exemplify the values of community philanthropy. The attitude, rather than the label, is the critical factor (Doan, 2019).

Community philanthropy is guided by six fundamental principles: transparency, asset-based approaches, power-sharing, long-term emphasis, collective effect, and participation (Hodgson & Knight, 2016). It stresses transparency and accountability, builds upon existing assets, and emphasises collaborative decision-making (GFCF, 2018). It is essential to transfer authority to the broader community to ensure that local voices drive long-term, sustainable solutions (Doan, 2019).

In India, community philanthropy is

characterised by a long heritage of informal giving and religious endowments, notwithstanding the rarity of institutionalised initiatives such as community foundations (Sidel, 2017). Traditional charitable approaches continue to dominate, as do regulatory difficulties, and trust weaknesses in formal organisations. These challenges are significant (CAF India, 2019). Additionally, there is a substantial trust deficit among local populations in relation to official philanthropic institutions, which is primarily attributable to previous instances of corruption or mishandling of funds (Bhat & Patil, 2020). The willingness of communities to engage with or support these institutions is impeded by this lack of trust. Another obstacle is the necessity of reconciling local demands with external financial requirements or broader development objectives. Community philanthropy prioritises local control; but, in practise, numerous organisations continue to depend on external money or support. This might result in problems if the priorities of external funders do not correspond with

those of the community (Hodgson & Pond, 2018). Additionally, the concept of structured community philanthropy is not well understood. Equitable participation and resource mobilisation are also impeded by economic restrictions and power dynamics (Bhat & Patil, 2020; Hodgson & Knight, 2016).

However, community philanthropy provides advantages such as the promotion of empowerment and ownership within communities, despite these obstacles (Hodgson & Knight, 2016). By offering community members the chance to engage in project execution and decision-making, it can foster the development of new leadership skills and abilities within the community. This can subsequently enhance the community's long-term resilience and development (GFCF, 2018). It generates context-appropriate solutions, fosters local leadership, and fortifies social cohesion (Doan, 2019). Communities can get durable, significant results by combining their investments (Hodgson & Pond, 2018).

2.5 Potential Relationship Between Community Philanthropy and Improving Women's Status in Cross-Regional Marriages in Haryana

The application of community philanthropy in Haryana holds significant promise for improving the status of women in cross-regional marriages. This approach, which emphasizes local ownership, collective action, and resource mobilization, can empower these women to address the unique challenges they face. By coming

together, women in cross-regional marriages can create support networks that leverage community philanthropy principles to improve their social and economic conditions. This collective effort can help mitigate issues such as isolation, economic dependence, and discrimination that these women often encounter. When women unite and share the elements of community philanthropy, they can pool resources, both financial and non-financial, to initiate projects that directly benefit them. These projects could include establishing local support groups, creating educational programs to enhance their skills and employability, and advocating for their rights and interests at the community level. By fostering a sense of solidarity and collective responsibility, community philanthropy can enable these women to create a stronger voice for

themselves. This grassroots approach can also attract attention and support from larger philanthropic entities, creating a bridge between top-down and bottom-up philanthropic efforts. Furthermore, community philanthropy can help women in cross-regional marriages build trust and reduce their reliance on external support systems that may not fully understand or address their needs. By managing their initiatives, they can ensure that their specific challenges, such as cultural integration, economic marginalisation, and social stigma, are effectively addressed. This self-reliance is crucial, as these women often find that no one else is advocating for their well-being. Through community philanthropy, they can take proactive steps to improve their lives, fostering a sense of empowerment and self-determination that is essential for their overall advancement.

3. Research Study

3.1 Research Objectives

The objective of this study is to examine the perspectives of cross-regional women in the Mahendragarh district of Haryana, with a focus on the obstacles they encounter. The study aims to offer a full picture of the social integration and living situations of these families by collecting and analysing data on their socio-economic and demographic profiles. The research will also investigate the unique challenges that cross-regional women face, particularly in the context of discrimination and exclusion within their new communities. The existing body of knowledge on internal migration and its effects on family dynamics and gender relations in rural India may be enhanced by this technique.

An essential element of this investigation is the construction and assessment of a solidarity forum that is driven by the community. It is the objective of this effort to enhance the social capital and capacities of cross-regional women in the Mahendragarh district. The research will evaluate the forum's efficacy as an innovative form of community philanthropy, focusing on its capacity to cultivate solidarity, mutual support, and reciprocity among participants. Furthermore, the study will examine the obstacles encountered by local NGOs, such as Empower People, in obtaining funding for community-led initiatives. The research aims to offer insights into sustainable strategies for empowering marginalised people and tackling local issues through grassroots efforts by investigating these characteristics.

The research objectives are:

- ◆ To collect and analyse data on the socio-economic and demographic profiles of cross-regional families in Mahendragarh district of Haryana.
- ◆ To understand the unique challenges faced by cross-regional women in Mahendragarh district of Haryana, particularly those related to discrimination and exclusion.
- ◆ To establish a community-led solidarity forum in Mahendragarh district of Haryana and assess its effectiveness in promoting capabilities and social capital of cross-regional women.
- ◆ To evaluate the forum's impact on the lives of cross-regional women as a novel form of community philanthropy, fostering reciprocity, mutual support, and solidarity.
- ◆ To understand the barriers faced by local NGOs including Empower People in obtaining funding for community-led initiatives addressing local problems.

3.2 Research Questions

Based on the outlined objectives, the following three central research questions form the core of this research:

- ◆ What are the socio-economic and demographic features of cross-regional families in the Mahendragarh district of Haryana, and how do these profiles relate to their experiences of integration, prejudice, and access to community support for women?
- ◆ In the Mahendragarh district of Haryana, how does a community-led solidarity forum affect the empowerment and social integration of cross-regional women, particularly in the context of difficulties connected to exclusion and discrimination?

-
- ◆ What are the primary obstacles that local NGOs, such as Empower People, encounter in securing funding for community-led initiatives that respond to the needs of cross-regional women in the Mahendragarh district of Haryana, and how do these obstacles influence the implementation of innovative community philanthropy?
-

3.3 Conceptual Framework

In exploring the multifaceted experiences of cross-regional women facing discrimination and exclusion, integrating diverse theoretical perspectives is essential. This framework employs the capabilities approach theory, social capital, and intersectionality theory to provide a nuanced analysis within the context of a solidarity forum aimed at fostering unity and collective action. Following are these three approaches:

3.3.1 Capabilities Approach Theory

Amartya Sen (1999) pioneered the Capabilities Approach, which was subsequently developed by Martha Nussbaum (2011). This framework provides a comprehensive assessment of the well-being of individuals and the structure of society. This method underscores the need for enhancing the genuine freedoms of individuals in order to lead the lives they have reason to value, with an emphasis on talent rather than merely resources or outcomes. This theory offers a valuable perspective on the opportunities and constraints that these individuals, particularly women, encounter in their new social environments in the context of cross-regional families in Mahendragarh.

The purpose of this research is to determine the specific functionalities that cross-regional women prioritise and the degree to which they can accomplish them in their new

communities through the application of the Capabilities Approach. This viewpoint is consistent with the study's aims of assessing the efficacy of the community-led solidarity forum in improving the capacities of these women and comprehending the obstacles they encounter. Robeyns (2005) contends that the Capabilities Approach is particularly pertinent for analysing the multifaceted experiences of cross-regional families, as it enables a nuanced comprehension of well-being that transcends economic indicators. It is fundamentally beneficial to evaluate tangible enhancements in the lives of women, which is in accordance with the objective of community philanthropy to broaden the range of new activities or roles that women can undertake as a consequence of the forum. It remains essential in addressing the heart of this project and provides a framework for analysing both economic and non-economic advantages.

3.3.2 Social Capital

Bourdieu's concept of social capital offers a critical theoretical foundation for comprehending the dynamics of social integration and networking among cross-regional families in Mahendragarh. Bourdieu (1986) defines social capital as "the sum of the actual or potential resources that are associated with the existence of a lasting network of more or less formalised ties of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (p. 248). Interpersonal relationships are valuable to individuals because they provide access to resources that can be used to achieve desired aims, according to the Social Capital Theory (SCT). The primary premise of this notion, as stated by Bourdieu (1986) and Florin, Lubatkin, and Schulze (2003), is that a network provides value to its members by granting them access to the social resources that are intrinsic to the network. The quality and extent of an individual's interactions are correlated with their respective social and economic position, as well as the value of trust and reciprocity, as emphasised by its three sub-categories: 'linking,' 'bonding,' and 'bridging'. In the context of social capital, bonding refers to the connections that have been established among network participants who share similar socio-demographic characteristics. Bridging social capital is characterised by mutual respect and regard between individuals who are not necessarily comparable in that regard. Linking social capital is characterised by relationships that are based on trust

among individuals who interact despite power differentials (Hodgson, 2020).

This concept is especially pertinent to the community-led solidarity forum and its ability to promote reciprocity and mutual support among cross-regional women, which is the primary subject of this study. The objective of this study is to investigate the manner in which cross-regional families, particularly women, collect and employ social capital in their new communities by utilising Bourdieu's theory. The research will examine the contributions of the solidarity forum to the development of social networks and the transformation of these networks into other forms of capital, such as economic or cultural (Bourdieu, 1986). This method is consistent with the research objective of evaluating the forum's efficacy in fostering social capital and its influence on the lives of cross-regional women. It has the potential to reveal the mechanisms by which community-led initiatives can address local issues and empower marginalised groups. The solidarity forum is designed to serve as a platform for the development of economic, cultural, and social capital by cultivating relationships, networks, and trust among local stakeholders and cross-regional women. The efficacy and longevity of the program can be enhanced by utilising social capital, which transforms the community into a resource for collaborative problem-solving, support, and resources.

3.3.3 Intersectional Theory

Intersectional theory, which was initially developed by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1989) and subsequently elaborated by scholars such as Patricia Hill Collins (2000), offers a critical framework for comprehending the intricate and overlapping systems of discrimination and disadvantage that cross-regional women in Mahendragarh encounter. This theory proposes that the intersection of many social categories, including gender, ethnicity, class, and migration status, results in distinctive experiences of privilege and oppression (Crenshaw, 1991). It investigates the intersection of various aspects of social and political identity to establish a framework for comprehending the intricate and distinctive forms of discrimination and exclusion. Consequently, it enables a more sophisticated analysis of the solidarity forum's impact on women in accordance with their intersecting identities. The objective of this research is to capture the complicated realities of cross-regional women's lives by employing an intersectional approach. It recognises that the experiences of these women cannot be fully comprehended by isolating gender, migrant status, or socio-economic background.

The utilisation of intersectional theory in this investigation enables a more thorough examination of the obstacles encountered by cross-regional women, thereby achieving the research purpose of comprehending their distinctive experiences of exclusion and discrimination. Additionally, this methodology contributes to the development and assessment of the community-led solidarity forum, guaranteeing that it accommodates the different requirements that result from the convergence of several identities. Intersectionality, as McCall (2005) contends, is an invaluable methodological instrument for capturing the intricacy of lived experiences. Consequently, it is particularly well-suited to the objective of this research, which is to offer a comprehensive comprehension of the integration processes of cross-regional women and the efficacy of community-based interventions.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design and Data Collection

Mixed-methods research, as defined by Johnson et al. (2007, p. 123), integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies, such as data collection, analysis, and inference techniques, to achieve a more profound comprehension and verification. It endeavours to strengthen and improve the conclusions of a study by incorporating qualitative and quantitative research components, thereby making a scholarly contribution to the existing body of literature.

A mixed-methods strategy was implemented to acquire comprehensive information regarding cross-regional women in Mahendragarh. At first, a structured questionnaire was employed to collect data on a variety of socio-economic and demographic variables, such as the age of the women, education, caste, native state, occupation, Self-help group (SHG) membership, husband's age and occupation, number of children, and age of the oldest child. This was a quantitative survey. The cross-regional women's backgrounds and current circumstances were fully profiled by this quantitative data.

Questionnaires are the most prevalent method for gathering quantitative primary data, as Roopa and Rani (2012) assert. This method enables the collection of standardised data, which in turn produces internally consistent and coherent information for analysis.

Figure 3: List of questions used to collect basic demographic and socio-economic data from cross-regional families

Village Name	Name of Woman	Phone	Age	Education	Native State	Married Years	Name of Husband	Age of Husband	Caste	Number of Children	Age of older child	Self employed	Husband's employment	SHG Member	Contact with Native Family	Last Visit to Native Home
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The survey was conducted with the assistance of a female field worker who visited all 52 villages in the Narnaul block. Her approach involved leveraging personal contacts and engaging with village sarpanches to ensure local leadership was aware of and supportive of the data collection process. This strategy was particularly effective given the sensitive nature of cross-regional marriages and the cultural norms that can make it challenging for unfamiliar men to discuss household matters with women.

The field worker's previous experience in the area and her gender were crucial in overcoming these barriers and collecting comprehensive data, albeit over a longer period than initially anticipated. During fieldwork, the researcher, along with the fieldwork assistant, visited the participants' homes to conduct interviews. In some instances, interviews were conducted at the sarpanch's house if the women/participants preferred that location.

To evaluate the impact of the solidarity forum on these women following the initial group formation meeting, a waiting period of at least 2.5 to 3 months was implemented for the second round of interviews. This method guaranteed a comprehensive assessment of the forum's efficacy and the incorporation of community philanthropy components into the participants' experiences.

Qualitative interviews were conducted with selected women to further investigate their experiences, following the initial data. Twenty women were chosen for the initial round of in-depth qualitative interviews, and eighteen of them participated in the subsequent round. These interviews were conducted by the principal investigator using a semi-structured format, which facilitated open-ended discussions guided by a flexible questionnaire. Semi-structured interviews, as noted by Dearnley (2005), allow participants to articulate themselves in depth and select their own words, resulting in rich, narrative data. High-quality audio that is appropriate

for qualitative research was obtained by recording these interviews with a digital voice recorder. Additionally, field notes were recorded to enhance the recorded interviews and offer supplementary context for the data.

The researcher managed coordination with the NGO Empower People for the solidarity group meeting in God Balaha village on April 3, 2024. Women were mobilised autonomously with the help of the fieldwork assistant. The objective was to cultivate a sense of ownership among the women for the entire initiative. The meeting was supported by pertinent local stakeholders, and the necessary permissions were obtained from block and district-level officials as a result of the concurrent election model code of conduct. The second round of interviews was facilitated by this meeting.

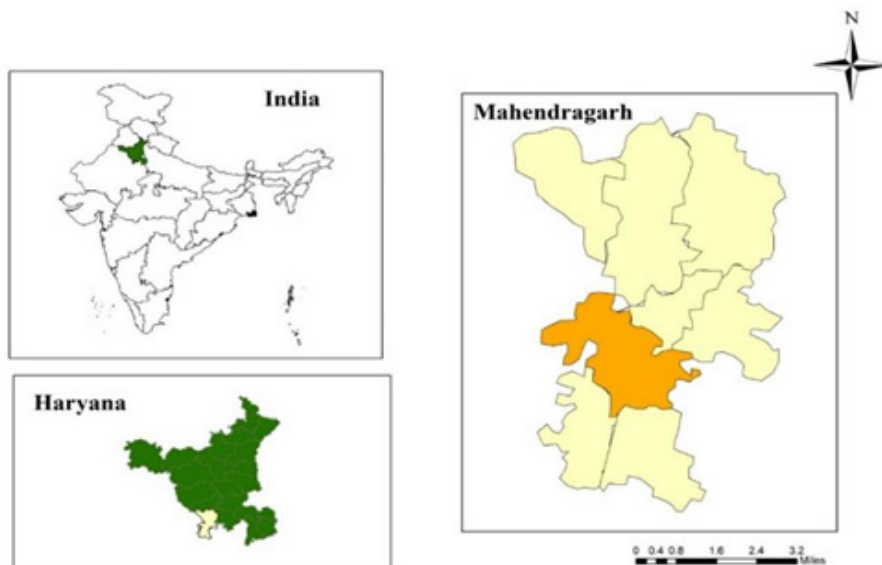
This research design is consistent with the Embedded Design, a mixed methods approach in which one data set serves as a secondary, supportive component in a study that is primarily based on the other data type. This design is especially well-suited for this study because it enables the integration of quantitative and qualitative data at the design level. The qualitative data is incorporated into a methodology that is framed by quantitative data. This method facilitates a more nuanced comprehension of the intricate realities encountered by cross-regional women, addressing a variety of research questions that necessitate diverse data types.

The use of this mixed-methods approach enhances the study's validity through methodological triangulation, providing a more comprehensive picture of the cross-regional women's experiences than could be achieved through a single method alone (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Furthermore, this design allows for the exploration of unexpected findings from the quantitative phase during the qualitative interviews, potentially uncovering new insights and avenues for further research.

4.2 Target Groups

This research focuses on cross-regional women in the Narnaul block of Mahendragarh district, Haryana. The target group for this study comprises cross-regional women identified through an initial quantitative survey conducted across all 52 villages of the Narnaul block (see Figure 4.2). This extensive survey identified 497 cross-regional women, comprising the major target population for the study. Narnaul was selected as the research location due to its role as the district headquarters of Mahendragarh and the significant concentration of villages in close proximity, which permitted effective data collecting.

Figure 4: Location of Narnaul block highlighted in Mahendragarh district, Haryana



From the initial population of 497 women, a subset of 20 participants was selected for in-depth qualitative interviews using purposive sampling. The selection criteria for these participants included factors such as education level, native state, number of children, and age. These 20 women were interviewed twice over the course of the study, resulting in a total of 38 qualitative interviews. This longitudinal approach allows for a more nuanced understanding of the women's experiences and any changes over time.

The choice of Mahendragarh district for this study is significant, as it is a part of the Ahirwal region (comprising Mahendragarh, Rewari, and Gurgaon districts) where cross-regional marriages are believed to have originated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While exact figures are not available, it is estimated that over one hundred thousand cross-regional marriages have occurred in Haryana, with local media reporting an increase in such unions in the Mahendragarh district in recent years.

Mahendragarh district is administratively divided into five tehsils and three subdivisions, which comprise eight community development units, and has 370 villages. The district's largely rural character (85.57 percent rural population) renders it a suitable location for investigating the life experiences of cross-regional women in rural settings.

By integrating a comprehensive quantitative survey with in-depth qualitative interviews, this mixed-methods approach enabled the comprehension of the experiences of cross-regional women in the Narnaul block from a broad and deep perspective. The design provides a comprehensive framework for examining the varied nature of cross-regional marriages and their repercussions for the lives of women in rural Haryana, thereby offering significant insights to the current body of literature on this subject.

4.3 Sampling Design

Purposive sampling was implemented for both rounds of interviews in order to meet the study's emphasis on women in cross-regional marriages (Gentles et al., 2015; Etikan & Bala, 2017). This method enabled a focused analysis of the interventions of the solidarity forum and the components of community philanthropy that were incorporated into the participants' strategies.

4.4 Data Analysis

The quantitative data that was obtained was manually documented in notebooks and subsequently entered into Excel spreadsheets. Upon completion of data entry, the dataset was imported into Jeffrey's Amazing Statistics Program (JASP), an open-source statistical analysis programme (Love et al., 2019). Subsequent to the initial data assessment, descriptive statistics and cross-tabulation were implemented as indispensable procedures. These were undertaken to ascertain the fundamental characteristics of the sample, including frequencies and central tendencies such as the mean and median of the demographic and socio-economic variables (Love et al., 2019).

The transcription of the recorded interviews was facilitated by internet applications such as Outlook Transcription in Hindi, and manual correction was performed to assure accuracy. Atlas.ti was used to evaluate the transcriptions, utilising open coding and subsequent thematic analysis to discover emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This process was repeated for the second round of

interviews, which were done 2.5 to 3 months following the original group formation meeting of the solidarity forum.

Thematic analysis was employed to find, analyse, and report patterns (themes) within the qualitative information. In this approach, the data was carefully categorised and coded to identify repeating themes that offer profound insights into the information's underlying importance (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process consisted of several stages, including the following: the reading of the data, the application of codes to extracts, the conduct of repeated rounds of coding, the categorisation of codes into various emergent themes, and the interpretation of the data. This dual-method approach, which integrated quantitative and qualitative analysis, guaranteed a thorough and comprehensive comprehension of the research findings, connecting academic inquiry with practical application and emphasising the intersectionality of issues in the rural setting (Bryman, 2016). I have supplied my positionality for this study endeavour in the appendices (see Appendix 2).

4.5 Ethical Considerations

Throughout the research procedure, ethical issues were meticulously adhered to in accordance with the rules of the Indian Sociological Society. The study's goal and methodology were thoroughly explained to participants during the initial phone call

and subsequent in-person sessions, which were essential for obtaining informed consent. Except for the demographic data that was provided to Empower People after receiving permissions during the Solidarity Forum meeting in April, written consent was gained once the usage and storage of their data was explained, with assurances of confidentiality and anonymity.

Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognise the constraints imposed by the cultural setting. The responses may have been impacted by the fact that the majority of interviews were done in the presence of family members or community officials. In order to prevent potential disputes, it was necessary to carefully select the questions, such as questions about the husband's family caste rather than the woman's home caste, due to the lack of privacy. Although this may have impacted certain responses, measures were taken to maintain confidentiality within the limits. During the analysis, the potential impact of these factors on the

data was meticulously assessed.

Participants were continuously reminded of their freedom to withdraw at any time without penalty. There was also an emphasis on transparency on the absence of direct advantages in order to temper expectations. Specific supplementary consent was obtained to guarantee that participants comprehended the potential applications of their information beyond the scope of the research when demographic data was shared with Empower People for fieldwork reasons.

The researcher maintained professional integrity by accepting only projects that were within their area of expertise and adhering to the most stringent ethical requirements. A special effort was made to safeguard the rights and privacy of participants, especially in the face of opposing interests. The research's integrity and participant protection were preserved by adhering to these ethical guidelines, notwithstanding the obstacles that were encountered.

4.6 Profile of Respondents

A concerted effort was made to assemble a diverse cohort of respondents in this study, with the objective of capturing a broad spectrum of experiences and perspectives. The selection criteria included a variety of demographic parameters, such as age, educational background, and Native State of Origin. The objective of this methodology was to improve the representativeness of the sample and to offer a more thorough comprehension of the research topic. (Please refer to Appendix 3 for the precise list of participants.)

5. Key Analysis and Findings

5.1 The Long Journey Home: Key Findings

5.1.1 Demographic Profile and Marriage Dynamics

The descriptive statistics analysed using JASP provided valuable insights into the demographic characteristics within the sample population. The data encompasses 497 valid entries for most variables, with a slight reduction to 482 for husband-related metrics. On average, women in the sample are 27.97 years old, while their husbands are 34.97 years old, despite 15 missing cases because of death, indicating a typical age difference of approximately seven years between spouses. This gap would be higher if 15 cases were not missing. Traditional Indian marriages on the other hand typically have a smaller age gap between partners, often less than seven years.

Table 5.1: Collected Basic Demographic Data From 497 Cross-Regional Families

Basic Demographic Data									
	Age of Woman	Age of Husband	Married Years	Number of Children	Age of older child	Women Age at Marriage	Men Age at Marriage	Age at first child	Contact with Native Family
Valid	497	482	497	497	497	497	482	497	497
Missing	0	15	0	0	0	0	15	0	0
Mean	27.966	34.973	8.129	1.485	6.348	19.837	27.326	21.598	0.934
Std. Deviation	7.455	7.988	6.989	1.032	6.747	4.238	5.277	4.733	0.249
Minimum	18.000	20.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	7.000	10.000	8.000	0.000
Maximum	60.000	78.000	45.000	7.000	60.000	39.000	50.000	50.000	1.000

The mean duration of a marriage is 8.13 years indicating that the majority of these marriages are relatively new and have occurred recently with women and men entering matrimony at the average ages of 19.84 and 27.33 years, respectively. The earliest recorded marriage occurred 45 years ago. Notably, the minimum reported age at marriage for women is seven years, which warrants further investigation to ascertain data accuracy or potential cultural factors. Among the 497 families, a significant majority of 257 or 51.5 percent consist of women who have married from

Uttar Pradesh. There were 59 women from Bihar, 48 from Assam, 37 from West Bengal, 22 from Madhya Pradesh, 17 from Odisha, 15 from Jharkhand, and the remaining 42 women from states such as Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Tripura, Karnataka, and even 3 women from Nepal (see Appendix 4).

Despite Uttar Pradesh and Punjab being adjacent states to Haryana, we classified families with brides from UP and Punjab as cross-regional. This is because the women travelled from distant areas such as Allahabad, Varanasi, Mirzapur, or Amritsar, where cultural differences from Haryana are significant. However, marriages from Rajasthan were excluded from the data

because Mahendragarh district shares a border with Rajasthan and the cultural disparities between the two regions are comparatively less significant.

Out of the states with the highest number of women, West Bengal has an average of 14.135 years of married life, followed by Tripura with 14 years, while UP only has an average of 6.22 years of married life so far. It shows that initially marriages started taking place from women coming from faraway states such as Bengal and Tripura and when cases have increased over the last few years, majority have started coming from states comparatively nearer to Haryana such as UP or MP.

Figure 5: Mean Age of Marriage for Women From West Bengal

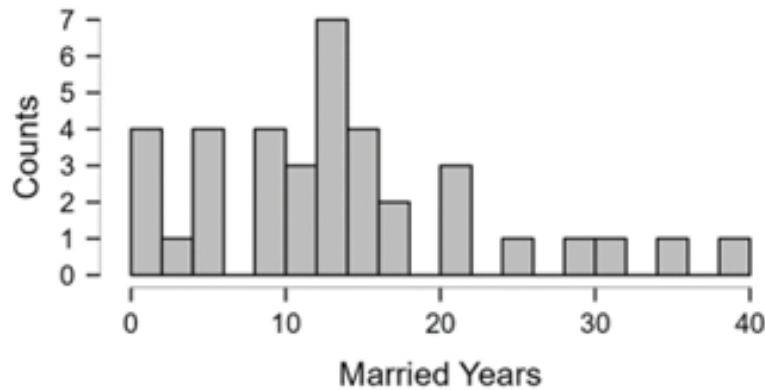
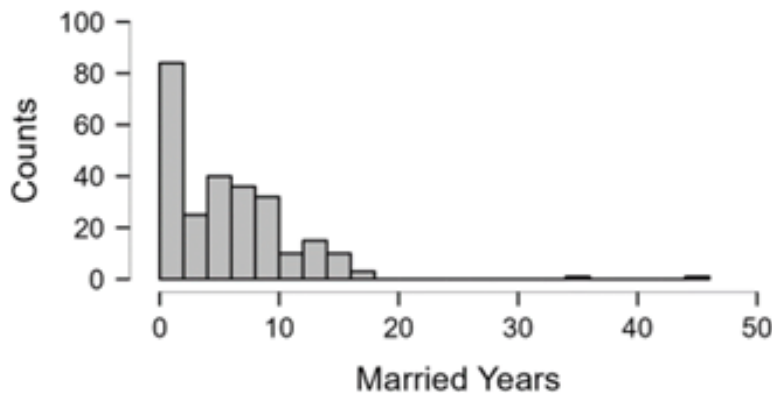


Figure 6: Mean Age of Marriage for Women From Uttar Pradesh



Regarding family composition, the average number of children per family is 1.49, ranging from 0 to 7, with the mean age of the oldest child being 6.35 years old. The data suggests that couples typically have their first child at around 21.6 years of age which is less than two years after their age at marriage.

The data on the relationship between age at marriage and number of children suggests several concerning implications. The negative correlation between age at marriage and number of children indicates that women who marry at a younger age tend to have a higher number of children. This pattern of early marriages leading to higher fertility rates can place significant physical and economic burdens on the young mothers. Early childbearing can result in young mothers facing overwhelming physical and economic challenges in caring for their families. The combination of being married at a young age and having a higher number of children can severely restrict the women's opportunities for personal development, education, and economic independence. Extensive research has shown that early childbearing can pose various health risks for both the mother and child, such as increased rates of maternal mortality, birth complications, and poorer child health outcomes. There are a total of 738 children in 497 families, resulting in an average of 1.48 children per family.

The standard deviation of 1.032 indicates that there are multiple families with two

or more children. It serves as evidence to demonstrate that the primary motive behind such marriages is to procreate and ensure the continuation of the family line. The majority of older children fall within the age range of 0–10 years, exactly 6.35 years of age. The study also collected data on the participants' caste, specifically the caste to which they are presently married (see Appendix 9).

The data regarding the women's reluctance to disclose their original caste and the adoption of their husband's caste identity points to several concerning social dynamics and implications. The fact that the women are not openly disclosing their original caste suggests the possibility of inter-caste marriages taking place. While inter-caste marriages can be a positive step towards social integration, they may also lead to increased social tensions and conflicts in certain contexts and may stem from a fear of encountering such discrimination or social ostracization in their new environments. This can be a significant source of psychological and emotional distress, as it severs their ties to their ancestral roots and community.

The Ahir caste, which is the predominant caste in the region, is also found to be the majority in these families. There were a total of 277 families belonging to the Ahir caste, followed by 71 Jat families, 50 Brahmin families, 28 Chamar families, and 14 Saini families. The remaining families originated from different castes, including Rajputs, Sunar, Gurjars, and Kumhars. The Yadav families consist of

158 women from Uttar Pradesh, 30 from Assam, 25 from Bengal, and 24 from Bihar. It is evident that many of these marriages are inter-caste because Bengal or Assam have smaller Ahir populations. Obtaining the caste data of women based on their own background proved to be quite challenging, as none of them were willing to disclose their true caste. Instead, they only indicated the caste they acquired through marriage. This phenomenon can be attributed to the fact that many of these women encounter derogatory comments or insults because of their own caste. In order to avoid such remarks, they opted to only mention the caste into which they are married.

5.1.2 Socio-economic Characteristics

The data suggests significant educational disparities, with the mean education level of 1.81 (on a scale where 0 represents no education and 6 represents postgraduate studies; see Figure 8) indicating a substantial educational deficit. This low level of education likely hinders women's ability to provide academic support to their children, access employment opportunities, and navigate social and institutional systems in their new environment, presenting substantial barriers to their integration and advancement. Only a small number of these women have pursued education beyond the 12th grade. Due to a lack of educational opportunities throughout their early years, married women from different regions face difficulties in offering essential academic assistance and supervision to their children. This situation gives rise to serious worries over the educational possibilities of the younger generation in these homes, which could potentially continue a cycle of restricted educational chances and limited social and economic mobility. The employment data highlights significant gender disparities and

economic dependence among the population. 74.85% of women are unemployed, indicating a very high rate of joblessness among this group while in contrast, only 14.09% of husbands are unemployed (see Appendix 5 and Appendix 6). Most of the employed husbands (40.85%) are engaged in low-skilled occupations, such as labourers. Also, note that the men with no employment had comparatively older children (see Appendix 7).

The stark disparity in employment rates means that many of the women are financially dependent on their husbands. This lack of economic autonomy severely limits the women's ability to make independent decisions and choices. The predominance of low-skilled, low-income occupations among employed husbands raises concerns about the overall economic stability and resilience of these households. This could lead to heightened financial insecurity and vulnerability. The data casts doubt on the notion that these marriages have resulted in upward social mobility (hypergamy) for the women. Despite moving from their original locations, their

economic circumstances do not appear to have improved significantly, as they continue to face comparable financial limitations.

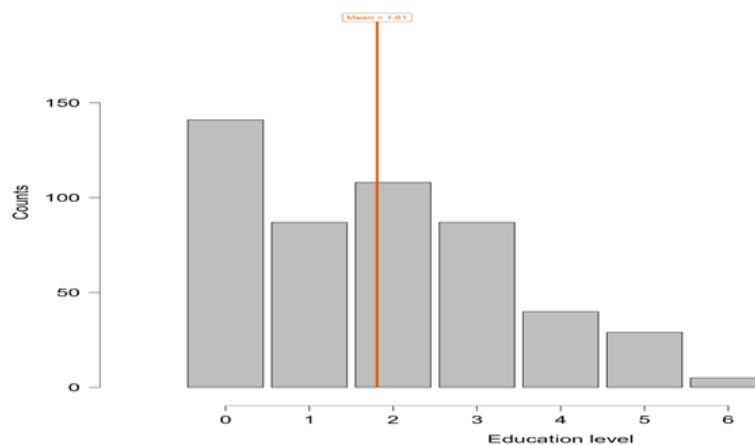
However, it is a fact that only a minority of these women who come from different regions are employed or have independent means of income, such as working as tailors or in small salons, in Narnaul. Most of the women rely on their husbands for financial support, and bear the responsibility of educating children since men, who are typically employed as labourers, drivers, and in similar occupations, have a substantial age difference with their wives. This

economic reliance prompts inquiries as to whether these unions have genuinely resulted in hypergamy, which denotes an enhancement in the women's social standing. Although they have moved from their original states, their financial circumstances do not seem to have notably alleviated, as they still face comparable economic limitations as before. To truly empower these women, it is essential to make ongoing and dedicated efforts to provide them with sustainable employment opportunities and help them achieve financial independence.

5.1.3 Social Integration and Mobility

96 percent of women report not being part of any self-help group, seven percent have no contact with their native families, and cultural and linguistic differences in their new environment further exacerbate their isolation. This lack of social networks and support systems may hinder their integration into the local community, limit their access to information and resources, and reduce their resilience in the face of challenges.

Figure 7: Average Education Level of Cross-Regional Women



[0-No education; 1-up to 5th standard; 2-up to 8th standard; 3-up to 10th standard; 4-up to 12th standard; 5-Graduate; 6-Postgraduate]

The variable “Contact with Native Family” exhibits a mean of 0.934, indicating that the majority of families maintain connections with their native relatives. This is a significant factor that challenges the notion of these cases being instances of trafficking or bride buying, as one would expect no contact with native families in such situations. In fact, 93% of women, or at least 464 individuals, reported having some form of communication or regular visits with their maternal families, either through phone calls or in-person visits. Although their visits may not be as frequent as those of other local brides, the ongoing communication underscores the continued relationships with their families. Only a small minority have never visited their hometowns, often due to factors such as distance, financial constraints, or a lack of encouragement from their marital families. This evidence further refutes the claims of bride trafficking, which typically imply a complete severance of ties with maternal relatives. Comparatively, it is the older women who are not in contact with their native families, younger women are in contact.

Figure 8: Age of Women Without Contact with Their Native Families

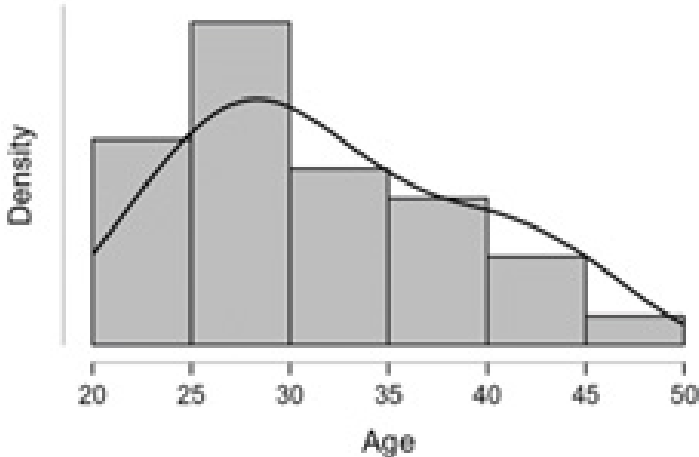
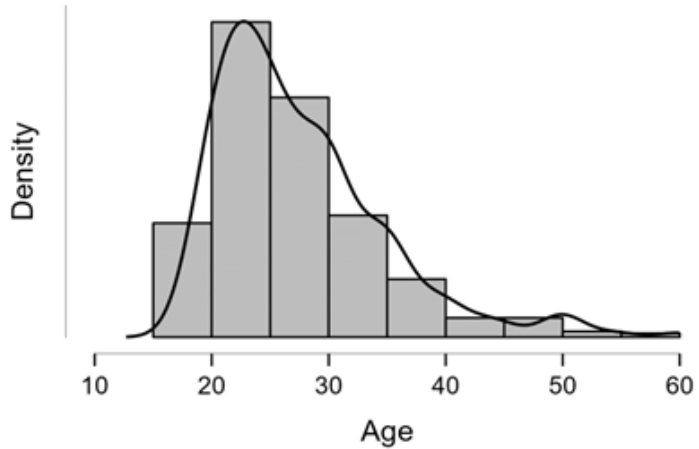


Figure 5.5: Age of Women in Contact with Their Native Families



Interestingly, those who have contact with their families are more educated as compared to those who do not have any contact with their families.

5.1.4 Cross-Tabulation Analysis

In one of the hypotheses formed, where the hypothesis is “higher education levels of women lead to a delay in the age at marriage”, using Pearson’s correlations using JASP, following results were observed.

Table 2: Pearson’s Correlation for Two Variables: Women’s Age at Marriage and Their Education Level

Pearson’s Correlations			
Variable		Age of Women at Marriage	Education
1. Age of Women at Marriage	Pearson’s r	–	
	p-value	–	
2. Education	Pearson’s r	0.161	–
	p-value	< .001	–

Since the value is positive, it indicates a positive linear relationship between the education level of women and their age at marriage. But a value of 0.161 is considered a weak positive correlation. Therefore, a Pearson r of 0.161 suggests a weak positive linear relationship between the education level of women and their age at marriage. In the context of the hypothesis, this means that higher education levels in women are associated with a slightly later age at marriage, but the relationship is not very strong. Other factors may also influence the age at marriage, and the education level alone does not account for a substantial portion of the variability in the age at marriage.

In order to gain a comprehensive understanding of the well-being of children in such households, it is imperative that we conduct further longitudinal studies focusing on their mental and psychological health as well as their educational achievements. The missing data in this study pertains to the sex ratio within these families, specifically whether there is a higher prevalence of boys or girls. Based on the sex ratio trends, it is not surprising to anticipate a higher number of males than females. It is interesting to note that when women marry early, they tend to have more children and when they marry late, they tend to have lesser children (see Appendix 8).

The intersectionality of these vulnerabilities—low education, economic dependence,

social isolation, caste dynamics, and reproductive pressures—creates a complex web of disadvantages for women in cross-regional marriages. This multifaceted vulnerability may significantly limit their capabilities compared to local women. Contrary to expectations of improved living conditions through cross-regional marriage, the data suggests that these unions may not substantially enhance the socio-economic status of the women or their families. The employment patterns and economic indicators imply that the husbands' families may not be in a significantly better position than the women's maternal homes.

These findings underscore the need for targeted interventions that address:

- ◆ Educational empowerment for women
- ◆ Economic opportunities and skill development
- ◆ Social integration and community support mechanisms
- ◆ Health and reproductive rights awareness
- ◆ Cultural sensitivity and anti-discrimination measures

5.2 Lack of Capabilities Revealed Through Interviews

5.2.1 Capability to Live Free From Physical and Emotional Harm

Amartya Sen defines capabilities as the freedoms and opportunities individuals have to do what they value in life. These encompass various aspects such as the ability to live a healthy life, be educated, participate in social and economic activities, and have control over one's own life. Capabilities are not just about what individuals can achieve but also about having the real freedom to choose different ways of living. Following are some of the capabilities that women in cross-regional families lack.

"I did not know my husband was an alcoholic even before our marriage. He is almost 10 years older to me and had started beating me from the very

beginning of our married life. My two children now see me beaten by their father every day. What can we do? There is no one to support us. Whatever I earn through labour, my husband takes it from me to drink." (W0-D-30-BH)

"My husband is younger to his brothers. One of his brother's wife is too zealous of my husband's earning. She could not digest the fact that my husband gives his earned money to me. So, she somehow got him beating me for no reason. I never understood why my husband started beating me for no reason. I feel like running away from this household now." (W3-K-19-BH)

“Why did I marry here? All because my family is poor and they could not afford dowry to local grooms. They just found that marriage with a man from Haryana will be cost free and they married me here. They are so far away now that I cannot even visit them once a year and my in-laws’ family does not let me go there. My mother died and still I could not go there. I am emotionally so dead here.” (W3-K-30-MH)

5.2.2 Capability to Form and Maintain Social Connections

“I still am not able to speak the Haryanvi accent. Obviously, my Bihari accent will be there when I speak. But I think for this reason itself or maybe for others, no local woman wants to be my friend or share anything with me. I do not know what I need to do to have friends here.” (W3-S-20-BH)

“In Assam, we have self-help groups of women where a group of women meet and save money together. But I do not see any such group here. This group can help women like me who come from faraway to mingle with other women, but there is no such opportunity so far.” (W2-Y-38-AS)

“I would like to wedding functions here in this village like others. But I have seen it on many occasions that no one invites me when it comes to women’s functions in a marriage. I have limited opportunities for social interactions outside the family.” (W1-K-37-WB)

5.2.3 Capability to Achieve Financial Independence

“I was married early when I had only passed my high school. I was a good student back then but after marriage I had kids very early. Now I have no opportunity to study further, what jobs can I do? I am solely dependent on what my husband earns.” (W3-Y-36-JH)

“I could not study at all due to poor family conditions. I had younger siblings to take care of and then married here in Haryana. I have kids here and I look after that. My husband had an accident recently and now we both do not have any source of income.” (W5-Y-22-UP)

5.2.4 Capability to Engage in Leisure and Recreational Activities

“Here in Haryana, people keep cattle at home. I come from West Bengal where we did not have any cattle at our home. So, I had to learn feeding them properly as well as to take care of them. I also started going to the agricultural field which was also new to

me. I have two children as well to take care. I have no free time for anything.” (W0-Y-45-WB)

“You will not believe me? I have not been even to Narnaul which is not far from here. I have cattle at home and I send children to school. Their father is working mostly and stays out of home. There is no one at home apart from me. I have limited time for leisure.” (W3-Y-25-UP)

5.2.5 Capability to Make Autonomous Reproductive Choices

“I understand now. These Haryanvi men and their families only bring us to produce sons. Because they do not have enough women here, they kill their daughters, so they go out to our states and bring us here. Within a year of marriage, I had (a) son and they were so happy. But it does not mean that I am also liked by everyone. No, only my son matters for them, not me.” (W3-Y-36-JH)

“I wanted to study after my marriage. I already have passed school, so wanted to pursue graduation such that I could do some job as well. But my in-laws here pressurized me to have kids and now I have two. I cannot study further now.” (W3-Y-25-UP)

“I had complexion in my first child’s birth and doctor had asked us to wait for at least 3-4 years before trying for another. But as the first born was a girl, my mother-in-law kept insisting for another child and within one year, I had son. But I faced a lot of problems. I cannot understand what do they achieve by forcing their daughters-in-law for sons?” (W0-D-30-BH)

5.2.6 Capability to Negotiate Power Dynamics Within the Household

“I do not think I have any decision-making power at my home. No one really asks me for anything. It is my mother-in-law who take(s) most of (the) decisions at home. She even abuses me for nothing.” (W3-Y-26-UP)

“As you know, we daughters-in-law are expected to obey our elders, especially our in-laws. Even my husband asks me to obey his mother. It seems to me that since I do not earn, I do not have any power to make any decisions in my own home.” (W4-B-28-UP)

5.3 Empower People's Project SEAL Experience

Project SEAL is a unique initiative in Haryana, empowering cross-regional women by involving them in decision-making processes. It begins with deep community engagement, identifying women facing social isolation, economic dependency, and cultural alienation. The project is structured in phases, ensuring (that) the women play active roles in shaping it. Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) are formed as foundational structures for skill training, decision-making, and mutual support. A Solidarity Forum is established at the block level, addressing broader community issues, while the Decision-Making Committee (DMC), led by women, autonomously steers the project to ensure responsiveness to their needs.

Project SEAL ensures ownership and autonomy by promoting self-determination through women-led structures such as district-level executive committees. This ownership fosters responsibility and agency, enabling women to direct their own lives. The Azad Women cooperative, which was established as part of the project, offers economic empowerment by means of a slipper-making machine. The cooperative's business approach encourages equitable resource allocation and collaboration, involving underprivileged and cross-regional women in the entire production process, from sourcing to sales. Fair profit sharing is guaranteed by transparent financial management.

Project SEAL established PARO VOICE, a YouTube channel that empowers women to share their stories and advocate for change, to support CBOs. The platform amplifies marginalised voices. The project also involves local stakeholders, including government officials, community leaders, and service providers, to establish coalitions and acquire the required resources. Regular workshops and exposure visits are conducted to educate women on their rights and access to services, hence fostering their participation in local decision-making processes.

Despite the project's accomplishments in economic empowerment, obstacles persist. The engagement of women is impeded by stigmatisation, community disapproval, and resistance from their families. Their liberty is further restricted by their economic dependence on relatives. Project SEAL utilises Empower People's strengths and implements a participative strategy to guarantee that programs are tailored to the requirements of women, despite these obstacles. The project endeavours to achieve long-term sustainability and effect by enhancing local capacities, promoting community ownership. Project SEAL's concept is well-suited for Narnaul, where similar difficulties exist, to provide an organised solution to jointly empower women, given its success in other places.

5.4 From Margins to Centre: Exploring the Community Philanthropy Approach

This research project was initiated to illuminate the transformative potential of community philanthropy in a society where top-down development attempts frequently fail to address the distinctive needs and ambitions of local communities. The researcher initiated an investigation on the capacity of underprivileged groups to collectively mobilise resources and collaborate in order to enhance their quality of life, albeit for a brief period, when they are empowered. The researcher focused on a potential initiative—the solidarity forum, which was organised by a group of cross-regional women in conjunction with the Empower People Organisation— due to the project’s limited time constraint. This forum provided a compelling case study that embodied the fundamental principles of community philanthropy, providing valuable insights into the potential of such an approach to drive meaningful change.

5.4.1 Gaining the Support of Community Members

The dedication of the women to secure the backing of their community members was demonstrated by their involvement in the solidarity forum and the subsequent establishment of self-help groups during a three-month period. They have been able to face their shared challenges by establishing a network of trust and camaraderie by getting out of their houses and engaging with their peers.

One of the attendees recollected, “It was the first time many of us had the opportunity to go out of our houses and meet with other women who understood our struggles.” “We were finally able to openly discuss the abuse, discrimination, and lack of chances we encountered, at least for a day. We anticipate the continuation of this platform.”

This collaborative support allowed the women to devise practical tactics, like campaigning for skills training and establishing small companies. The sharing of experiences cultivated trust and solidarity, enabling them to perceive themselves as part of a broader movement and to alter their communities. The impact of this was evident when forum members invoked the assistance of community authorities. The ladies, rather than relying on top-down directions, took the initiative to connect with important stakeholders, garnering the backing for the forum’s operations and creating confidence.

“We achieved a significant milestone by obtaining the backing of our local leaders,” stated W0-Y-40-AS. “It demonstrated that our endeavours were being acknowledged and that our communities were prepared to accept the reforms we were advocating for.”

5.4.2 Leveraging Community Resources

The women expertly coordinated community resources, securing venues and pooling finances to support their activities. Their proactive approach to securing meeting locations was a prime example. They secured accessible and congenial venues for their events by contacting local community centres, institutions of worship, and private households, rather than relying on external assistance. “We did not wait for another individual to offer them a meeting location,” explained W3-Y-25-UP. “We went out, knocked on doors, and worked with local leaders and institutions to obtain a site that would accommodate their increasing numbers and enable their conversations.”

The forum’s practical success was guaranteed by this proactive approach to mobilising community

resources, which also cultivated a sense of empowerment and ownership among the participants. By assuming responsibility for the logistics, the women exhibited their capacity to capitalise on the assets inside their communities, a crucial aspect of community philanthropy. The field study assistant was astounded by the women’s resourcefulness and inventiveness. “They did not wait for someone else to resolve their issues; they pulled up their sleeves and began to work, leveraging the combined power of their community.” This inventiveness was particularly apparent in the women’s endeavours to guarantee their children’s access to high-quality education. In spite of financial constraints, they were prepared to make significant sacrifices in order to ensure that their children had the resources and support they needed to succeed in their academic endeavours.

5.4.3 Determining the Use of External Resources

Although the women’s activities were primarily motivated by their own community resources, they also acknowledged the importance of external collaboration and support. The participants were able to augment their efforts by collaborating with the Empower People Organization, which provided them with expanded resources and experience. “The Empower People team indicated that the women recognised that they were unable to address these difficulties independently.” “They acknowledged the necessity of uniting, establishing a network of trust and camaraderie that would enable them to address their challenges head-on.” Not only did this external

relationship offer the women real aid, but it also served to validate their endeavours and elevate their voices within their communities. The participants were able to establish a diverse approach to tackling their difficulties by utilising both internal and external resources.

5.4.4 Participation, Collaboration, and Shared Power in Decision-making

The principles of participation, collaboration, and shared power in decision-making were exemplified by the women's approach to the solidarity forum and the subsequent self-help groups. The participants actively took part in the development of the forum's agenda and strategies, thereby guaranteeing that their voices were heard and their needs were prioritized, rather than passively accepting top-down directives.

The Empower People Organization's plans were not simply accepted by the women; they were actively involved in the process of determining the forum's focus, agenda, and strategies, according to the field research assistant. "The participants developed a sense of trust and ownership as a result of this inclusive, collaborative process."

The women were able to navigate complex power dynamics and challenge entrenched societal norms by fostering this spirit of shared decision-making. Their collective endeavours illustrated the transformative potential of community philanthropy, which enabled marginalised communities to become the architects of their own growth. "The forum provided us with a secure environment in which to discuss our challenges and solicit assistance from one another," stated W0-C-20-UP. "We came to the realisation that we were not alone in our struggles and that we could find the strength to surmount them by collaborating."

5.4.5 Volunteering Time and Energy

The women's unrelenting dedication to volunteering their time and energy was the foundation of their participation in the solidarity forum. The forum meetings were the first occasion for many of these women to leave their homes, transcending the limitations of their conventional roles and obligations. W1-Y-26-UP recollected, "I recall the day I originally resolved to attend the forum meeting." "My neighbours contended that I was squandering my time on "such stuff," and my spouse was doubtful. However, I was deeply moved by a desire to contribute to a cause that was greater than myself." Numerous additional women emulated W1-Y-26-UP's experience,

each with their unique narrative of surmounting personal reservations and cultural expectations to participate in the forum. I was astounded by the unwavering commitment and sacrifices that these ladies were prepared to make in order to make a positive impact on their communities.

The field study assistant, Dayawati, elucidated that “many of these women had to negotiate with their families, reschedule their domestic tasks, and even undergo social ostracization to attend the meetings.” “However, they persevered, motivated by a shared belief that their combined endeavours could have a concrete impact on their lives and the lives of their loved ones.” The researcher observed that this inclusive procedure encouraged participants to feel a sense of ownership and trust. The

ladies achieved consensus, addressed concerns, and linked the forum’s operations with local needs by engaging community members in decision-making. The researcher developed a profound respect for the resilience of these cross-regional women as the project concluded, seeing the potential for community-driven ways to effect permanent change on a global scale.

“This forum was merely the beginning,” declared W0-C-21-BH. “We will persist in our efforts to question the current quo, push the boundaries, and establish a more equitable and prosperous future for our communities with the assistance and solidarity of our fellow women. We are prepared to respond to this collective summons.”

5.4.6 Community Mapping and Inclusive Participation

The women began their solidarity forum with a community mapping exercise, allowing them to understand the unique challenges the participants faced. Through discussions, they identified issues like lack of clean water, healthcare, gender-based violence, and economic marginalisation. This approach ensured the women’s voices shaped the forum’s priorities, fostering a shared sense of purpose and laying the groundwork for tailored, community-driven solutions.

To ensure every woman’s perspective was heard, the forum organisers implemented interactive activities like games and group discussions to encourage participation. Older, more vocal women mentored and supported their peers, creating a safe space for younger or marginalised women to speak up. This inclusive approach, central to the forum’s model, allowed the group to draw on diverse experiences and build collective solutions.

5.4.7 Expanding the Ripple Effect

In the wake of the solidarity forum's transformative experience, the women returned to their respective villages, vowing to disseminate their newly acquired knowledge and inspire grassroots change. Assisted by a field research assistant who is currently employed by the Empower People Organization, these village-level gatherings offered the women an opportunity to interact with their peers and collectively establish a course of action.

"Upon witnessing the solidarity forum's influence, we were aware that we could not confine this experience to ourselves," W1-Y-30-MP reflected. "It was imperative that we return to our communities with this energy and sense of empowerment, enabling all individuals to capitalise on the knowledge we had acquired."

According to W5-B-23-MP, "We were determined not to abandon anyone. As a result, we ventured outside, knocked on doors, and extended an invitation to the women of our villages to consider joining us. Regardless of our backgrounds or circumstances, we desired to convey to them that this was a place for all of us."

5.4.8 Community Mapping and Grassroots Planning

Drawing on the lessons acquired from the solidarity forum, the women initiated a rigorous process of community mapping and grassroots planning inside their communities. In order to develop sustainable solutions, they acknowledged that a profound comprehension of the distinctive advantages and problems of their local contexts was necessary.

According to W5-K-23-UP, "We were not interested in simply replicating our actions from the forum. We were aware that each of our villages had its own unique combination of resources and demands, so we had to begin from the ground up, determining the most effective methods to handle them and mapping out the issues to address them."

5.4.9 Strengthening Village-Level Groups and Securing Funding

The women acknowledged the necessity of formalising their endeavours and establishing self-sustaining, robust groupings as the village-level gatherings gained momentum. They collaborated closely with the Empower People Organization to obtain finance and technical assistance, so enabling these grassroots initiatives to flourish.

“We were able to forward our plans to the next level with the organisation’s support,” stated W5-K-23-UP. “We did not merely discuss change; we began to implement it by mobilising our communities and combining our resources to transform our concepts into tangible outcomes.” W1-Y-26-UP remarked with unshakeable determination, “This is merely the beginning. We have experienced the transformative power of collective action, and we are determined to continue until the lives of all women in our communities have been altered. This is our battle, and we are committed to the long term.”

The foundation for a durable and truly transformative process was established by the women’s dedication to community-driven change and the assistance of the Empower People Organization. The women were living examples of the transforming possibilities of community generosity as the ripple effects of the solidarity forum continued to spread throughout the communities.

5.5 Barriers to Funding for Community-Driven Initiatives: The Challenges Faced by Empower People Organization

Organisations frequently encounter substantial obstacles in their pursuit of funds to support their essential work in the context of community-driven development and social justice efforts. Empower People Organization, a non-profit organisation that is committed to the rehabilitation of survivors of bride trafficking, is no exception to this fact, as evidenced by an informative conversation with its founder, Shafiqur Rahman Khan.

Empower People Organization frequently finds itself in a hazardous position, since it is required to “lay low” because of the sensitive nature of its work, which entails collaborations with the Haryana police and other authorities, according to Khan.

The organisation faces substantial issues in securing the necessary finances to sustain its vital field-based activities in Haryana and Assam due to the reluctance of funding organisations to completely embrace the organisation’s objective and the need for discretion.

The organisation has implemented a variety of techniques to increase the appeal of its work to potential funders in order to surmount this challenge. This encompasses the meticulous preparation of reports in an appealing format and design of their agendas to correspond with the priorities and preferences of funding organisations. Nevertheless, this adaptive approach is not without its drawbacks, as Khan

observes that funding organisations frequently impose strict deadlines and limitations on the type of work that can be supported, which further complicate the organisation’s capacity to effectively address the changing needs of the communities they serve.

The recurring issue of insufficient money is another substantial obstacle that the Empower People Organization encounters. Khan indicates that the organisation’s expected demands are frequently not met by the funds it receives, which is making it increasingly challenging to maintain their field-based operations and retain experienced workers. The organisation’s capacity to sustain a focused and experienced workforce is further impeded by the low compensation granted to field workers, which compounds this difficulty.

The organisation’s challenges are further compounded by the relative paucity of other institutions that are involved in comparable social justice-oriented

initiatives. Funding organisations frequently perceive Empower People Organization’s projects as unique and unfamiliar due to the absence of a comprehensive support network, which results in a reluctance to provide the requisite financial support. Consequently, the organisation’s troubles have been further exacerbated by the lack of prioritisation of social justice issues in the funding landscape.

Empower People Organization stays resolute in its dedication to its purpose, despite the significant obstacles it faces. It is motivated by an unrelenting commitment to the transformation of the lives of survivors of bride trafficking. The group is committed to advocating for a wider acknowledgment of the critical role that community-driven projects play in addressing deeply entrenched social inequalities, forging strategic partnerships, and adapting its methods as it navigates the difficult funding landscape.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Summary of Findings

The intersectional vulnerabilities that cross-regional women in Haryana's Mahendragarh area encounter are a multifaceted web of obstacles that are strongly founded in their age, education, caste dynamics, and social isolation. These women, who are on average about 28-years-old, exhibit a substantial age disparity with their husbands, who are on average approximately 35-years-old, as indicated by the demographic data that was obtained. These women are at a disadvantage, particularly when considering the social and economic constraints they encounter in their new contexts, as a result of the age difference and early marriages: women often marry around the age of 19. The vulnerability of these women is further exacerbated by their low average education level, which restricts their capacity to acquire employment, assist their children academically, and navigate the largely unknown and unfriendly social and institutional structures they encounter in Haryana.

However, the lives of these women are further complicated by the politics of caste, since many of them are hesitant to acknowledge their original caste origins. The acceptance of their

spouses' caste identity is frequently the consequence of this hesitation, which may subject them to additional forms of caste-based discrimination and social humiliation. The complex convergence of social, cultural, and economic variables that these women must traverse is underscored by the possibility for societal tensions to arise from inter-caste marriages and the loss of their original cultural identity. Providing unparalleled breadth and scope, the demographic data obtained in this study is remarkable and offers unique insights into these intersectional concerns. Local government leaders have been engaged through this data, which has not only informed the research but has also proven to be a big accomplishment.

These women are frequently isolated from both their native families and the local communities in which they now reside, which is a serious issue due to the absence of social capital. The profound social isolation that these women face is underscored by the fact that 96% of them are not members of any self-help group, and seven percent have no contact with their native families. This isolation is further exacerbated by cultural and linguistic obstacles,

which make it challenging for them to integrate into their new communities, access essential information and resources, and develop resilience in the face of a multitude of challenges. It, in conjunction with the other vulnerabilities they encounter, results in a situation in which these women are economically and socially reliant on their husbands. The data indicates that 74.85 percent of these women are unemployed, whereas just 14.09 percent of their spouses mostly work in low-skilled labour. The financial autonomy of these women is restricted by this economic dependence, which also elevates the likelihood of economic instability within their households.

Project SEAL, which was established by Empower People, has emerged as a critical intervention in the face of these issues. It establishes a block-level forum that provides these women with a venue for solidarity and assistance. The women themselves envisioned this forum as a platform for sharing experiences, learning from one another, and offering emotional support, rather than merely a top-down campaign. Empower People acknowledged the potential of this forum and incorporated it into their continuing endeavours to provide support to women from various regions. The forum exemplifies numerous components of community philanthropy, including the cultivation of shared power, collaboration, and participation in decision-making, the utilisation of community resources, and the acquisition of the support of community members.

The solidarity forum has already manifested into a transforming environment for these women, allowing them to participate in activities that improve their social capital, develop resilience, and attain a certain level of financial independence. The practical advantages that this effort has provided to the participants, who have collaborated to establish a supportive community, are indicative of its success. This initiative has achieved a critical milestone in its journey by extending its association/collusion beyond the women themselves to include local government officials who have been involved in the effort. The significance of this demographic data and the forum's actions in fostering a more comprehensive understanding of the challenges encountered by cross-regional women in Haryana is emphasised by the participation of local authorities.

Despite the fact that the project is approaching its conclusion, the solidarity forum is poised to serve as an enduring legacy of this endeavour, thanks to the ongoing support of Empower People. The researcher, who was instrumental in the forum's establishment, is proud of the enduring shift it represents and the impact it has made. The forum's capacity to provide ongoing support to these women, beyond the project's official schedule, is a testament to the significance of persistent support for vulnerable populations and the power of community-driven initiatives. This research has demonstrated that a multidimensional approach is necessary

to address the intersectional vulnerabilities experienced by cross-regional women. This approach should incorporate community engagement and empowerment, as well as data-driven insights. The solidarity forum serves as a model for future interventions that are designed to assist marginalised communities and is a clear illustration of how such an approach can result in significant, enduring change.

6.2 Implications for Practitioners

Being an insider has unique advantages and challenges when doing research or interventions in sensitive areas, such as this research topic. Practitioners may discover that their insider status enables them to more easily access communities, so allowing them to engage with a greater number of individuals and maybe acquire more profound insights into the issues at hand. Nevertheless, the full degree of access is frequently limited, particularly for women in cross-regional marriages or families. This constraint is a result of the delicate nature of the subject matter, which may cause individuals to be hesitant to freely disclose their experiences. Practitioners must, however, exercise caution in their self-presentation and endeavour to preserve objectivity throughout the process. In order to maintain the integrity of the research and respect the privacy and sensitivities of the participants, it is necessary to carefully navigate the twin roles of insider and researcher.

There is a pressing need for lasting solutions that address the economic dependence and social exclusion of cross-regional women, despite the abundant documentation of the hurdles they encounter. In an effort

to economically empower women and to give them a platform to voice their opinions within their families and communities, practitioners should contemplate the development and support of projects comparable to the solidarity forum. The capacity to live with dignity is crucial, and it is imperative to elevate the visibility of these women in public settings to disrupt the cycle of seclusion. In addition to cultural preservation, a well-designed intervention should ensure that these women are able to celebrate their original traditions, languages, and festivals. This cultural inclusion is essential for the psychological well-being of the individual and for the development of a sense of belonging in both the individual and their children.

In addition, practitioners must communicate effectively with funding organisations, rephrasing the concerns as matters of social justice and inclusivity, rather than merely in terms of women's empowerment. To improve the quality of life of women and reduce their isolation, it is imperative to secure an adequate amount of funding to expand interventions and reach a larger number of women over multiple blocks.

Additionally, practitioners should prioritise the education and welfare of the children of these women, as they are particularly vulnerable and necessitate support. Immediate actions are essential to ensure that women in the most perilous situations have access to resources required to rebuild their lives and that their basic needs are met. By addressing these multifaceted challenges, practitioners can assist cross-regional women in integrating more fully into their communities while maintaining their cultural identities. This can contribute to their long-term resilience and personal empowerment.

6.3 Limitations of This Study

The study was limited by time, particularly in terms of connecting with women from different regions. The research period was significantly occupied by data gathering, which resulted in a lack of time for in-depth engagement. Due to this time constraint, the interviews were conducted at a rapid speed, which may have impacted the quality and depth of the data being obtained. Furthermore, the ladies were unable to completely analyse the long-term effects of the study as they did not have enough time to fully realise and illustrate the potential influence of the solidarity forum beforehand or after its formation.

The study's development was impeded by a lack of clarity surrounding the concept of community philanthropy at the commencement of the project. The direction and focus of the interventions and the research itself may have been influenced by this conceptual ambiguity. The effectiveness and relevance of the initiative would have likely been improved, resulting in more unified outcomes, if community philanthropy

concepts had been more clearly understood and integrated from the outset. Despite the researcher's efforts to maintain objectivity, the research approach may be biased due to their insider status. The researcher's tendency to ignore certain biases may have been influenced by their proximity to the community, which may have altered the interactions and interpretations of the data. An alternate strategy could have involved the study being conducted by an outsider to offer a unique perspective, potentially resulting in a more impartial and well-rounded review.

Questions regarding its relevance to the study's objectives were raised by the acquisition of socio-economic demographic data. Although the poverty of these families in Haryana was apparent from the outset, the research outcomes may have been less impacted by the attention on this data. Nevertheless, the information regarding the women's caste and age groups was both pertinent and indispensable for comprehending the intersectional vulnerabilities they encounter. The study

may have been enhanced by a more concentrated strategy that prioritised data that directly informs the specific issues and dynamics of cross-regional marriages. The study did not involve all women equally, as certain more loud individuals dominated group meetings and solidarity forum conversations. The findings may have been distorted by the unequal participation of women who were less loud, as their experiences and viewpoints were underrepresented. Reaching out to people who are still hesitant to fully participate is essential for achieving a more inclusive and

representative knowledge of the broader community.

The project's long-term sustainability is dubious, particularly in case Empower People withdraws its sponsorship. The significance of creating clear leadership and continuity strategies to guarantee the solidarity forum's continuous effectiveness and influence is underscored by the study. In the absence of a clearly defined end objective and leadership structure, the project's progress could be jeopardised, which could ultimately undermine the long-term benefits for the women.

6.4 Implications for Future Research

The examination of the new generation born into cross-regional marriages should be the primary focus of future research. These children will encounter distinctive obstacles regarding their mental health, employment prospects, and education as they mature. It is imperative that researchers concentrate on the **unique requirements and potential obstacles to social integration of the children** who are on the brink of maturity. Valuable insights into the most effective methods of supporting the growth and well-being of these youngsters can be gained by examining their interactions with the educational system and their dual cultural identities. Furthermore, studies should investigate the mental health consequences of growing up in these homes, thereby guaranteeing that these young people receive the requisite assistance to flourish.

Community engagement in relation to cross-regional marriages is an additional significant subject for future research. It is imperative to dispel the impression that these weddings are a solution to the shortage of women in specific locations. Rather, studies should concentrate on including local communities to increase knowledge of the broader societal ramifications of cross-regional marriages and the obstacles faced by women. Future research can lead to more sustainable and equitable social solutions by promoting a more profound comprehension of these concerns within communities. In addition, researchers should investigate methods to more effectively integrate cross-regional women into local job opportunities, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) or Anganwadi

programming. Reducing their economic dependence and improving their social status could be achieved by prioritising these women in local job programs.

Secondly, additional research is required to comprehend the reasons for the significant absence of cross-regional women from self-help groups. The examination of the obstacles to their involvement could provide valuable insights into the ways in which these groups can be made more inclusive and supportive of the women. The potential of self-help groups as a platform for economic empowerment and social integration might also be investigated in this research. Furthermore, future studies should investigate the preservation of the indigenous traditions of cross-regional women, which are frequently lost following their transfer to Haryana. Researchers should explore methods for safeguarding cultural identities, such as community gatherings that commemorate both native and Haryanvi traditions or cultural exchange initiatives.

It could also be a great subject of research to investigate how the talent and cultural knowledge of these women can be utilised and incorporated into the local economy.

Lastly, research should concentrate on the establishment of sufficient infrastructure and support systems for cross-regional families at the local level. This encompasses an analysis of the role of gram panchayats and other local governance systems in addressing the distinctive issues encountered by these families. Future research could investigate the establishment of local organisations or procedures that are specifically designed to meet the requirements of cross-regional families, thereby enabling them to express their concerns and receive critical services. Research can also ensure long-term integration and well-being of cross-regional families by addressing these infrastructural gaps, contributing to the creation of a more inclusive and friendly environment.

7. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author of this paper has no conflict of interest to declare.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies:

“In preparing this manuscript, I have used AI tool Quillbot to improve and check grammar, and to paraphrase the language, with AI-generated content mainly used in chapters 1, 2, 3 and 6, and I take full responsibility for the content.”

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Sex Ratio Data of Haryana, Census Data, 2011

Census year	Sex ratio recorded in Haryana
1901	867
1911	835
1921	844
1931	844
1941	869
1951	871
1961	868
1971	867
1981	870
1991	865
2001	861
2011	877

Appendix 2: My Positionality

During my year-long research on cross-regional marriages in my community as a 29-year-old male researcher, I encountered unique challenges. While my insider status granted initial access to all 52 villages, engaging with cross-regional families remained difficult. Many women were reluctant to share, and families were hesitant to speak with outsiders. To improve data collection, I hired a female field assistant, a decision not in my original plan but necessary to overcome access barriers. Though my local connections helped occasionally, privacy during interviews was often compromised, as most conversations occurred in the presence of others.

Positionality, which refers to one's worldview and stance in research (Foote & Bartell, 2011; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013; Rowe, 2014), encompasses ontological, epistemological, and human nature assumptions (Sikes, 2004; Bahari, 2010; Scotland, 2012; Ormston et al., 2014; Marsh et al., 2017). Reflexivity, a key part of qualitative research, requires researchers to recognise how their presence shapes the research process (Hardy et al., 2001; Alvesson & Sköldberg, 2013). It includes reflecting on motivations and how research reveals aspects of the researcher's identity (Pels, 2000; Gabriel, 2015; Cunliffe, 2003; James & Vinnicombe, 2002).

While my local background eased some tensions, I had to navigate the challenge

of viewing cross-regional marriages as either a problem or a solution. My gender helped me connect with village leaders but made it harder to engage with women. My collaboration with Empower People aimed to sustain the initiative, with my field assistant, now employed by the organisation, continuing this work.

Being both an insider and outsider posed methodological and ethical dilemmas (Chacko 2004). Insider status does not guarantee uniformity within a group (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009), as researchers' beliefs and identities differ from those of participants, shaped by factors like gender and education (Merriam et al., 2001; Rose, 1997; Valentine, 2007). Community-based research (CBR) values partnerships to achieve social change (Israel et al., 1998; Stoecker, 2002), offering insights into the insider-outsider dynamic. Insiders often gain deeper cultural understanding (Reed & Proctor, 1995; Tom-or-me, 1991) and foster more authentic interactions (Robinson & Thorne, 1988), though ethical issues persist (Labaree, 2002).

Reflecting on my positionality, I recognise how my worldview and motivations shaped the research. Through reflexivity, I have sought to ensure my work is ethical and meaningful for the cross-regional women of Mahendragarh.

Appendix 3: List of Interview Participants

Code	Age of Women	Education	State	Married Years	Age Of Husband	Caste	Children	Age Of Older Child	Self Occupation	Occupation Of Husband	SHG Member	Contact With Native Family	Last Visit Home
W3-K-30-MH	30	3	Maharashtra	9	43	Khatri	2	6	No	Furniture	No	Yes	2023
W3-K-19-BH	19	3	Bihar	2	23	Khatri	1	1	No	Labour	No	Yes	2022
W0-C-21-BH	21	0	Bihar	1	22	Chamar	0	0	No	Labour	No	Yes	2021
W3-Y-36-JH	36	3	Jharkhand	20	41	Yadav	2	18	No	Labour	No	Yes	2024
W5-Y-22-UP	22	5	UP	2	26	Yadav	1	1	Farming	No	No	Yes	2023
W0-Y-45-WB	45	0	Bengal	15	65	Yadav	2	14	Cattle	Labour	No	No	No
W0-Y-38-WB	38	0	Bengal	16	42	Yadav	2	15	No	Farming	No	Yes	2023
W4-Y-35-JH	35	4	Jharkhand	12	39	Yadav	2	11	No	Farming	No	Yes	2022
W3-Y-25-UP	25	3	UP	8	35	Yadav	2	4	No	Labour	No	Yes	2023
W5-K-23-UP	23	5	UP	1	25	Khatri	0	0	No	Welder	No	Yes	2023
W2-Y-23-UP	23	2	UP	5	31	Yadav	2	3	No	Labour	No	Yes	2023
W3-Y-26-UP	26	3	UP	3	32	Yadav	0	0	Farming	Farming	No	No	No
W0-C-20-UP	20	0	UP	5	35	Chamar	1	2	No	Labour	No	Yes	2022
W4-B-28-UP	28	4	UP	4	34	Brahmin	1	3	No	Labour	No	Yes	2022
W1-Y-26-UP	26	1	UP	13	32	Yadav	2	11	No	Labour	No	Yes	2023
W0-Y-50-WB	50	0	Bengal	27	62	Yadav	3	25	No	No	No	Yes	2023
W0-D-30-BH	30	0	Bihar	14	40	Doom	2	12	No	Farming	No	Yes	2024
W0-Y-40-AS	40	0	Assam	19	46	Yadav	3	17	No	Labour	No	Yes	2021
W2-Y-38-AS	38	2	Assam	18	50	Yadav	1	16	No	Labour	No	Yes	2022
W3-Y-42-KA	42	3	Karnataka	23	46	Yadav	2	19	No	Labour	No	Yes	2023
W5-B-23-MP	23	5	MP	5	30	Brahmin	2	3	No	Priest	No	Yes	2024
W3-S-20-BH	20	3	Bihar	2	30	Swami	1	1	No	No	No	Yes	2023
W1-Y-30-MP	30	1	MP	7	40	Yadav	2	5	Cattle	Chowkidar	No	Yes	2023
W1-K-37-WB	37	1	Bengal	19	44	Khatri	2	18	Anganwadi	No	No	Yes	2023

Appendix 4: Frequencies for Native States of Cross-Regional Women

Native State	Frequency	Percent
Arunachal Pradesh	1	0.201
Assam	48	9.658
Bengal	37	7.445
Bihar	59	11.871
Chhattisgarh	12	2.414
Gujrat	1	0.201
Himachal	1	0.201
Jharkhand	15	3.018
Karnataka	1	0.201
Madhya Pradesh	22	4.427
Maharashtra	9	1.811
Nepal	3	0.604
Odisha	17	3.421
Punjab	2	0.402
Tamil Nadu	2	0.402
Telangana	1	0.201
Tripura	5	1.006
Uttar Pradesh	257	51.710
Uttarakhand	4	0.805
Total	497	100.000

Appendix 5: Status of Husbands' Employment

Husband's employment	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Company	33	6.640	6.640	6.640
Driver	57	11.469	11.469	18.109
Farming	96	19.316	19.316	37.425
Labour	203	40.845	40.845	78.270
No	70	14.085	14.085	92.354
Own	34	6.841	6.841	99.195
Priest	2	0.402	0.402	99.598
Study	2	0.402	0.402	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	497	100.000		

Note: The missing 15 values due to death are counted in No employment

Appendix 6: Status of Women's Employment

Women's employment	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Cattle	61	12.274	12.274	12.274
Farming	13	2.616	2.616	14.889
Labour	15	3.018	3.018	17.907
No	372	74.849	74.849	92.757
Tailoring	22	4.427	4.427	97.183
own	14	2.817	2.817	100.000
Missing	0	0.000		
Total	497	100.000		

Appendix 7: Age of Older Child Corresponding to Their Fathers' Employment Status

	Company	Driver	Farming	Labour	No	Own	Priest	Study
Valid	33	57	96	203	70	34	2	2
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	3.606	5.439	7.010	5.409	10.729	5.529	7.500	0.500
Std. Deviation	4.782	4.961	6.046	4.901	11.591	5.218	4.950	0.707
Minimum	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	4.000	0.000
Maximum	20.000	17.000	25.000	22.000	60.000	20.000	11.000	1.000

Appendix 8: Age of the Women at Marriage Corresponding to the Number of Children They Have

Age of Women at Marriage							
	0	1	2	3	4	5	7
Valid	98	139	199	47	12	1	1
Missing	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mean	20.469	20.554	19.246	19.383	18.500	18.000	15.000
Std. Deviation	4.177	4.354	4.108	4.332	3.802		
Minimum	11.000	7.000	9.000	10.000	14.000	18.000	15.000
Maximum	39.000	35.000	36.000	28.000	27.000	18.000	15.000

Appendix 9: Caste Status of Cross-Regional Families

Frequency of Castes		
Caste	Frequency	Percent
Brahmin	50	10.060
Chamar	30	6.036
Gurjar	7	1.408
Jat	72	14.487
OBC	27	5.433
Rajput	2	0.402
SC	8	1.610
Saini	14	2.817
Yadav	287	57.746
Total	497	100.000

**Note: OBC: other backward classes; SC: scheduled castes;
In no case women revealed their native caste.**

Appendix 10: Round 1 Interview Questions

Background/Pre-Marriage

1. Tell me about your life growing up—your family, siblings, schooling etc.

Marriage

2. At what age did you get married? How did the marriage proposal happen? What led you to choose this marriage?

3. What was your wedding ceremony like? How was the experience travelling from your hometown to here for the marriage like?

4. Were dowry or gifts exchanged during the marriage process? How did you feel about that? Should dowry be given in a marriage?

Post-Marriage/Transition

5. What did you know about Haryana or Mahendragarh before coming here?

6. What were some of the changes you first observed between your maternal and in-laws' house when you first came? Who taught you the household work here?

7. What language do you communicate with your in-laws in? Was there any language or communication issue initially?

8. In one word, please describe your experience living in Haryana. What do you like most here? What do you dislike most? Did you face any challenges? If yes, what kind of? Who helped you in overcoming them?

Relationships

9. Please describe your relationships with your in-laws. Are you able to communicate properly? Do they help you with household work?

10. Tell me about your friendships and social life here. Do you go out in the village or participate in local events?

Social/Cultural Adaptation

11. Any religious or cultural festivals you miss from your hometown? Do you get to celebrate festivals that are popular in your hometown or follow any customs from there?

Children

12. How long have you been married? Do you have children? Tell me about your experience of having children.

13. Who was with you when you had your first child? Was there anyone that helped you?

14. Any challenges you faced during pregnancy or delivery? How was the medical/hospital experience?

15. Please describe your relationship with your children. How do your in-laws treat

them?

16. Do you help your children with schoolwork? Tell me about their schooling experience.

17. Do you think your children are considered equal here compared to other children? How does having children affected your life?

Future Outlook

18. How do you envision your life and your children's future here in the coming years? What are your hopes or expectations? Do you hope for some changes in your life in the future?

19. Other cross-regional women are getting together to form a block level solidarity forum to help each other, would you like to join such a forum? Why? Would you need any special help from such a forum?

20. In what way would you be able to contribute to this forum? Will your in-laws let you join such a forum? If not, what kind of steps would you take for the same?

Appendix 11: Round 2 Interview Questions

- 1.** What motivated you to participate in this solidarity forum meeting?
- 2.** Can you describe some of the specific challenges you face as a woman in a cross-regional family?
- 3.** How has your understanding of your rights as a woman in a cross-regional family changed since joining the forum?
- 4.** What aspects of the forum do you find most valuable, and why?
- 5.** How has Empower People's leadership contributed to your experience in the forum?
- 6.** What new skills or knowledge have you gained through your involvement in the solidarity forum?
- 7.** In what ways can the forum help you overcome social challenges or cultural barriers?
- 8.** How has the forum helped you connect with local resources or support system so far?
- 9.** What economic opportunities, if any, have opened up for you through your participation in this forum?
- 10.** How has interacting with other women in similar situations influenced your perspective or approach to problems?
- 11.** Can you share an example of how you have supported another woman in the group?
- 12.** Can you describe a moment of empowerment you experienced as a result of participating in these meetings?
- 13.** What specific steps or actions have you taken as a result of participating in this forum?

- 14.** How has participation in this forum affected your relationships within your family?
- 15.** What challenges, if any, have you faced in regularly attending or participating in the forum meetings?
- 16.** How has the forum addressed issues specific to cross-regional families that you hadn't considered before?
- 17.** What changes have you observed in your community's attitude towards cross-regional families since the forum began?
- 18.** How do you envision your role in your family and community changing due to your involvement with this group?
- 19.** Looking ahead, what goals or changes would you like to see achieved through this collective effort?
- 20.** What aspirations do you have for expanding the impact of this forum beyond the block level?
- 21.** How do you think this forum could be improved to better serve women in cross-regional families?

Navigating Philanthropic Horizons:

Mapping and Documenting the
Transformations and Dynamics
of Stakeholder Relationships in
Education in Jharkhand

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Abstract

The evolving landscape of educational policymaking has witnessed a significant role for philanthropic organisations, which are increasingly shaping governance structures in India and across the globe. This research utilises critical discourse analysis to explore the expanding involvement of these non-state actors, particularly philanthropic entities, in shaping education policy within the context of Jharkhand. It examines how these organisations contribute across various stages of the policymaking process, including agenda-setting, program design, and evaluation.

The findings highlight how the collaborative efforts of these organisations are reshaping traditional frameworks of accountability, and enabling deeper integration into the policymaking process. This transition from a government-centric approach to a governance-oriented model underscores the growing influence of philanthropic organisations in educational policy and calls for a systematic enquiry into their roles, contributions, and legitimacy within the broader policy ecosystem.

Keywords: Philanthropy, Coalition, Education Policy, Globalisation, Privatisation

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1. Introduction

Despite a marked increase in social sector spending, India continues to lag behind the financial benchmarks set by NITI Aayog, which estimates that 13% of GDP is necessary to achieve the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs) by 2030. These goals encompass critical areas such as the eradication of poverty, provision of quality education and healthcare, promotion of gender equality, and climate action. The shortfall in government funding underscores a significant gap, suggesting that the public sector alone cannot fulfil these ambitious targets.

In response to this challenge, global reports—including those from the Global Monitoring for Education (GME) and UNICEF—have advocated for increased engagement of private actors, including philanthropic entities. Reflecting this trend, private philanthropy in India experienced a substantial growth rate of 10% in FY 2023, reaching INR 1.2 lakh crore (\$15 billion). This uptick, contrasted with a more modest 5% annual growth observed from FY 2018 to 2023, is largely attributable to a surge in family philanthropy (15%) and retail giving (12%).

Moreover, donors are increasingly inclined towards cooperative efforts, leveraging collective resources and expertise. Over the past decade,

India has witnessed a notable rise in collaborative initiatives such as networks, platforms, and pooled funds. These developments necessitate an examination of the evolving landscape of educational philanthropy and its implications.

This study addresses the following research questions:

- ◆ What discourses and accountability relationships emerge with the entry of philanthropic actors into the education sector?
- ◆ How does the involvement of these new players impact educational policymaking and its implementation?
- ◆ What accountability relationships and arrangements arise from this restructuring?

Recent years have seen a significant rise in coalitions within educational policymaking, which has profound implications for the governance and administration of education. This shift warrants a critical exploration of global policy contexts and frameworks, particularly through the lens of policy sociology. The work of Stephen J. Ball provides a foundational framework for this analysis. Initially focused on national policy contexts, as seen in his earlier work (Ball, 1990; Lingard, 1996), Ball's later contributions, such as *Big Policies/Small*

World (Ball, 1998) and Global Education Inc. (Ball, 2012a), have expanded to incorporate global dimensions of policy production and implementation. These analyses emphasise on the interplay between global and national policy dynamics and highlight the influence of transnational actors and coalitions.

In alignment with recent scholarship (Johnson and Smith, 2021; Martinez et al., 2020), this paper examines the privatisation of education policy as influenced by non-state actors and corporate entities, including philanthropic organisations. This trend reflects a broader shift towards governance models where private players increasingly shape and influence educational policy.

The study explores the implications of these coalitions at three levels: the discourse level, the organisational level,

and the level of individual educators. The discourse level examines how coalitions are framed in public discourse and media, including the visual and linguistic strategies employed to legitimise their roles. The organisational level investigates how these discourses are institutionalised within official policy frameworks, affecting organisational behaviour and policy implementation. Finally, the research considers the impact of these shifts on individual educators and their practice.

By employing critical discourse analysis, this paper aims to map the growing role of coalitions in education and assess how they are reshaping educational policymaking in India. This investigation contributes to a deeper understanding of the shifting landscape of educational governance and the increasing influence of non-state actors in public policy domains.

2. Review of Literature

The role of the non-state actors has implications for policy analysis as Ball (2012) states that “education policy analysis can no longer sensibly be limited to within the nation-state—the fallacy of methodological territorialism” and that it “must also extend its purview beyond the state and the role of multilateral agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to

include transnational business practices” (p. 93). Working through global policy networks, these non-state activities, and schooling in the meta-narrative of global productivity and competitiveness. With non-state actors dominating ‘framing’ and ‘determining’ the educational policy discourse, Ball (2017) also argues for locating educational policies in a Foucauldian construct of ‘dispositif,’

defined (Foucault, 1994) as “a resolutely heterogeneous combination of ‘discourses,’ institutions, architectural edifices, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific pronouncements, and philosophical, moral, and philanthropic propositions” (p. 299).

Working with parallel discourses such as performativity, public choice theory, accountability, and new managerialism, these global policy networks define both the policy rhetoric and problems, and suggest, at the same time, ‘magical solutions’ to the same (Lingard and Seller, 2013). As ‘efficiency,’ ‘performativity,’ and ‘productivity’ are considered vital to a well-run educational system, these ‘magical solutions’ often come in the form of ‘market solutions,’ opening up space for new philanthropic organisations, edu-business and ‘edu-preneurs’ as new stakeholders (Shah, 2013). Soon, these stakeholders also become legitimate policy community members and begin participating in government committees, actively setting the agenda through their participation. The National Education Policy (NEP), which emerged in 2020, was a product of large-scale public consultation, a deeper engagement with many key non-state actors and private players, intently contributing to constructing and enabling imagined educational futures.

Some studies in the recent past have also looked at the growing influence of venture philanthropy, or

‘philanthrocapitalism’ (Barkan, 2013; Ravitch, 2013), as these foundations have sought to reconstitute public education through practicing the same business patterns that their parent corporations use to launch new products or services (Barkan, 2013; Klonsky and Klonsky, 2008; Kovacs, 2010; Ravitch, 2013; Saltman, 2009; Scott, 2009). In the field of education, the Omidyar Network, Bridge International Academies, the Education Alliance, and Teach for India are good examples of growing philanthropic investments. Studies have also pointed out how these foundations and philanthropic organisations have often deployed “socio-technical imaginaries” through reports, grants, symposiums, etc., to create a certain discourse, drive investments, and transform educational practices. Education as a field has been critical to these “socio-technical imaginaries.”

Another phenomenon that has attracted substantial attention is the technical and financial investments made by major global technology companies and venture capital firms, via philanthropic initiatives, in global education. Banking on their “radically disruptive” (Rabin, 2015) visions of education, rooted in specific “socio-technical imaginaries,” they have sought to change the logic and language of education through various interventions and partnerships. These global and national coalitions enter education by providing governments with data infrastructure services, data-driven insights, and designing and commercialising new

products and services. Through their various “incubator” and “accelerator” programs, Silicon Valley firms such as Facebook, Google, IBM, Uber, Amazon, and Disney, AT& T, have sought to help more start-ups test and validate ideas and launch products into scalable businesses (Gomes, 2015). Additionally, companies like Facebook directly finance schools to formalise the teaching of coding skills (Fewkes and McCabe, 2012). Despite being competitors, Google and Facebook’s investments in BYJU could be an excellent example of how big Internet companies view this investment as a means of normalising their interests and language in education. Business Insider (2019) reported that the investments made in these companies were the highest in the history of the education industry by an extraordinary margin, with global investments reaching a staggering \$10.39 billion in 2019 and much of this investment came from tech companies.

Similar developments can be observed in India, too, where the state is increasingly conceptualised “as the commissioner and monitor of public services and broker of social and economic innovation, rather than a deliverer or even owner and funder” (Ball, 2007). The presence of organisations such as Akanksha Foundation, Teach for India, STIR Education, The Education Alliance, and the Indian Institute of School Leadership (IISL), funded by Dell, Ark, and Omidyar Network, in providing various educational services

and solutions, not only indicates the growing influence of these non-state actors, including philanthropies but also reveals a tendency where these players increasingly seek to set the policy agenda and narratives. This creation of the “Education Services Industry” has been made possible through “multiple privatisations” (Ball, 2007), expressed through several forms of privatisation existing simultaneously across various educational segments and hierarchies.

With these philanthropic organisations, think tanks, NGOs, and edu-businesses becoming a part of the “policy creation community” (Menter et al., 2004), policymaking has become a complex interweaving of the public and private in the workings of education. As these actors provide “solutions” and generate a discourse of “crisis” and “reform,” they transform “broader political-economic processes and national imaginaries” (Larner and Laurie, 2010). These factors have led to the emergence of the Global Education Industry (GEI), which introduced “market rationality” into various aspects of public service delivery (Verger et al., Khamsi, 2016). These processes have also resulted in various governments showing a willingness to engage with the private players and creating “business opportunities” within governments by creating “new forms of outsourcing, contracting, and public-private partnerships” (Ball, 2012). This newly introduced rationality favouring market-led solutions allows for-profit motives to be the main drivers for participation in education. It also

reconceptualises competition between businesses and conventional public providers in ways that incentivise public providers to act under “market rationality.”

The aforementioned global review of literature focuses on the impacts of privatisation on various aspects of education in an attempt to comprehend the motives of actors who have recently entered the field. Additionally, it shows how, due to close collaboration between governmental and non-governmental organisations, many non-state actors who were at the margins previously have now assumed a prominent role in formulating and implementing educational policies. It further systematically discusses the strategies these actors for exerting influence and producing “evidence” to promote preferred policy ideas, suggesting conceptual tools that resulted from policy advocacy networks and global policy communities.

3. Research Methods: Methodological and Conceptual Considerations

There is a growing recognition that educational policies are taking new directions as policy debates move from an earlier embrace of privatisation to corporatisation. The process began with the government opening new spaces by privatising public goods and services. While the overall public investment in education remained static, the government relied on the help of private players to fill the burgeoning demand and supply gap. The entry of new players and coalitions, further reconfigured critical aspects of the education policy and governance, transforming its foundational discourse and purposes. As a discursive space, the field of education today is dominated by grand narratives of innovation, scalability, acceleration,

value for money, and systemic change, as well as small tales of individual entrepreneurial risk-taking. While the private players in education only reshaped the boundaries between the public and the private (Ball and Youdell, 2008), the coalitions led to a significant transformation of public education and its re-conceptualisation as an education marketplace. Grimaldi and Ball (2021) argue that the entry of these coalitions, with their corporate logic and style, changed education in four fundamental ways; “(i) fields of visibility, that is, ways of seeing and perceiving, (ii) forms of rationality or, ways of thinking and questioning, (iii) dividing practices, that is, modes of acting, intervening and directing of the educational experience,

and (iv) modes of identity formation, or, ways of forming subjects.” This reconfiguration of education also preserves and promotes “the necessary mental conceptions of the world that facilitate productive activity, guide consumer choices, and simulate the creation of new technologies” (Harvey, 2014).

The number of interviews depends on whether “saturation of knowledge” (Bertaux, 1981, p. 37) has been reached. The type of saturation the researcher seeks is theoretical saturation (Morse, 1995). In total, 30 interviews were conducted to document and analyse how various educational practitioners make sense of their practices and how they perceive their organisation’s role in the educational ecosystem. The non-probability snowball sampling method (Parker et al., 2019) has been utilised for interviews, with networking and referral as its central characteristics. The method relies on referrals from initially sampled respondents to other participants believed to embody the characteristic of interest (Johnson, 2014). The snowball sampling method is ideally suited for constructing multi-perspective, emancipatory, participatory, and deconstructive interpretations of qualitative data and seeks no generalisations (Suri, 2011). While snowball sampling has methodological advantages like transcending geographic locations during restricted face-to-face communications, feasibility and cost, the inclusion of diverse participants, data collection with working professionals, etc. (Amri et

al., 2021), there are obvious limitations of the technique as the data collected through it cannot be considered random or representative; so, it may result in selection bias and external and internal validity limitations (Valdez and Kaplan, 1999; Moore and Hagedorn, 2001). However, probability sampling seems impractical when the research objective is to obtain systematic information on how people create meanings, and snowball sampling may be more valid in such circumstances (Cohen and Arieli, 2011). Therefore, the researcher employed his professional network and prior experience in education to establish initial links, with sampling momentum developing to capture a growing chain of participants. The sampling will be concluded when theoretical saturation is reached.

In addition to collecting primary data through face-to-face interviews, data points were gathered from interviews with thought leaders and leaders published in print and social media. In these interviews, the educational leaders and founders freely expressed their perspectives on education and how they saw their various initiatives transforming the face of education. These interviews were also crucial in capturing the debates around challenges, complex negotiations, and visions that these thought leaders and founders imagined were of paramount importance.

Deeply implicated in reimagining, reframing, and unfolding a new future, these coalitions also produce imaginaries in material reality as

they seek to influence individual and collective identities and the development of narratives, policies, and institutions. In Jasanoff and Kim (2009), this conceptual category, summarised as “imagination, viewed as an organised field of social practices, serves as a critical ingredient in making social order (Appadurai, 1996; Taylor, 2004)”. These “socio-technical imaginaries” are always “co-produced” (Jasanoff, 2004) within and with other discourse(s). The state, corporations, and other entities use the analytic power of these imaginaries to justify their views and actions, impacting new investments, practices, and policies.

The capacity to reimagine the future has become a constitutive element in the practices of many global media and education coalitions. Mager (2017) has analysed the workings of Google, Facebook, Apple, Amazon, and so on, in producing the collective and publicly shared visions of the future, privileging the “techno-euphoric interpretation of Internet technologies as driving forces for economic and social progress” (pg., 56). By reimagining a future, these “socio-technical imaginaries” get deeply implicated in “how education in future might be, could be, and perhaps even should be, ... and ... might shape and limit the everyday practices of all those who inhabit it” (Williamson, 2017; p.18).

As the study deals with analytical concepts that straddle the constantly changing structure and agency divide, combining soft, subjective dimensions of subjects with the hard

policy styles, organisational behaviour, and institutional culture of the field of education, an interpretive approach is found to be best suited for the study. Using the analytical framework of corporatisation (Moeller, 2020), the field of education in India is mapped to reveal the corporatisation process and expand coalitions. Once such a field is established, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is used to investigate the “socio-technical imaginaries” deployed by these actors. CDA is a comprehensive framework that focuses on a critical theory of the social world, the role of discourse in forming and representing a given social reality, and a mechanism that enables individuals with the discourse to identify, comprehend, and explain such reality. It is used to examine taken-for-granted assumptions about discourse, education, and society and how a particular discourse embeds itself into social practices through ways of interacting (genres), ways of representing (discourse), and ways of being (style) (Fairclough, 2003).

As visual and non-verbal forms of representation are widely used, they are also analysed using critical discourse analysis methods. The emphasis here is on investigating how human subjects produce or receive the objects underlying discourse and the socio-economic conditions that govern these processes (Janks, 1997). The study also deploys the concept of intertextuality—instances of texts linking to other texts—to reveal the absences (what is not said or acknowledged) in the

discourse patterns (Farrelly, 2019). Semi-structured interviews (Kvale, 1996) with key members in the field of education, which includes start-up founders, tutors, facilitators, educationists, executives of companies, and individuals working with educational philanthropies and the not-for-profit sector, were conducted to juxtapose who gets in and out of these imaginaries, where boundaries are created and maintained, and how things are hierarchically related within an imaginary.

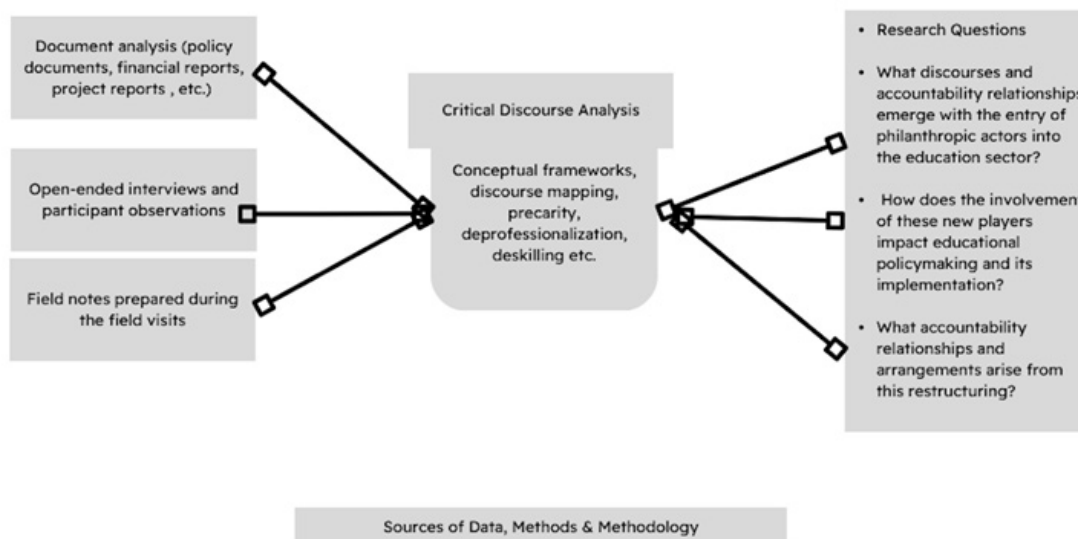
The study takes a text-oriented and context-based approach to discourse analysis. By combining the works of Fairclough (1992, 2003, 2013) and Bernstein (2000, 2004), it attempts to analyse the social relationships, identities, and figured worlds that emerge from a network of discourse patterns. Bernstein and Fairclough emphasise the social-theoretical

sense of “discourse” that examines the fundamental relationship between power, social groups, forms of consciousness and practices, and their reproductions. Through close analysis of educational policy texts, government financial plans, company documents, annual reports, and periodic research documents, etc., the study seeks a deeper understanding of how power and policy are interrelated in the context of the growing role of coalitions in India. The analysis focuses on what values, goals, and socially situated representations of the field these discourses generate (Ball, 1990; Fairclough, 1995a) and how this new understanding of the field positions people in specific ways. As the interpretations and representations in the field of education happen at all levels, local, institutional, and societal, the data analysis is also carried out at three levels: text, discourse practice, and social interaction.

4. Data Analysis and Discussion

The Computer-Aided Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS), ATLAS.ti is used for “defining, categorising, theorising, explaining, exploring, and mapping” (Ritchie and Spencer, 2002) the collected data. The study utilises thematic analysis and category coding processes to analyse the interviews and structured-unstructured observation data. As the kinds of analysis discussed here are the result of interaction between the researcher and the data, “between the observer and the observed” (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998, p. 40), every effort is made to present the viewpoint of participants as truthfully as possible so that it does not “erase how the researcher’s privileges and preconceptions may shape the analysis” (Charmaz, 2014, p. 13).

Figure 1: Thematic Analysis of the Coding Process



A total of 832 codes and 1200 quotations resulted from a detailed analysis of 208 artifacts, including 30 interviews, 89 documents (speeches, policy documents, media, meeting minutes, instruction manuals, financial reports, projection reports, etc.), and 99 images. The software ATLAS.ti was also a great help for various other functions such as sorting data, studying quotations, and creating conceptual maps that greatly “facilitated the process of understanding the underlying meanings behind the gathered evidence” (Rambaree, 2014).

With a large student consumer base in both K-12 and higher education, the field of education in India has become a crowded marketplace. There is a huge market for the sector to leverage and grow, as 36% of India’s population is young and learning. It now incorporates not only Indian philanthropic organisations but also philanthropic wings run by transnational companies such as Google, Facebook, IBM, and Amazon. Favourable policies, driven by a critique of the existing education system, have made the emergence of these philanthropic organisations possible.

Initiatives such as Digital India, Start-up India, Make in India, and Smart Cities have increasingly positioned the Indian state as a partner or facilitator in educational policymaking and its implementation. Since 2014, almost all new policy initiatives have been positioned as a shift in the government’s mindset from issuing authority to business partner, and philanthropy has been conceptualised as a critical instrument in all of these educational interventions. From an exclusive start-up policy that provides 100% tax exemption for the first three years on profits (GoI, 2016b) to a Digital India policy that envisions the transformation of India into a digitally empowered

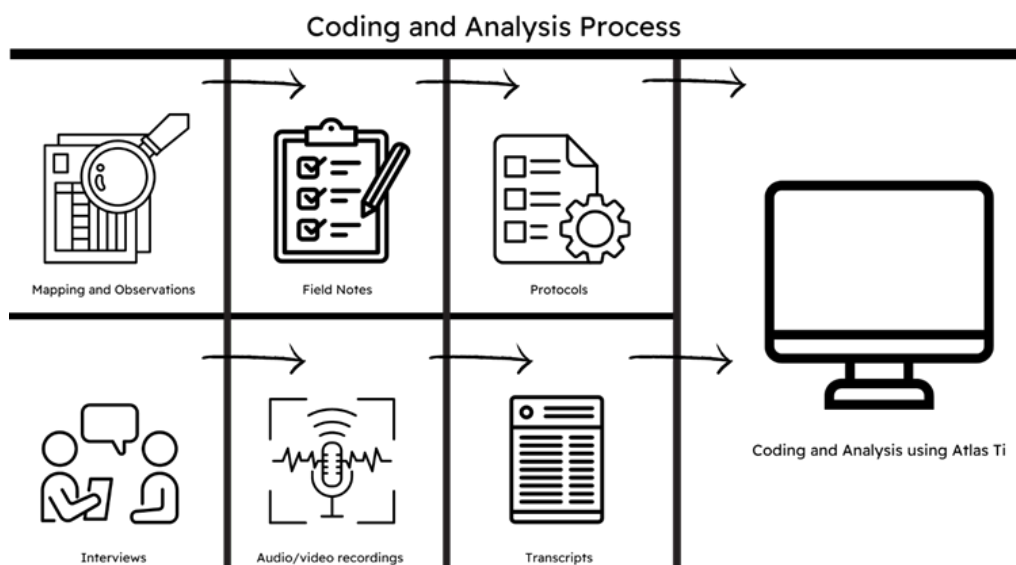
society and a knowledge economy (Gol, 2015b), these favourable policies have helped the field attract a large number of players.

The actors, who have become prominent, are philanthropic organisations run by multinational companies, corporate social responsibility (CSR) wings of companies, think tanks, venture capitalists, tech publications, and tech-education wings of non-technology companies. Some of these players also play overlapping intermediary roles that directly or indirectly affect the field of education. The expanding influence of these coalition players can also be seen through the business opportunities created within the government by outsourcing, contracting, or public-private partnerships. From Google announcing the training of one million teachers in India (Washington, 2020) to the Government of Tamil Nadu partnering with Coursera to skill 50,000

young persons (Hariharan, 2020), these coalitions illustrate new partnerships in educational delivery and governance. Private players are also growing in the educational policymaking process, with both the central and state governments actively seeking funds and expertise from the private sector (Niti Aayog, 2021).

This reconfiguration of education by coalition players has implications for educational administration and governance in India. As the field is increasingly dominated by actors driven by the corporate logic of profit maximisation, the processes of privatisation and commercialisation have also entered the field and become integral to its operating logic (Ball, 2007; Molnar, 2005). By taking a public position of a more competitive, deregulated model of public education, these actors seek to enhance the influence of private interests and organisations in educational policymaking.

Figure 2: A Summary of the Process of Coding and Analysis



4.1 Philanthropic Organisations as Knowledge Brokers, Corporatisation and Remaking of Education

The reconfiguration of education can be seen in the proposed official reforms and is mentioned in various policy documents. The NITI Aayog, India's policy advisory think tank, argues while outlining the gaps in its report titled "Systemic Transformation of School Education: The SATH-E Experience (2021)".

"Our joint effort through the SATH-E (Sustainable Action for Transforming Human Capital – Education) project in three States, and the learnings from work done in four additional States, show that current public education systems are broken at a fundamental level across multiple areas and need significant revamp."

The report also laments the incapacity of state governments to implement the proposed reforms, which necessitates the participation of private actors, including non-governmental organisations, foundations, philanthropic organisations, CSRs, and corporations. Frequently, private entities wishing to participate in education align their objectives with state governments or implementing bodies and agencies like the NITI Aayog. For instance, the NITI Aayog report mentions the following five reforms as its five pillars in the states of Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha. Several other states in

India have also embarked on a similar transformation journey, including (but not limited to) Rajasthan, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, and Andhra Pradesh;

"Specifically, the proposed interventions are founded on five pillars: (i) focus on academic reforms, (ii) strengthening human capacity, (iii) strengthening administrative systems, (iv) driving accountability, and (v) creating a shared vision for change."

The CEO of NITI Aayog praised the knowledge partners involved in the program even though there is little evidence of the effectiveness of these measures, which were expected to be completed within 8–10 years.

"In collaboration with our knowledge partners—Boston Consulting Group and Piramal Foundation, SATH-E champions a systemic approach to transformation, which prioritises simultaneous academic and governance reforms. In the first one and a half years of Project SATH-E, the States have championed bold and path-breaking reforms like school consolidation, teacher rationalisation, and large-scale learning enhancement programs."

With the increasing participation of non-state actors in education, the role of coalitions as intermediaries has become

crucial; it has evolved from a peripheral role to consulting or advising governments, where they actively push for specific reforms aligned with their ideologies. Many private players have a role in all spheres of education in India.

From the NIPUN to SATH-E, philanthropies enter into direct agreements with governments or form partnerships with organisations such as the Central Square Foundation (CSF), Pratham, and other think tanks and public policy entities. It is worth asking whether the government’s reliance on these philanthropies prioritises short-term gains over long-term sustainability, given that these philanthropies and their investments are often part of translational networks that promote the ideology of corporatisation. These players often enter the domains of education as intermediaries. As “knowledge brokers,” these actors perform “all the activity that links decision makers with researchers, facilitating their interaction so that they can better understand each other’s goals and professional cultures, influence each other’s work, forge new partnerships, and promote the use of evidence-based decision-making” (Lomas, 2007: 131). In effect, they build “a bridge between the research and policy communities” (Nutley et al., 2007, p. 63). In the context of education, these intermediaries may include corporate charities, CSR organisations, businesses, industry, or even civil society organisations.

SATH-E, a program started under the aegis of Niti Aayog in Jharkhand, was initially a project where consulting partners, including philanthropies were appointed to initiate “state transformation programs” by acting as advisory and implementing agencies. Beginning in 2018, Niti Aayog and the state government of Jharkhand decided to share the cost of external partners such as BCG and the Piramal Foundation, and the budget for the state was decided as INR 9 crore per year or INR 45 crore over five years. This program resulted in the Jharkhand government deciding to close nearly 6000 schools under the rationalisation or school consolidation policy recommended under SATH-E. This is despite the fact that most of these schools were opened in Adivasi habitations after a long demand.

JHARKHAND INNOVATION CHALLENGE (ACHIEVING NIPUN GOALS)

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EARLY LEARNING (SUPPORTED BY
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Out-sourcing educational policymaking and implementation to large coalition of philanthropies and global-national. An example of FLN implementation in Jharkhand

These philanthropic funds, working with other likeminded organisations, have built a thriving enterprise around government contracts. This is also facilitated by how educational bureaucracy in India has historically been formulated, resulting in enormous capability gaps that these organisations currently fill. As governments lack in-house capabilities to constantly push their schemes and programs into the public imagination through various mediums, these philanthropic organisations become the default options for politicians and bureaucrats. Working in corporate style, these firms see these interests as investments and often compete with each other to provide reports, projections, plans, execution headlines, and tweetable content to the state governments and their politicians and bureaucrats. These firms also work as a safeguard against public anger; often, politicians blame these firms to dissuade any criticism directed towards them. A program manager with a philanthropic organisation explains;

“The big advantage of philanthropic organisations coming and working with the government, as far as the government is concerned, these organisations, as you know, work as the perfect tools, like, you know, if they need to push something through, they will use their thing as a means to get their work done. Also, they will easily fire them if anything does not work out, saying they were responsible. That was their recommendation.”

These philanthropic organisations work as safeguards when governments want to try something new or something, which was previously controversial. With their network in media and skills, these organisations help governments create a positive perception of these schemes and programs. Also, these organisations provide the necessary flexibility, as they are not attached to any specific ideology or a particular way of doing things and guarantee specific outcomes.

As knowledge brokers, these philanthropic organisations first enter the discourse with their pro bono work for governments and even show a willingness to partially fund the projects. In many cases, their work with one government often contradicts what they have done with another state government. For instance, Piramal Foundation for Education Leadership (PFEL) partnered with NITI Aayog to improve education indicators in two aspirational Districts of Jharkhand, through its Gandhi Fellows. It worked in partnership with the Government of Jharkhand and NITI Aayog to improve Education Indicators in Pakur and Sahibganj districts. While the Aspirational Districts Transformation Programme (ADTP) claims to support the District Collectors and District Education Officials to develop the capacities of BRCs (Block Resource Persons) and CRCs (Cluster Resource Persons) through supervision, it leaves the task of such support to the Gandhi fellows, who are often fresh graduates with no experience in education. Deploying these supervisors

over critical academic staff restructures the accountability hierarchies, where the officials now report the data to a fellow, appointed by a third party. This whole exercise turns BRCs and CRCs into merely data collectors or gatherers who have to follow the instructions given by the fellows. The Foundational Learning and Numeracy (FLN) program in Jharkhand has followed a similar trajectory where the state has handed over its implementation duties to a private consultancy firm. The policies related to FLN are now decided in a program unit consisting of private funders like USAID and CARE, with the government merely playing a peripheral role in driving this crucial policy reform.

A more national-level analysis reveals that these philanthropies, working with consultancy firms, transnational NGOs, and other organisations, often deliver favourable recommendations to the respective governments. For example, between 2014 and 2017, BCG, Central Square Foundation (CSF), and Samagra (a think tank that works with state governments) attempted to advocate for various educational reforms in government schools, including consolidation, hiring of contract teachers, and implementing technology in classrooms. They recommended sharply differing reforms for Delhi and Haryana, despite being neighbouring states, and sharing the same contexts and having comparable educational indicators. It has been observed that these philanthropic initiatives often advocate for different types of “systems”

reforms in different states and frequently use “pro bono” work to enter the education systems.

These philanthropic organisations build a network of connections and products through their work with the governments, which they can monetise at any time or use to expand similar work in other states. They not only receive government funding, but also get other stakeholders heavily invested in system reform to advance their objectives. Piramal Foundation’s work with the Jharkhand government illustrates how this process commoditises the educational process and prepares educators for more such interventions. In Jharkhand, the Foundation received funding from the BCG, and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation to start its impact work. During the implementation of its Quality Improvement in Leadership Programme, it discovered that by incorporating non-profits into the implementation process, it could earn a substantial amount of revenue on a sharing basis. It established a special project division to distinguish itself from other government-run projects and implemented weekly tests and monitoring mechanisms to refine its model. It quickly made the model scalable, aggressively marketed it, and now submits competitive bids for similar projects with various state governments, international organisations, and donors.

Piramal’s work with NITI Aayog’s SATH-E initiative was commercially successful, and resulted in developing a decision-making framework that advised

governments to close schools whose enrolment and teacher–student ratio fell below a specified threshold. As an independent philanthropic organisation had provided these recommendations, state governments could present them as ‘objective suggestions’ and avoid being singled out for these “reforms” or turning them into political ones. As a result, schools in Jharkhand with 20 to 25 students or one to two teachers were closed. Philanthropic organisations have pushed for reforms such as opening central command centres and data centres, initiating curriculum reforms in which subjects such as entrepreneurship are introduced, and schools are consolidated, and so on. It is doubtful

that these reforms will endure once these philanthropies withdraw from their implementation, as their interventions neither generate institutional memory nor ensure institutional change. This is the story of virtually every ministry and government department of Jharkhand where these philanthropic organisations act as shadow policymakers. They frequently amplify system gaps with their knowledge and expertise as intermediaries and imprint their institutional logic on the public education system. By connecting the private sector to education governance, they prepare the public sector for more private inventions through their role as aggregators (Caves et al., 2021).

4.2 Corporate Imprinting through Partnership: Role of Philanthropies as Policy Intermediaries in Educational Governance

The entry of various players has made education more complex, making intermediaries and their networks crucial for conceptualising educational policies and their implementation (Piopiunik and Ryan, 2012; Hoeckel and Schwartz, 2010). These players function as intermediaries, defined as “organisations that occupy the space in-between at least two other parties and primarily function to mediate or manage change in both those parties,” and are increasingly involved in every facet of the educational process. These organisations tend to operate

independently of the two parties and provide distinct value beyond what the parties alone could develop or amass. The National Education Policy (NEP, 2020) further reinforces the roles of these intermediaries by envisaging “extensive use of technology in teaching and learning, removing language barriers, increasing access, and education planning and management (p. 56)”. Under the NEP implementation, various policies, schemes, and programs favourable to non-state actors have been launched and executed by the

NCERT, CBSE, NIOS, and several other organisations and institutions at the national and state levels. Philanthropies, working as policy intermediaries, seek to reorganise and reconstitute education. Honig (2004) identified five dimensions along which intermediaries differ: level of government, composition, location, scope, and funding sources, as well as their expanding role in serving specific purposes such as policy implementation.

In the Indian context, the role of policy intermediaries has increased over the last two decades, with several new players entering the space of education with diverse interests. Supported by a solid national and translational network, these players act not just as consultants or advisors but also actively participate in implementing educational policies, and have the financial and narrative power to influence education outcomes. Even international organisations such as UNESCO now depend on such partners to fund their initiatives across developing countries. These organisations openly seek funding from their corporate partners, as one of the UN's websites explains what these players get in return.

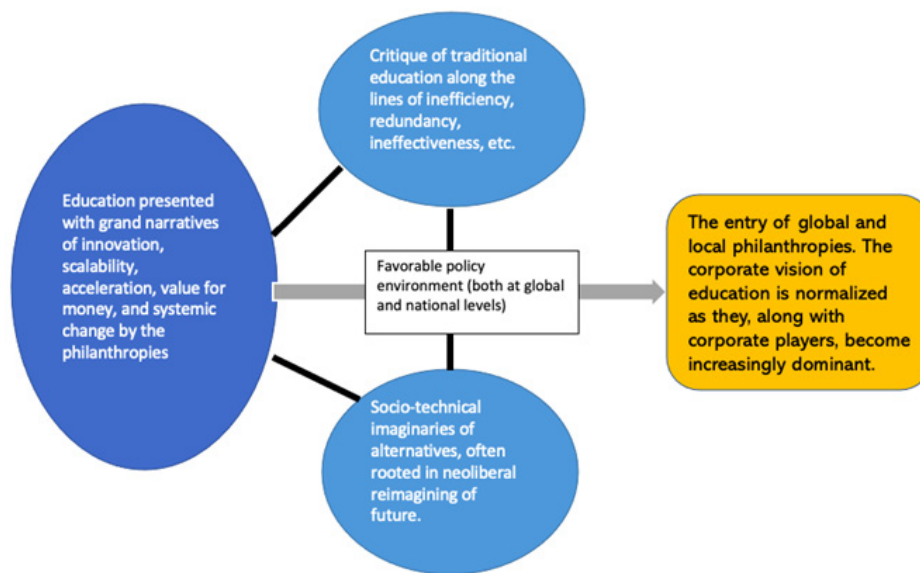
"The benefits that UNESCO brings to partnerships may be that UNESCO has an established reputation in its fields of

competence on which is built a strong global brand and UNESCO's role as an impartial interlocutor, particularly within governmental and academic circles..." (p. 18)

An example of policy intermediaries playing a decisive role in shaping educational goals can be understood by the agreement signed by Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO, and Nokia. It stated that Nokia would donate between USD five and 10 million to "promote the use of mobile technologies to further the objectives of Education for All (EFA)." Later, UNESCO issued a report supporting the use of mobile technology in education. However, UNESCO, in its report, "The 2015 Global Monitoring Report—Education for All 2000–2015: Achievements and Challenges", acknowledged that the study was flawed, stating, "It is possible that those who participated in the survey had more favourable opinions of mobile reading than those who did not (p. 150)." While this may not always be the case, it cannot be denied that corporate players frequently have hidden interests when investing in public goods such as education, a practice known as "shadow investing."

Figure 3: Normalisation of Corporatisation as a Discourse: Meshing Discourse of Ineffectiveness and Inefficiency with Socio-Technical Imaginaries 2010

Relying on ever-newer imageries, corporate interests in education enter the picture in many ways. Procurement is one way that philanthropic organisations make their presence felt. This process involves schools and educational departments obtaining services from various philanthropic organisations. For instance, the Jharkhand government had signed agreements with Edu Comp, Vodafone and ILFS to procure their digital services—software and hardware, and necessary licensing.



Similarly, branding is another strategy through which corporate interests enter the public education space. Many state governments now allow government-run schools to be adopted by corporate players (Satya Bharati Schools: several government schools in Haryana were adopted by Bharati Airtel and rebranded as Satya Bharati Schools) and public sector units. Under these arrangements, these schools get moulded into corporate style, and the focus shifts to making children more employable. In Jharkhand, Tatas and Vedanta have adopted many government schools under their philanthropic initiatives, along with Vodafone, which branded government schools supported by it as LOTB (Learn Out of the Box) schools.

The third strategy through which philanthropies make their presence felt is through lobbying. It often involves multiple players who are stakeholders in administering and providing education. This is a long-drawn process and may even require years for the outcome to show. One fine example of such a lobbying effort could be the “e-learning—Advance Digital Jharkhand Initiative of Government with Adaptive

Modules” program launched by the Jharkhand government. Pratham initially piloted this initiative in a few Jharkhand schools, assessed by J-PAL using the Teaching at the Right Level framework. Then, organisations such as CARE, BCG, Central Square Foundation, and Piramal Foundation joined the effort. After years of sustained lobbying efforts, the government finally agreed to distribute 21,000 tablets across schools in Jharkhand to promote digital learning.

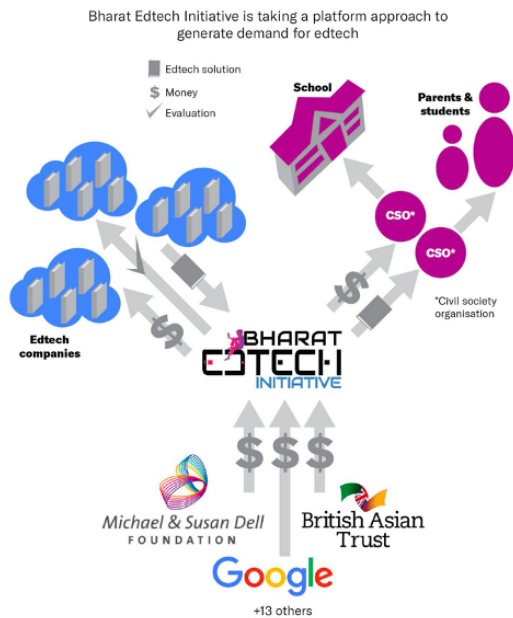
Credentialing is another method for integrating students, educators, and educational systems into a specific learning ecology. Google Education, Microsoft Education, and Khan academy, under their philanthropic initiatives, administer certification programs for teachers and schools. Under these initiatives, teachers receive certification as Google or Microsoft educators and are fully integrated into the system. Then comes the network effect, as these certifications can only be used within the Google or Microsoft networks. These certifications or credentials serve as channels through which education systems are trained in a specific learning ecology. As Google and Microsoft are corporations, the corporate imprint remains strong in these situations.

Philanthropies, as policy intermediaries, also provide technical management and support services to governments and other vital stakeholders in the education domain. Much of the digital infrastructure that the government of Jharkhand has created in the last few

years was through the help of technical partners like Piramal Foundation, BCG, Central Square Foundation (CSF) and others. The governments also lack technological integration and alignment capacity and need support from external players. Players like Google, Microsoft, Dell, HCL, Infosys, Wipro, TCS, etc., have helped governments and other stakeholders with technological integration and alignment.

The changing face of educational governance as a multistakeholder effort brings together various actors that support governments and other entities engaged at numerous governance levels, in diverse roles, and the public and private sectors. The analysis shows that public infrastructure is one of the critical areas that facilitates the entry of intermediaries into educational spaces, aiding policy conceptualisation and implementation (Honig, 2004). As education is increasingly being mediated by technology and being digitised, providing technical assistance or resources (Reckhow and Snyder, 2014) is another area where the public education system requires support from these external players. These partnerships promote dialogue (Williamson, 2014) between public and private players in education. Analysing these intermediaries in educational governance networks is pertinent when multiple partners, including public and private-sector actors, shape and reshape education in developing countries (Blackmore, 2011).

A non-venture edtech model



Bharat EdTech Initiative: A philanthropy-led Rural

Infrastructure is becoming more pervasive as the education system increasingly relies on digital infrastructure like smart glasses, tablets, internet connectivity, etc. In the digital age, as Perrotta et al. (2021) describe, infrastructure happens through four types of integration between digital applications and the classroom: (i) automation, (ii) hypervisibility and control, (iii) synchronisation, and (iv) cross-platform-isation. This infrastructure has serious implications for existing pedagogical practices, as these digital infrastructures tend to decide the “rule of participation” for various activities, permitting other parties to enter the dialogue and introduce data interoperability to the process. It unbundles many previously integrated processes and prepares

them for commercialisation and corporatisation. The Bharat EdTech Initiative, a rural EdTech program, is a prime example of how philanthropies enter the field of education to make space for their own profitable investments. It is funded by large global and national philanthropic organisations, that provide everything from funding, to solutions to even conducting an evaluation, with an explicit objective of “unleashing learning potential of students by driving effective, and equitable EdTech access as well as adoption.”

One concrete example of infrastructure and corporate imprinting can be seen in the case of the Jharkhand government. The Jharkhand government has not been able to increase public investment in education, but at the same time, private participation in education has increased substantially. It has partnered with many corporate players to increase the efficiency and productivity of the system and integrate schooling into the larger economy. The government has partnered with entities like ILFS on technology in schools, where significant investments were made but all that infrastructure is laying unused in absence of regular maintenance and capacity building of teachers/master trainers. The analysis demonstrates that education in general, and higher education in particular, is moving toward an “omni-channel” approach, in which the role of coalitions with corporate interests has become incredibly influential.

5. Conclusion And Implications

The present study attempts to present a picture of the evolving Indian educational landscape, revealing a dynamic interplay of diverse public and private actors. The educational marketplace has witnessed the proliferation of philanthropic initiatives, in which both global giants and indigenous players actively participate. This growth is further driven by government initiatives such as Digital India, which reflect and encourage collaborative partnerships. The influential role of philanthropic organisations as knowledge brokers raises critical questions regarding the sustainability and long-term impact of their interventions and partnerships to realise systemic change. Corporate imprints intertwine private interests with public education, either through branding, lobbying, credentialing, or technical support services. The analysis of the study highlights the emergence of an “omni-channel” approach in education. The trajectory of India’s education sector underscores the need for careful examination of the impact of such intermediaries. In such a scenario, it becomes essential to ensure that technological advancements and private-sector participation align with the overarching goal of providing inclusive and quality education to India’s diverse student populace.

This study offers a critical contribution to the theory of education by exploring the multifaceted impact of philanthropic interventions within the Indian educational landscape, shedding light on several key dynamics:

- ◆ **Political Economy of Education and Philanthropy’s Imaginaries:** The increasing influence of philanthropic organisations in India’s education sector is reshaping the educational discourse. These external interests introduce new “imaginaries” – alternative visions or aspirations – that often align with broader global agendas of economic liberalisation and corporate governance, thus shifting the focus from traditional public education goals such as equity and inclusive growth towards more privatised, outcome-driven systems. These philanthropic ventures are not merely altruistic but form a part of a larger political economy, interacting with government policies and corporate actors to redefine education’s role in society. Thus, pushing for an education system that is tailored to producing human capital for the global market.
- ◆ **Corporatisation of Education and Accountability Discourses:** Philanthropic

involvement tends to bring with it a corporatised model of education, where schools are managed with the same efficiency, accountability, and performance metrics that are applied in business. The discourse of accountability is embedded within this framework, with a strong emphasis on standardised testing, performance metrics, and measurable outputs, which often subsumes the humanistic and cultural goals of education under economic imperatives.

- ◆ **Impact on Labour and Education Workforce:** The increasing corporatisation of education has far-reaching implications for teachers, administrators, and other education professionals. With the infusion of philanthropic resources comes a restructuring of educational labour. Teaching, for example, is increasingly viewed through a performative lens, where the value of educators is measured by student outcomes, particularly in terms of test scores and employability. This leads to the precarious commodification of teaching labour, where educators may be incentivised or penalised based on narrow performance criteria. Additionally, administrative roles are redefined to align more with corporate management practices rather than educational leadership, reducing autonomy and potentially stifling innovation in pedagogical approaches.
- ◆ **Subjectivity and Control Mechanisms in Education:** The imposition of new philanthropic-driven policies and structures introduces forms of subjectivity that prioritises control and compliance. New practices to monitor, measure, and control educational outcomes are institutionalised, changing the way educators, students, and administrators engage with their work. This surveillance-based approach introduces technologies of control, such as data-driven decision-making and constant performance reviews, which reshape educational practices and redefine success in more mechanistic and quantifiable terms. As a result, education becomes less about holistic development and more about achieving pre-set targets.

In conclusion, the growing role of philanthropic interests in India's education system has contributed to a significant shift towards a corporatised, market-driven model. While such interventions are often framed as progressive, they may undermine broader social and educational goals, particularly in terms of equitable access and the cultivation of a more inclusive, democratic society.

6. Declaration Of Conflict Of Interest

I, Anurag Shukla, the author of this report titled Navigating Philanthropic Horizons: Mapping and Documenting the Transformations and Dynamics of Stakeholder Relationships in Education in Jharkhand, prepared under a fellowship provided by the Indian School of Development Management (ISDM), under the CPID Research Fellow Program, hereby declare that I have no conflict of interest in relation to this report.

I confirm that:

1. I have no personal, financial, or professional relationship with individuals or organizations that may benefit from the findings, analysis, or recommendations provided in this report.
2. Any affiliations, if applicable, that I have with related institutions or stakeholders have been disclosed to ISDM prior to the commencement of this research.
3. The views and recommendations expressed in this report are entirely my own, and they have been arrived at through independent and unbiased analysis.
4. In cases where external data, sources, or research have been used, full and appropriate citations have been made to avoid any form of intellectual property infringement.
5. If, during the course of this research, a potential conflict of interest emerged, it was immediately disclosed and resolved in accordance with ISDM's conflict of interest policies.

This declaration is made in good faith, and I take full responsibility for the contents and integrity of the research presented in this report.

Signed,
Anurag Shukla
27/09/2024

7. Declaration Of Generative AI And AI-Assisted Technologies

“In preparing this manuscript, I have not used AI tools, and I take full responsibility for the content. ”

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9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Defining the Corporate in Education

Concepts	Definition
Corporations	Corporations are businesses that are legally separate from their owners or shareholders
Corporate foundations	The philanthropic/CSR arms of corporations
Corporatisation	A dynamic set of processes and power relations through which for-profit actors influence education
Corporate networks and lobbying groups	Collectives comprised of corporations, corporate foundations, and other private groups that seek to influence public education
Corporate-style	A descriptor for understanding a set of characteristics attributed to corporations
Corporate power	A specific form of power generated by the interactions between corporations, corporate foundations, the state, and other social and institutional actors

Source: Accounting for the Corporate: An Analytic Framework for Understanding Corporations in Education by Kathryn Moeller (2020), p. 233

Table 2: Types of Corporate Actors in Education

Types of Corporate Actors	Descriptions
Non-educational corporations	Companies that influence the field of educational policy and practice through corporate social responsibility, corporate philanthropy, and/or lobbying
Technology corporations	These corporations sell educational technologies but are not education companies
Education corporations	Companies whose entire business is education
Venture capital firms	For-profit venture capital firms that invest directly in for-profit educational companies
Investment banking firms	Firms that invest in education, particularly EdTech and knowledge services companies, and provide financial advisory services
Limited liability corporations	These entities engage in for-profit investing, commonly understood as venture capital, particularly in EdTech; some combine this with philanthropic activities, often termed venture philanthropy

Appendix 2: Qualitative Interview Guide/Schedule Used for Conducting Interviews

Introduction:

Thank you for participating in this research study. The purpose of this questionnaire is to understand the intricate dynamics of community philanthropy and its impact on accountability relationships between the state, people, and civil society organisations. Your insights will contribute to a deeper understanding of how philanthropy shapes the distribution of welfare responsibilities between the state and communities.

Section 1: General Information

- 1.1** Please provide your name and contact information (optional).
- 1.2** Can you briefly describe your involvement or experience with philanthropy, community organisations, or government initiatives related to welfare?

Section 2: Perceptions and Understanding

- 2.1** How would you define community philanthropy in the context of social and welfare activities?
- 2.2** In your opinion, how has community philanthropy evolved over the years, and what factors have influenced its development?

Section 3: Accountability Relationships

- 3.1** From your perspective, how does community philanthropy impact the accountability relationship between the state and the people it serves?
- 3.2** In what ways does community philanthropy influence the accountability of civil society organisations to the communities they serve?
- 3.3** Can you share specific examples or instances where community philanthropy has strengthened or strained accountability relationships between the state, people, and civil society organisations?

Section 4: State and Community Welfare

4.1 How does community philanthropy contribute to meeting state welfare targets, and in what ways does it replace the state's role in welfare provision?

4.2 In your experience, what are the key challenges and opportunities associated with community philanthropy taking on welfare responsibilities that were traditionally fulfilled by the state?

4.3 How do state institutions perceive and respond to the involvement of community philanthropy in welfare activities?

Section 5: Community Empowerment

5.1 How does community philanthropy contribute to empowering local communities in decision-making processes related to welfare?

5.2 Are there instances where community philanthropy has led to increased self-sufficiency and decreased dependency on state-funded welfare programs?

5.3 In your view, how can community philanthropy be optimised to enhance community empowerment without compromising a state's responsibilities?

Section 6: Recommendations and Future Perspectives

6.1 Based on your experiences and insights, what recommendations would you propose to enhance the positive impact of community philanthropy on accountability relationships and welfare provision?

6.2 How do you foresee the future of community philanthropy in relation to state, people, and civil society organisations and accountability dynamics?

Appendix 3: Name, Position and Organisation of the Respondents

Name	Organisation	Role/Position
Suraj Kumar	Room to Read	Regional Director
Smriti Gupta	UNICEF (Jharkhand)	Program Manager
Shailesh Upadhyay	Localism	Fellow
Chandan Kumar	Pratigya	Founder
Kiran	Localism	Fellow
Smriti Mishra	Language Learning Foundation	Senior Program Manager
Anustup Nayak	Central Square Foundation	Director
Shadab Ahmed	STIR Education	Director
Bikas Chetry	Independent researcher	Independent researcher
Siri Sriram	Anandi Foundation	Program Manager
Shailesh Kumar	Pratibimb Foundation	Founder
Pragya	Digantar Foundation	Program Manager
Nazrul Haque	Azim Premji Foundation	Program Manager
Priyank	Independent Researcher	Independent Researcher
Soumya Jha	Community Radio Station	Program Manager
Manju Srivastava	Adhyayan Education Foundation	Director
Abhishek Doshi	The Learner's Company	Founder
Kunal Chawla	Chalees Minute Foundation	Founder
Mukesh Kumar	Agastya Foundation	Senior Program Manager
Dheeraj Kumar	SOAS Children's Village	Director

Name	Organisation	Role/Position
Raju Chemalla	KPMG	Program Manager
Abhishek Dubey	Muskaan Dreams	Founder
Deepshikha	Independent trainer	trainer/educator
Raghu Pandey	iMature	Founder
Raanu Mandal	Time Marks	Founder
Balaji	Chrysalis	Senior Program Manager
Poornima	ID Mentors	Founder
Jyoti Srivastava	BYJU's	Program Manager
Apoorva	Prodigy Education	Program Manager
Viplow	Pratham Digital	Head

Local Empowerment Through Philanthropy:

How Trusts Foster Community
Engagement and Ownership

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Abstract

This study explores how a trust organisation, mainly funded by individual donors and family philanthropy, meets the criteria of community philanthropy through its functions, decision-making processes, and engagement with the community. It also explores how a trust functioning in the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh protects individuals from catastrophic health expenditure by offering a wide range of healthcare services in the region. The study adopted a sequential mixed method approach to capture the quantitative and qualitative aspects. Through the quantitative method, the study analyses the trusts' finances and how the trust collects funding from the community, individual donors, family donors, and user charges. It further investigates the proportions of funding obtained from user charges and community philanthropy. The qualitative approach tries to capture the motivation factors of the donors, who continuously donate to this trust. It also looks at why the community members prefer to access healthcare services provided by a trust, and which push and pull factors play an important role in shaping the community members' health-seeking behaviour over time. It tries to understand whether the trust has also protected community members from the marginalised sections from catastrophic health expenditures, while accessing the services of the trust. The study's findings enable us to understand that the trust imbibes the principles of community philanthropy.

Various programs carried out by the trust to serve the underprivileged community in the field of education, community health intervention, community ophthalmology, and watershed management in collaboration with community members, truly portray how it has embedded the basic nature of community philanthropy in it, even though it gets a large proportion of its funding through individual donors and family philanthropists. The trust also embodies a strong sense of responsibility and ownership by including community members in planning, decision-making and managing resources. It has also promoted those who have been working with the trust since the beginning, as trustees and empowered them to make contextual interventions that have resulted in groundbreaking results in this region. Overall, the findings show how the trust's community-focused approach addresses healthcare needs and helps improve living standards in rural areas.

Keywords: Community Philanthropy, Local Empowerment, Health Expenditure, Religious Donations

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1. Introduction

The well-being of a society is significantly impacted by the development pathways it selects. The level of access citizens have to essential resources and services is determined by these pathways, which also influence socio-economic opportunities. In India, the quasi-welfare state is inextricably linked with development trajectories, as the government ensures that the population can access fundamental living standards (Sundar, 2001). The state must ensure that everyone is included, particularly regarding access to education, healthcare, and income-generating opportunities. The Indian government has implemented many initiatives to reduce disparities between various societal segments since achieving independence in 1947. These endeavours are designed to reduce the disparity between the affluent and the less fortunate to achieve a more equitable distribution of resources (Niumai, 2011).

Despite these initiatives by various governments in India, resource allocation disparities persist, rendering marginalised communities susceptible to systemic poverty and exclusion. Consequently, the significance of non-state actors, including social organisations, philanthropies, and donors has grown (Viswanath & Dadrawala, 2004). The civil society, individual donors and community

members complement state efforts by providing critical support to marginalised groups, mitigating the effects of unequal resource distribution. Philanthropy supports vulnerable populations by providing financial assistance, resources, and opportunities to enhance their living conditions (Kumar, 2022). The impoverished, the destitute, and the marginalised frequently perceive philanthropy as a lifeline. Conversely, the pathway of traditional philanthropy is full of obstacles. There has been criticism of philanthropy for being donor-centric, as the donors' priorities frequently dictate the design and implementation of programs rather than the requirements of the communities (Sundar, 2001).

Community philanthropy has emerged as a viable alternative model due to this critique. It emphasises on local engagement and endeavours that enable communities to assume responsibility for developing processes that suit their local context (Hartnell, 2017). It provides context-specific solutions more appropriate for addressing the distinct challenges and demands of various populations by promoting local participation. The concept of community philanthropy is that communities themselves possess valuable assets, including human resources, cultural capital, local knowledge, and social networks that can be leveraged to promote

sustainable development (Niumai, 2011). Consequently, this type of philanthropy signifies a departure from conventional philanthropy's hierarchical, top-down approach favouring a more participatory, inclusive model (Kumar, 2022).

India's development trajectory since independence has been defined by concurrent attempts to resolve social inequalities and foster economic growth. Even though state-led initiatives have been instrumental in enhancing the living standards of people, they have only been adequate and meet the requirements of the country's diverse and extensive population sometimes (Viswanath & Dadrawala, 2004). Consequently, philanthropy has become a significant player in the development of India, offering resources

and assistance to communities not adequately supported by government initiatives (Hartnell, 2017).

The overarching nature of the conventional philanthropic model has been criticised due to the disproportionate influence of the donors over program priorities (Sundar, 2001). The inability or failure of donor-oriented philanthropy resulted in the demand for more participatory and locally driven models of philanthropic intervention, where communities are responsible for their development objectives and solutions (Kumar, 2022). One such model is community philanthropy, which underscores the significance of enabling local communities to assume responsibility for development processes (Hartnell, 2017).

The core foundation of community philanthropy is the belief that communities themselves are best equipped to comprehend their own needs and to mobilise the resources and devise the solutions to resolve them (Niumai, 2011). In contrast to conventional philanthropy, which frequently depends on external benefactors, community philanthropy endeavours to capitalise on local assets and encourage communities to assume responsibility for development processes (Hartnell, 2017). The community-driven solutions are especially pertinent in India, where the deep-rooted social inequalities necessitate context-specific interventions customised to various communities' requirements (Kumar, 2022)

1.1 The Concept of Community Philanthropy

Community philanthropy has acquired popularity as a novel method of addressing social and economic inequalities (Hartnell, 2017). Compared to conventional philanthropy, which is frequently donor-led and externally directed, community philanthropy prioritises local accountability, ownership, and participation (Niumai, 2011). It is based on the notion that sustainable development necessitates the active participation of local communities in the development program's design and execution (Kumar, 2022). Community philanthropy acknowledges that communities possess invaluable tangible and intangible resources that can be leveraged to assist in the process of development (Sundar, 2001). These resources may encompass financial contributions from community members, volunteer labour, social capital, and cultural knowledge. Community philanthropy empowers communities to be stronger and more self-sufficient by using existing resources (Hartnell, 2017). This approach is crucial in India, where a single, uniform development plan will not work because each region, community, and social group faces different challenges (Viswanath & Dadrawala, 2004). It provides contextually flexible and result-oriented solutions that suit the specific needs of each community (Niumai, 2011). This study attempts to explore if a donor-based trust in India also embodies the spirit of community

philanthropy, and if so, what those aspects are (Kumar, 2022). It also looks into how the trust is funded, especially focusing on support from the community, like fees from those who use its services, as well as what motivates donors to give.

To answer these questions, the research combines the analysis of financial data and captures personal experiences. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected through interviews with donors, trust members, community members running screening services, patients, and healthcare workers. Quantitative data was analysed using statistical tools to understand the financial sources and role of the trust in protecting households from catastrophic health expenditures. The qualitative data was analysed thematically to understand the determinants of community members' health-seeking behaviour, the motivational factors of donors and how their socio-economic status shapes their donation behaviour. The research aims to enhance the general comprehension of the methods by which social development organisations can integrate the principles of community philanthropy into their operations. Specifically, it aims to identify the shared characteristics of community philanthropy that can be applied to other social development initiatives in India and beyond (Niumai, 2011).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Defining Philanthropy

The term 'philanthropy', derived from the Greek words 'philos' (loving) and 'anthropos' (humankind), refers to the act of encouraging the well-being of others, usually via the contribution of money to charitable organisations. The notion of philanthropy has developed greatly throughout time, influenced by cultural, religious, and economic influences (Sundar, 2017). The nature, motivation, and scale of the donation signify the importance of giving, and the terms used to refer to them have evolved over time. Altruistic giving, which refers to giving driven by compassion and without any intention of receiving anything in return, has been referred to as charity, philanthropy, or social investment. The phrases 'charity' and 'philanthropy' are sometimes used interchangeably, although they really have distinct nuances since they developed in different eras and situations (Sundar, 2017).

As discussed earlier, the nature, scale, and objectives of giving decide the kind of terminology that will be used for the giving. When a donation is made for an immediate cause, that is palliative in nature, and for short-term relief and does not attempt to solve the root cause of the problems, is referred to as charity; on the other hand, when the donation is made by planning to solve social issues and is curative in nature, it is referred to as philanthropy. Charity does not assert that it has been provided to reduce inequality or advance social justice. Instances of charity could include providing alms to a destitute individual, offering sustenance to a starving individual, or donating funds to a cancer patient for medical care. Philanthropy, in contrast, refers to the deliberate allocation of resources to bring about positive societal change. It involves using a scientific approach and methodology in the act of giving, to promote social progress (Sundar, 2017).

2.2 Community Philanthropy: Concept

While traditional philosophy of philanthropy has contributed to solving pressing societal issues, specifically assisting and supporting marginalised sections, it has been criticised due to its donor-based, centralised governance system that knowingly or unknowingly has overlooked the community and the contextual aspects, and appropriate interventions.

Philanthropists and social scientists have highlighted that traditional philanthropy focuses on those issues and problems that the donors think are important, rather than those raised by communities. This has led to the evolution of the community philanthropy approach, which offers a different, contextual approach to solving a community's problems. While conventional philanthropy largely depends on donations from wealthy people or organisations, a larger proportion of the resources are arranged by the local people, to give and receive support. This approach aims to build local resources, skills, and trust, allowing the community to shape its development. The funding sources in community philanthropy also differ from that of traditional philanthropy. It further helps communities address challenges like poverty, education, and health by empowering them to take charge of their progress.

2.2.1 Evolution of Community Philanthropy in India

Origins of community philanthropy can be traced back to ancient times. Indian community philanthropy began with the practice of supporting religious and social institutions. Panchayats managed communal resources and coordinated public works. During the mediaeval period, religious places such as temples, mosques, facilities like wells, and schools were maintained by local communities (Chitnis, 1981). Colonialism changed Indian society, including philanthropy. British policies disrupted community structures but allowed the formation of creative new organisations like charitable trusts and societies. Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Swami Vivekananda encouraged social reform and education, laying the groundwork for modern Indian community philanthropy (Sen, 1992).

Many non-government organisations (NGOs) and community-based organisations (CBOs) have worked towards addressing the socio-economic, political, and cultural issues in India after independence. These organisations have focused on pressing societal issues and have politically, socially, and economically empowered marginalised communities. The Sarvodaya movement, a post-independence community philanthropy movement (Reddy, 1993; Sundar, 2017) was inspired by Mahatma Gandhi's self-reliance and social equity. It wanted to help everyone and shape the Indian community philanthropy. Gandhi believed wealthy people should use their wealth to benefit society as trustees. This concept influenced many Indian philanthropists and social workers, who founded a lot of community-based projects (Chakrabarty, 2005).

2.3 Differences Between Philanthropy and Community Philanthropy

Philanthropy and community philanthropy promote social welfare, but their methods, scale, and effects differ. Wealthy individuals or corporations make large donations to causes that may or may not involve beneficiary communities in the decision-making. Participatory community philanthropy emphasises on local engagement, decision-making, and resource ownership (Hodgson, 2014). The difference between traditional philanthropy and community philanthropy can be categorised as given in the table.

Table 1: Various Aspects of Philanthropy and Community Philanthropy

Aspect	Philanthropy	Community Philanthropy
Source of Resources	External donors (individuals, corporations, foundations)	Within the community (collective giving)
Decision-Making	Decision-Making External donors or foundations control	Community-led, participatory approaches
Focus	Driven by donor interests; broad	Localized, specific community needs
Sustainability	Can lead to dependency on external funds	Empowers communities for long-term change
Impact	Can be short-term and broad in scope	Aims for sustainable, self-driven change

Source: Hodgson et al., 2012

2.3.1 Case Studies Highlighting the Differences

Numerous examples highlight the differences between these two forms of philanthropy. These differences are based on a few important characteristics. For instance, the Tata Trust, established by one of India's oldest and largest philanthropic organisations, primarily operates on a traditional model of philanthropy, where funds are distributed to various causes through centralised decision-making processes. On the other hand, organisations like SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association)

exemplify community philanthropy by involving local women in the planning and execution of their initiatives, thereby ensuring that the programs are tailored to the specific needs of the community (Kudva, 2005).

2.4 Common Characteristics of Philanthropic Organisations, Trusts, NGOs, and Community Philanthropy Organisations

Despite their differences, philanthropic organisations, donor-based trusts, and community philanthropy initiatives can share several common characteristics, particularly when they adopt practices that emphasise local engagement and sustainability.

Focus on social impact: All these entities share a commitment to achieving social impact, whether through direct service delivery, advocacy, or systemic change. Their effectiveness is often measured by the positive changes they bring to the communities they serve (Salamon, 2014).

Resource mobilisation: Traditional philanthropic organisations and community philanthropy initiatives rely on mobilising financial, human, or in-kind resources to achieve their goals. The key difference lies in how these resources are sourced and utilised, with community philanthropy often prioritising local contributions and involvement (McGarvey, 2013).

Sustainability and long-term vision: Successful philanthropic initiatives, whether donor-based or community-driven, typically prioritise sustainability. This includes ensuring that projects benefit communities long after initial funding has ended. For community philanthropy, this might involve building local endowments or developing income-generating activities that support ongoing efforts (Sacks, 2014).

Transparency and accountability: Accountability to stakeholders is crucial in donor-based trusts and community philanthropy. However, while donor-based trusts may focus on accountability to their donors and boards, community philanthropy emphasises accountability to the local communities involved (Ebrahim, 2010).

2.4.1 Organisational Structure and Governance

Philanthropic organisations, including donor-based trusts, NGOs, and community philanthropy organisations, often share similar organisational structures, though the specifics can vary depending on their size, mission, and operational focus.

Governance models: Most of these organisations operate under a board of trustees or directors who provide oversight and strategic direction. In community philanthropy, however, governance structures may be more inclusive, with community representatives playing a significant role in decision-making processes (Ostrower, 2004).

Decentralisation: While large philanthropic organisations may have centralised decision-making processes, community philanthropy organisations often favour decentralised structures that empower local branches or committees to manage their activities autonomously (Graddy & Morgan, 2006).

2.4.2 Funding Mechanisms and Donor Relations

Funding sources and the relationship with donors can vary significantly across different types of philanthropic entities.

Endowments vs. Local fundraising: Donor-based trusts often rely on large endowments, while community philanthropy initiatives may depend more on local fundraising efforts, including small donations from community members. This difference highlights the contrast between top-down and bottom-up funding approaches (Knight, 2012).

Donor engagement: Engaging donors in the work of the organisation is critical for both traditional philanthropic trusts and community philanthropy organisations. However, while traditional trusts may focus on large, one-time gifts, community philanthropy organisations often cultivate ongoing relationships with a broad base of smaller donors, fostering a sense of ownership and participation (Sacks, 2014).

2.4.3 Community Engagement and Participation

Community engagement underpins community philanthropy and is becoming a best practice in traditional philanthropy.

Participatory methods: Community philanthropy organisations involve community members in identifying needs, planning projects, and evaluating results. This participatory approach makes projects relevant and sustainable (Hodgson, 2012).

Empowerment and capacity building: Traditional and community philanthropy initiatives may empower communities in different ways. Community philanthropy emphasises local capacity to help communities develop themselves (Gibson, 2016).

2.4.4 Sustainability and Impact Measurement

Measuring the impact of philanthropic activities and ensuring their sustainability are critical concerns across all types of philanthropic organisations.

Impact assessment: Philanthropic organisations increasingly use sophisticated tools and methodologies to measure the impact of their work. Community philanthropy organisations share this focus on outcomes, though they may also emphasise on qualitative measures like community well-being and social capital (Ebrahim & Rangan, 2014).

Sustainability practices: Ensuring the sustainability of philanthropic initiatives is a common goal, though the strategies employed may vary. Community philanthropy often emphasises the development of local resources and capacities, while traditional philanthropic organisations may focus on creating endowments or securing long-term donor commitments (Sacks, 2014).

3. Research Study

3.1 Research Objectives

- ◆ The main goal of this study is to thoroughly comprehend the funding framework of the Shri Sadguru Seva Sangh Trust and specifically examine the proportion of donations obtained from community philanthropy.
- ◆ To explain the aspect of community philanthropy and how it is incorporated into the functioning of the trust.
- ◆ To study the factors that influence giving in general in this community and to donate in particular and other options the community exercises for their giving.

3.2 Scope of the Study

The study was conducted to understand the functioning and financial structure of the Shri Sadguru Sangh Seva Trust (SSSST) to develop an understanding of how donor-based organisations imbibe the basic aspects of community philanthropy. The major focus of the study was to analyse its funding sources, especially community donations, user fees, and external donor support. Along with its funding sources and mode of function, the study further attempted to understand how the services run by the trust align with the principles of community philanthropy. The study investigates how SSSST mitigates out-of-pocket healthcare expenses for impoverished families. It also examines the trust's role in providing affordable and accessible eye care and general health services. The study was conducted in Chitrakoot and other adjoining areas from December 2023 to November 2024. This study does not include other trusts and organisations working in the region. It adopted a mixed method approach, incorporating the quantitative analysis of financial data and qualitative aspects through interviews with donors, staff, and service users to ascertain the motivations behind donations and service utilisation.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Study Design

This research uses a mix of numbers and personal stories to answer important questions. First, it looks at the trust's financial records to find out how much of its funding comes from local community members and how much patients have to spend to get healthcare services at the trust. The second part involves talking to people—donors, community members, and trust staff, including those who work in the outpatient department and those who come for other healthcare services. These interviews help to better understand the motivations and values that guide the trust's work.

4.2 Sampling Framework

4.2.1 Study Population

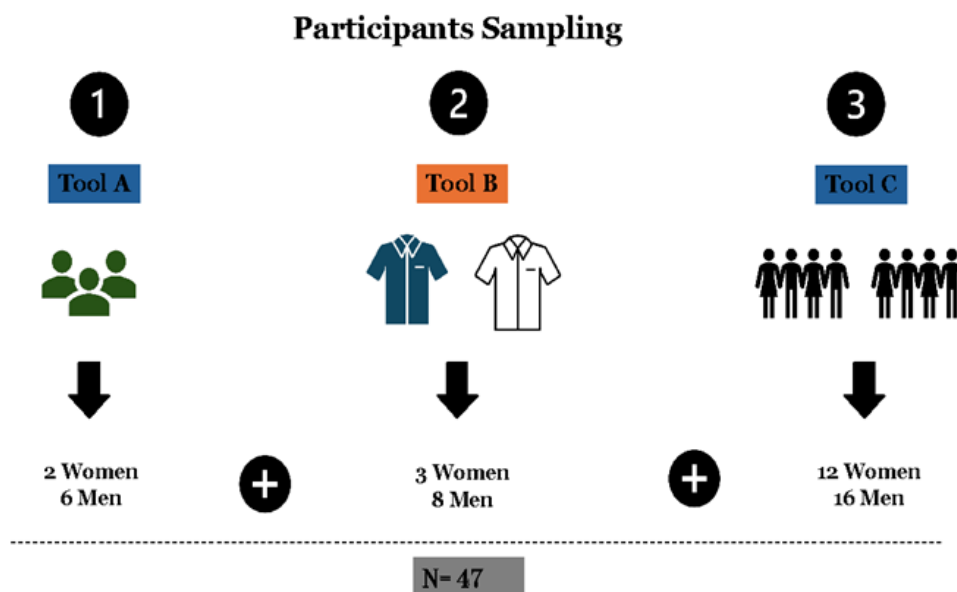
The study targets various stakeholders involved with the SSSST, including community donors, doctors employed at the trust, nursing staff, general donors, patients from the community, and trustees. These groups are critical as they provide insights into the funding mechanisms and the trust's healthcare services.

4.2.2 Sampling Method

A purposive sampling method was employed to ensure representation from all relevant groups. This method is appropriate given the specific focus on individuals directly involved with or affected by the trust's operations, such as donors or patients availing healthcare services.

4.2.3 Sample Size

The study involves 47 respondents, divided into categories—8 community donors, 6 doctors, 2 nursing staff, 2 general donors, 28 patients, and 1 trustee. This distribution allows for comprehensive insights from diverse perspectives.



4.3 Profile of the Respondent

For the purpose of the study, the following respondents were interviewed from different categories based on their roles, responsibilities, association, nature of donation, and usage of services.

Table 2: Profile of the respondents selected for the interview

Sr. No.	Respondents	Number
1.	Community Donors	8
2.	Doctors employed at Trust	6
3.	Nursing Staff	2
4.	Donors	2
5.	Patients from Community	28
6.	Trustee	1
	Total	47

4.4 Data Collection

Quantitative and qualitative data collection methods were used, including financial data analysis and interviews, to meet the purpose of the study. The quantitative data helps examine the financial structure, while interviews provide insights into motivations and experiences.

4.4.1 Data Collection Tool

TOOL 1

Tool one is designed to collect the socio-economic and demographic profile of the household, whose member has availed health-related services from the trust. It also collects the details of the family members, including their education, migration status, the kind of health insurance they have, and other information. The tool also includes the basic amenities available to the family, such as the availability of drinking water and cooking gas, the possession of land, the structure of the house, kind of ration card services, household processes, and many more. In sections B and C, the tool collects the details of every individual member and the kind of illnesses and health-related events they encountered during the study period. It further investigates the health-seeking behaviour of the community and the household members and the various pull and push factors that play a crucial role in shaping the health-seeking behaviour of the members of the family and the community. It tried to understand why a family member avails healthcare services from the trust, not other private and government institutions. It also examines whether they have any financial support or transportation facilities from the trust, if they are from a marginalised and poor household.

TOOL 2

The tool has been designed to collect the qualitative aspects of the study, such as the various motivating factors from the community members and the members of the trust, including the working staff who work in the trust hospital and other domains. It tries to understand the various determining factors for community giving and why particular individuals choose to donate to a particular trust or to a particular domain. It also tries to understand the socio-economic and demographic characteristics of the community that are crucial in shaping the motivation factors for community giving. Another factor to infer is whether personal experience and cultural and religious influences play any role in shaping their donation. The tool also seeks to comprehend why individuals prioritise a specific domain or issue for donation, why community members choose healthcare for their donations, aiming to link personal health experiences to

philanthropic decisions. This comprehensive guide hopes to capture the emotional, rational, and experiential factors driving community donations to SSSST.

TOOL 3

This tool has been specifically designed to understand the motivating factors of the community members, who used to work in collaboration with the trust, to provide any services to the community and consider that they play a crucial role in the non-functioning of the trust and work as the linkage between the community and the trust. It helps the researcher to appreciate what aspects of community philanthropy this approach imbibes and whether the member from the community has any say in decision-making or rendering the services to the community, which is a crucial component in community philanthropy. It captures the socio-economic profiles of the community members who used to run outpatient services in collaboration with the trust, their motivation factors, the history of their linkage with the trust, how they have served the community over time and whether they have been part of the decision making. It also looks at the driving forces and personal experiences that have led them to work with the trust and whether their association with the trust has given them any sort of satisfaction. It also examines whether they consider themselves an integral part of the trust.

5. Results and Key Findings

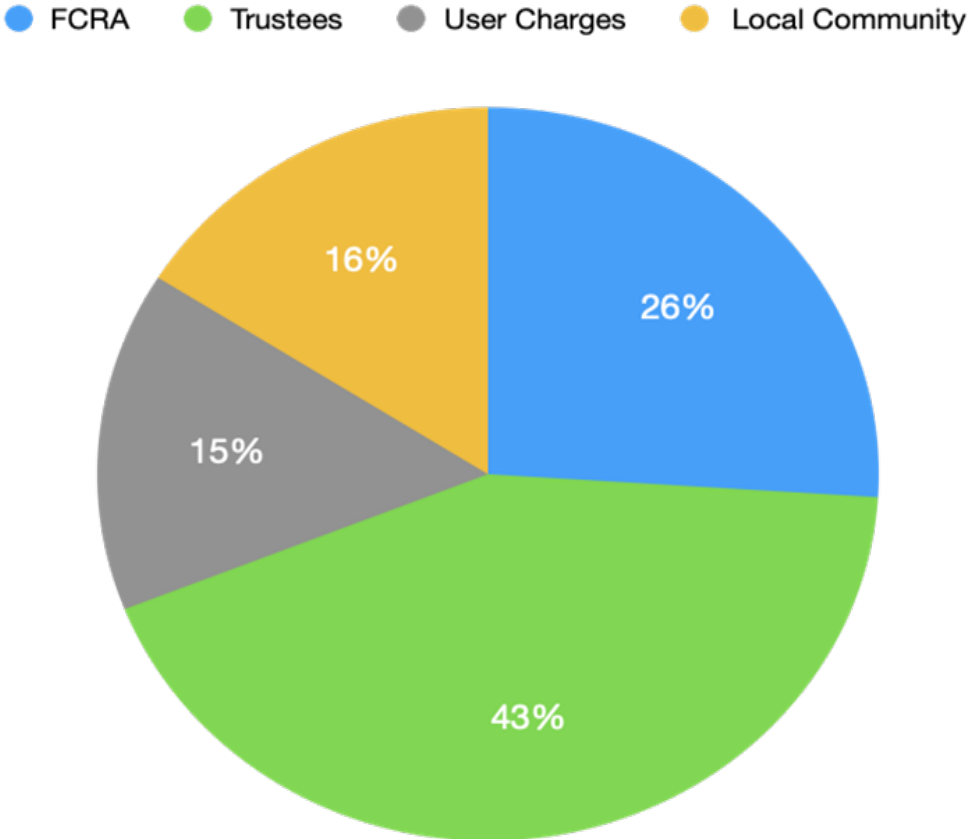
The study's findings will be divided into three parts to meet its objectives. Firstly, it will deal with the funding framework of the trust to understand the contribution made through community philanthropy. Secondly, it will delve into the motivational factors influencing the community donors and why they chose this trust for donation, and lastly, the study underlines how SSSST's healthcare services alleviate financial healthcare burden, offering insights into healthcare access and economic conditions of the households surveyed in the community, and what factors and experiences of the community members influence their health-seeking behaviours.

Analysis of the funding sources of the trust clearly mentioned that the larger proportions of the trust's funding (43%) come from the family philanthropist Mafatlal, individual donors, and foreign institutions (26%) working in healthcare. Only a small proportion of the funding (16%) is through donors from the community and user charges (15%) that the trust charges people from well-off families during their treatment in hospitals managed by this trust. While studying the funding sources, one clearly understands that, as the trust gets a larger chunk of its funding via the traditional mode—donations from individual families and international organisations,

it might not have the basic characteristics of community philanthropy, as that depends solely on local financial resources. But the trust has clearly shown over the period of time that the funding sources have been obtained from the community and the user charges are minimal; its functioning and programmatic interventions have always aligned with certain aspects of community philanthropy, like designing context-specific interventions based on the need of the community in the region they operate.

The trust has also imbibed the principles of community philanthropy by establishing funding sources from the community and local donors, community involvement and participation, sustainability and impact assessment, and transparency and local ownerships. The incorporation of these aspects in its functioning make it a perfect example of how a trust or a social welfare organisation, though it may not be founded or started as a community foundation or managed solely by community members for a common cause, can function as a community organisation and imbibe the basic characteristics of community philanthropy.

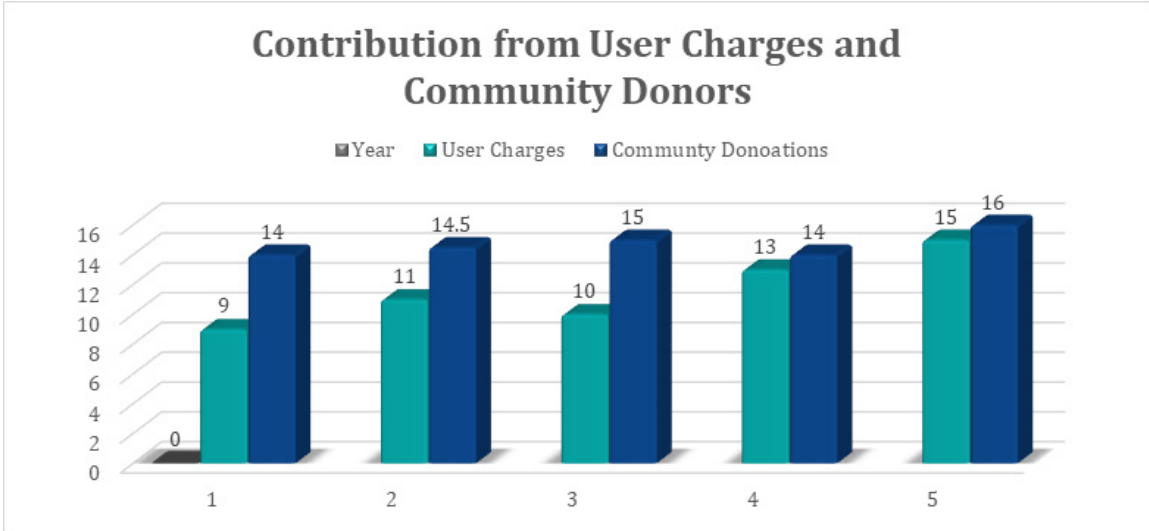
Figure 1: Funding Source of the Trust



Source: Based on the data provided by the trust, especially related to healthcare services

We know that community philanthropy emphasises leveraging local resources and encouraging grassroots participation. Local donors, organisations, and user charges contribute nearly one-third (31%) of the total income, demonstrating strong community involvement. The trust promotes a sense of ownership and accountability in the community by relying on local donations and small user fees. This funding source reflects the key principles of community philanthropy: local engagement, resource mobilisation, and community-driven decision-making. While these donors might not be directly involved in the local community's decision-making process, their contributions reflect a larger, geographically diverse form of support for community-based initiatives. Also, by onboarding local leaders and doctors as trustees, the trust can still be seen as community-focused as donors are motivated by SSSST's impact on underserved populations, contributing to the well-being of vulnerable communities.

Figure 2: User charges and Community Donations over 5 Years (2020–2024)



Contribution from the community and the user charges have increased by nearly 60% and 15% respectively over a period of 5 years. It clearly shows that due to the initiation of various healthcare services and support from the community, the trust has continuously grown its reach within the region and established a good rapport with the community members. It also shows that if an organisation works and aligns its priorities with the community's needs, it will definitely produce a sustainable model for other community-oriented organisations who are working in adjoining geographies or other parts of the globe.

5.1 Funding and Collaboration with Local Organisations

To ensure the availability of funding resources to serve the marginalised sections in the region, the trust has continuously sought support not only from individual donors and family philanthropists, but also from local, international, and government organisations, trusts and non-profits working in India, and other funding sources working in the region. The trust has collaborated with Kalyani Seva Trust Patan, Sri Lakshmi Narayan Bhagwan Trust Dhanbad, Shriram Seva Kendra Ahmedabad, Maithili N Desai Public Charitable Trust, and the Sri Svetambara Jain Sangh Trust Satna Madhya Pradesh. These collaborations and associations show that the trust believes in the basic aspects of community philanthropy. Recently, the trust has initiated many outpatient services, designated ophthalmological services centres, and dedicated paediatric centres for children in Chitrakoot, Varanasi, Anandpur and other locations to serve the larger population with sophisticated healthcare facilities unavailable in this region earlier. The association of the trust with Seva Internationals, Site Saver International, the Government of India, Vision 2020 India, and the Aravind Eye Care System has transformed the Janki Kund Netra Chikitsalaya into one of the largest eye care hospital facilities in India. Recently, it has collaborated with the government of Uttar Pradesh and the government of India during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit in October 2023 to establish dedicated eye-care health facilities in Varanasi. These approaches enable the trust to establish a sustainable model through scientific and research-based initiatives, which are also inseparable aspects of community philanthropy.

5.2 Community-led Philanthropy

The trust has a history of collaboration with community members, and it has rendered a range of services to the larger population in the area. The Outpatient Department (OPD) services at the community level exemplify the idea of community philanthropy as the trust offers these services in collaboration with community members and most of these activities are organised and managed by people from the community members. The story revolves around local community members working with Shri Sadguru Netra Chikitsalay in Chitrakoot to provide free eye care services. These services include screening patients for eye-related issues, providing free checks, and referring those in need for treatment to the hospital. The trust organises transportation and facilitates free treatment, ensuring that financial barriers do not prevent

individuals from receiving care. The individuals leading these efforts locally are a part of the community and run the OPD services with a deep sense of responsibility and altruism. For example, Mr Sunil Shivhare, who operates a screening centre in Fatehpur, stated: “I provide these services for free to those who are poor and arrange the referral in coordination with the trust. In a month, I refer 2–3 patients to the trust, and local people respect me for my services. Recognition and respect from the community and the trust motivate me to continue this service.” Similarly, another respondent, Mr Ranjit Pandey, who runs a screening service from his optical shop in the Banda District, underlines that: “Service initiated for the community by the trust is admirable. I think such collaboration in other services can serve the underserved population in my district or other locations.” These statements reflect the community members’ selfless dedication to improving the well-being of their neighbours, driven by the social and moral reward of respect and recognition. Their work is not for financial gain but for the satisfaction of helping those in need.

The collaboration between the local screening centres and the trust embodies the principles of community philanthropy. Community philanthropy involves local people identifying and addressing the needs of their community using local assets, resources, and leadership, often in partnership with external institutions or organisations. It is a powerful way of building social capital, fostering a sense of belonging, and empowering communities to improve their well-being. Individuals like Mr. Shivhare and Mr. Pandey are empowered to lead their communities by identifying needy patients and referring them for specialised care. This reflects the philosophy of community philanthropy, where solutions are locally driven but supported by external partners. Both respondents emphasise that the local community recognises and respects their work. This respect is personal and symbolic of the community’s trust in their ability to deliver meaningful healthcare services. The trust’s support (logistics, free treatment) enhances the impact of these local efforts, creating a symbiotic relationship where both sides contribute their strengths. As mentioned by the respondents, the motivation derived from community respect and recognition is a key element of community philanthropy. Unlike top-down aid models, where outside help might be viewed as charity, community philanthropy fosters a sense of shared responsibility. This leads to a more sustainable and long-term commitment from local actors, who are invested in the success of the services they provide. Both respondents specifically mention that they focus on serving the “poor” and “underserved populations.” This aligns with the ethos of community philanthropy, where efforts are focused on equity and addressing disparities in access to resources—healthcare, education, or other services.

How This Collaboration Aligns with Community Philanthropy

In the above example, the collaboration between the local screening centres and Shri

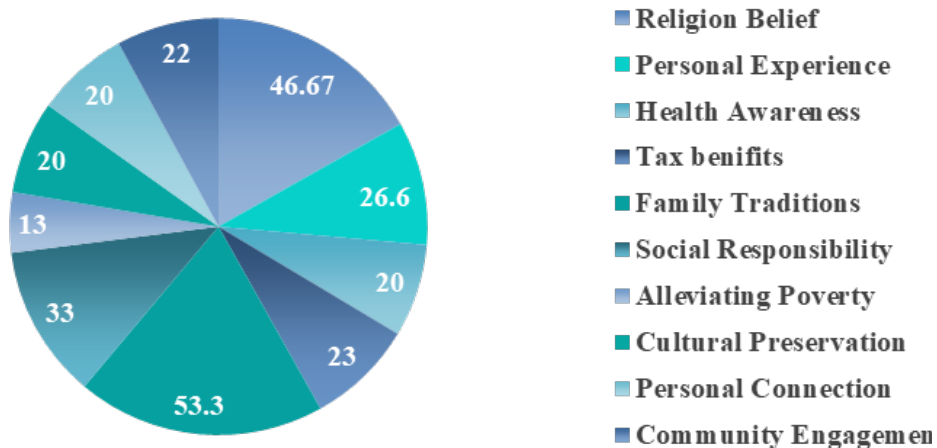
Sadguru Netra Chikitsalay shows that when community members are trusted and supported, they can become agents of change within their own communities. The alignment with community philanthropy is clear:

- ◆ **Local Ownership:** The local community takes ownership of identifying and referring patients using their personal assets and networks.
- ◆ **Support from External Partners:** The hospital trust provides crucial resources (free treatment and transportation), but the leadership of the process remains with the local community.
- ◆ **Focus on Equity:** The services are explicitly designed for the underserved, ensuring that philanthropy, in this case, is not just about financial donations but about creating structures of care and support for those most in need.

5.3 Key Motivation Factors of Stakeholders

The qualitative aspect of the study delves into the diverse motivational factors influencing decisions of individuals to donate to charitable organisations and their reasons for selecting specific trusts. The background of each respondent, including factors such as occupation, financial status, religious beliefs, and family values, plays a critical role in shaping their decision to donate. Diverse socio-economic settings and life experiences of the respondent significantly influence their philanthropic priorities. The analysis further suggests that various determinants, such as religious beliefs, personal experience, and empathy towards the community, largely drive their motivation. Along with this, the community’s belief in the kind of services provided, trust in the organisation’s transparency, and the impact of the trust’s work in healthcare and education are significant drivers behind these donations.

Percentage



5.3.1 Religious and Cultural Motivations

Through the process of thematic analysis, we have found that various motivating factors and determinants form the pattern of community giving in the adjoining districts of the Bundelkhand region of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Religious and cultural practices in these geographies are dominant motivating factors for donating, with many respondents underlining the same about the Chitrakoot region and adjoining districts throughout history. Here, people always believe in karma and think that if they do good for their society, they will get good results and virtue from God for their good deeds. Nearly 54% of the respondents say that their family traditions and cultural practices are key motivating factors behind the donation to the trust. They believe that learning from their parents and their grandparents is the main reason behind their continuous support of the community, and it has resulted in good fortune for their family, and they have flourished over a period of time. As mentioned above, religious belief emerges as another further motivation to donate, and nearly 47% of the respondents have said that they believe that it is their religious duty and obligation to donate for the betterment of the marginalised sections of the society. They think that if they help the poor and destitute who are in need, God will definitely reward them for their good deeds, giving them satisfaction and peace in their lives.

A local politician Sunita Devi articulates that it is her religious belief that always motivates her to donate to society, and she is continuously donating to the trust so that they can provide affordable healthcare services to the people who are in need and cannot afford quality healthcare services due to the lack of money and information. She said “गरीबों की मदद करना भगवान की सेवा करने के बराबर है अगर हम किसी की मदद कर रहे हैं तो इसका मतलब हम प्रत्यक्ष या अप्रत्यक्ष रूप से अपने ईश्टदेव की सेवा कर रहे” (Helping the poor is like serving God. If we are helping someone, we are directly or indirectly serving our God). Whenever the people from the trust visited her on the occasion of Ram Navami or Diwali, she donated to this trust. Another respondent Mr Ramesh Sharma who is the owner of small enterprises in Satna district cited a similar reason for donating to this particular trust and said “मेरे पास जो कुछ भी है उसे भगवान का ही दिया हुआ है अगर मैं किसी बेसहारा और मजबूर इंसान की मदद कर रहा हूँ तो इसका मतलब मैं भगवान के दिए हुए में से ही उनको वापस कर रहा हूँ” (Whatever I have is God’s gift, if I am helping a destitute and needy person, it means I am returning them from God’s gift). This perspective underscores how donations can be seen as a way to carry forward family values and cultural traditions that prioritise helping others. For many participants, giving to charity is not just about personal satisfaction but about adhering to long-standing cultural and religious practices that place high importance on supporting those in need.

The obligation to give is viewed as a moral imperative rooted in the desire to do good for others as a reflection of one's faith and values. This indicates that spiritual or religious values drive personal motivations and choices for nearly half of the surveyed population.

One very crucial approach this trust has adopted to generate funding sources and to portray its sustainable programmatic intervention to a wider audience is through inviting prominent religious leaders, cultural organisations, and influential political entities. The trust has, since its establishment collaborated with government organisations, trusts, and religious institutions. They have also worked closely with many chief ministers, cabinet ministers, and organisation heads like S Sudarshan Mohan Bhagwat and many more. They have routinely invited religious leaders like Shankaracharya, head of an influential religious institution, not just

to show the kind of work they are doing, but also to leverage their influence in the community to generate both human and financial resources. Recently, the trust has invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Mohan Bhagwat to showcase the kind of work and impact they have created in this region to seek larger financial support. The Prime Minister has inaugurated various projects. The trust has started and laid the foundation of a dedicated eye health facility in Varanasi in collaboration with the government of Uttar Pradesh. It will be used to organise cultural and religious programs in Chitrakoot and other districts to promote cultural heritage, and preserve and encourage values in the population. This also helps the trust gain the trust of the community members. On various occasions, the trust has in the true sense, used, and capitalised the belief system of people and it helps them generate abundant resources.

5.3.2 Empathy and Compassion for the Needy

Apart from religious and cultural beliefs, empathy and compassion emerged as other motivating factors for community members to donate for the greater good of the people in their community. Many respondents expressed that they believe in mitigating the population's vulnerability in nearby locations by donating some small portions of their savings and profits so that they also feel relieved that they have done some good work for their community. Asha Singh, an assistant professor, said that she regularly supports the eye camp organised by the trust and donates INR 3500 monthly to support the surgery of poor people.

She explained, " मैंने बहुत से परिवार को बिमारी के समय अपने खेप अपने गहनों को बेचते या मोरगेज पर रखते हुए देखा है इसीलिए मुझे हमेशा लगता है कि अगर मैं किसी भी एक परिवार को मदद कर पाऊं तो यह बहुत ही नेक और संतुष्टि देने वाला काम होगा" (I have seen many families selling their farm, jewellery or keeping it on mortgage in times of illness, so I always feel that

if I can help one family, it will be a very noble and satisfying work). Vinod Paswan, a well-known contractor and social worker, spoke about his learning from his family members since his childhood has resulted in supporting the vulnerable sections of the society. He shared his personal experience and said, “मुझे परोपकार का विचार मेरे परिवार से मिला है। हमारे परिवार की परंपरा है कि हम अपने समाज और ज़रूरतमंदों की मदद करें, गरीबों को दान देना, गरीब परिवार की लड़की की शादी में मदद करने के साथ साथ जब भी जरूरत होती है किसी गरीब परिवार को उनके श्राद्ध में भी आर्थिक सहायता देता हूँ” (The idea of philanthropy comes from my family. It is my family traditions to give alms to beggars, support marriages of daughters of poor people and often contribute to the last rites of any individuals in the communities who could not afford it.) He also believed that serving the community somehow help him get recognition within the community and this has contributed higher returns in terms of flourishing businesses.

Many donors' empathy and emotional attachment towards their community members was one of the major motivation factors behind their philanthropy. By acknowledging the kind of vulnerabilities the poor people in their communities are exposed to, it becomes prudent to support those in need if God has rewarded them with good fortune and prosperity. Compelled to act on their feelings of compassion, they often direct their donations to organisations that they believe can address these social inequities.

5.3.3 Personal Experiences as a Motivation for Donation

Along with religious, cultural, and empathetic factors, the personal experiences of the respondents with health-related events are an important motivating factor for community giving. Nearly 27% of the respondents say that they have seen the kind of suffering and problems their family members have gone through during ill health or any health-related events. They think that even after belonging to a well to do family if they have suffered, they should think about the people who are poor and do not have information regarding good healthcare services and institutions in their nearby locations. The life events of these members motivate them to support their community members, which is why they often donate whenever the volunteers from the trust visit them.

Arvind Mishra, a contractor and a well-known individual in his society, shared his personal experience and how this has motivated him to donate some proportion of his profits to this trust at the end of the year. His father passed due to ill health, and he could not get timely medical care. This affected him personally and changed his perspective on the importance of health and why one should always support those who are in need. He said, “I lost my father due to the unavailability of proper healthcare services 10 years ago, so I have decided that whenever I get time and have

enough money, I definitely support one family or individuals if they are unable to meet their healthcare expenses." He explained, "मैंने अपने पिता को इस वजह से खो दिया और इसलिए मैं हमेशा चाहता हूँ कि गरीब लोगों को बेहतर स्वास्थ्य सेवाएं मिल सकें" (I lost my father because of a lack of timely medical care, and that's why I always want the poor to have access to better healthcare services). A similar response was from Chandrika Prasad Upadhyay, who is a politician and former MLA. He recounted his experience and said his brother was severely ill and they were not able to meet the expenses and could not afford quality healthcare. The trust supported them in their time of need. His family benefited directly from the work of the Shri Sadguru Sangh Seva Trust. His brother received cataract surgery through the trust's services when his family was financially unstable. He explained, "उन्होंने मेरे भाई की मोतियाबिंद सर्जरी में मदद की थी जब मैं आर्थिक रूप से सक्षम नहीं था। उस समय से मैंने उन्हें नियमित रूप से दान करना शुरू किया" (They helped my brother with his cataract surgery when I wasn't financially well off. Since then, I have been donating to them regularly).

The above responses and respondent's experiences show that the experience related to ill health and the kind of suffering they have gone through. For Upadhyay, the personal impact of the trust's healthcare services solidified his decision to become a long-term donor.

5.3.4 Transparency and Trust in the Organisation

One of the most frequently mentioned reasons for selecting a particular trust for donations was the transparency and trustworthiness of the organisation. Donors strongly preferred organisations that clearly demonstrated how their funds were being used and provided regular updates on the impact of their contributions.

Transparency and trust in the organisation due to its sustainable and continuous service to the members of the community in this region also attracted many individuals from the adjoining districts to extend their financial support to the trust. Many respondents say that they personally observe and get feedback from the community members, who have received the services from the trust over time, and the straightforward and clear-cut messages from the trust about the kind of services they are providing, the kind of facilities they have, and the extent of impact they have created over a period of time.

Ramesh Sharma, who works as a class B official in Madhya Pradesh, says that he had personally observed the kind of services this trust is providing, and they used to charge people minimal fees for accessing their healthcare services. He says, "As I work in the health department, I know the problems individuals go through during the treatment due to lack of information and financial constraints. One of my colleague's

parents has some issues and I have visited the hospital in Chilkoot. I observed that file admitting the patient. They have very clearly informed the patient about the kind of problem he's going through after getting the diagnostic report from the lab and what amount he has to pay to get the treatment from the facility. He has been charged a very minimal amount and even got the transportation facility from the trust after discharge. Incidences and transparency from any organisations propel one to have faith in their functioning, in their services and the colleges for which they are working, that is why I always used to donate some sort of money to this trust." "मेरे व्यक्तिगत अनुभव से मुझे यह पता चला कि यह संस्था वास्तविकता और भी बड़ोत ही ईमानदारी और पारदर्शिता से इस पिछले एरिया के गरीब और ज़रूरतमंद लोगों की सेवा कर रही है और साथ ही साथ अपनी व्यवस्था को सुदृढ़ करने के लिए जो लोग आर्थिक रूप से मज़बूत हैं और जो किसी न किसी तरीके से मदद कर सकते हैं, यूज़र चार्ज के माध्यम से उनसे मदद भी लेते हैं।" (From my personal experience, I came to know that this institution is actually serving the poor and needy people of this past area with a lot of honesty and transparency, and at the same time, people who are financially strong and who can help in some way also seek help through user charges to strengthen their system). For Sharma, the transparency and openness of SSSST reinforced his trust in the organisation and motivated him to continue supporting their work.

5.3.5 Impact of Healthcare Services on Donation Decisions

Apart from other motivating factors, the kind of impact the trust has created and demonstrated in this region through sophisticated healthcare services, dedicated ophthalmological surgeries, regular health camps, collaboration, outpatient services in the community, labour, free transportation services, and waving of user charges from the poor household, has led many individuals to support this trust, which has led to its working in the Bundelkhand region, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh since the 1970s.

Many respondents said they have known this trust and its work in their area for many decades and have seen the kind of interventions and the sustainable model it has produced in their regions. Recently, the Chitrakoot and Banda districts have been declared cataract-free zones due to the persistent efforts by this trust and its members. They also believe that after the COVID-19 pandemic, they have realised that their health and well-being hold paramount importance in their lives, and they cannot ignore it in the long run. Suresh Sharma, a government teacher working in an intermediate college in the Banda district, says that after 2020, after getting information from the trust about the kind of services they are providing, he started donating to it. He believes that it is our collective responsibility to keep society healthy. If someone in our neighbourhood is suffering from any disease. It is not only he or

she is going to suffer, but there are chances that most of them can get affected by the disease directly or indirectly, so it will become very prudent to contribute to the government, to an organisation, or to any individuals who are working for the health of society and have shown such good results over time.

The focus and awareness of healthcare services and their effect on human society resonate with many community members. They believe that contributing to this trust or helping people who are ill is necessary, and one should always come forward to help such individuals in society. These examples show that apart from the other determinants and motivating factors, awareness towards a healthy society and the kind of vulnerability an unhealthy society can expose to the larger population motivates many individuals in these localities to come forward and donate to good causes.

5.3.6 Role of Education in Motivating Donations

Many respondents share their experience with the educational facilities of trust, which motivates them to contribute to this trust. Many said their children had been educated by the trust from childhood and have medical degrees and are now earning their bread easily. The trust provides both primary to master's level degrees, vocational training, and handholding support programs to graduates from adjoining districts, and skill development programs for women in self-help groups and recent graduate students. Sumit Pyasi, a politician, had a personal connection to the trust education services. His daughter studied at a college run by this trust and is now pursuing her MBBS at KGMU. He said this good fortune happened due to the quality of the trust's education services and their continuous support of his daughter. He believes that now it is his time to repay the trust so that it can continuously support more families in his area. He also says that apart from the educational services, the tax benefit he received after donating to this trust motivated him to donate. Many other individuals cite similar reasons for making donations to the trust. They said that when the trust is serving their community, and they know the kind of quality services this trust has provided, why should they not donate to this particular organisation after being aware that they are the ultimate beneficiary?

5.4 Challenges and Opportunities

The qualitative data and transcript clearly showed that this trust closely follows the principle of community philanthropy. However, there are some challenges in fully realising these models. A big part of the fund comes from family, philanthropists, and foreign institutions, and only 31% of the contributions come from community members and through user charges. We suggest that this trust still follows traditional philosophical models about its funding sources. The fact that these families and foreign donors might have their own priorities could limit ownership and decision-making by the community members. How do the trust's functions and the model it has adopted since the 1970s meet the criteria of community philanthropy? It is clear that the trust has consistently promoted and included community members in its core team as trustees. They have also designed context-specific, sustainable programs that have made Chitrakoot and Banda districts cataract-free zones because of the easy services they provide. Apart from this, the trust has mixed external funds with locally suitable and demand-driven initiatives, which is a hybrid model of philanthropy that can use both traditional and local resources to benefit society the most. Moving forward, we see opportunities for the trust to further align itself with the community philanthropy model by getting more local donors involved and making the participatory decision-making process more inclusive by including and promoting more community members in the decision-making body. It is also shown that the contribution from community philanthropy and user charges has increased over time. By taking advantage of these opportunities, the trust can reduce its reliance on external funding and empower the community to take greater ownership of its development.

5.5 Limitations of this Study

This study has some limitations that we should keep in mind. First, we only looked at one organisation, so we cannot say how other organisations in the same area work. Second, we mostly used interviews with donors, community members, and staff from the trust. This might have introduced some bias from the people we talked to. Third, we did not look at all the factors that motivate community members and trustees to donate. We also did not examine how the government affects the trust or how the beneficiaries get involved. Fourth, we only looked at the external funding sources, not how the trust ensures it is sustainable or has autonomy. Finally, this study was done quickly, so we cannot predict how the trust will change in the future. These are just a few limitations, but more research must be done to address these challenges and understand how funding structures and sustainable interventions work in similar contexts.

6. Conclusion and Recommendation

This paper explores the crucial role community-based philanthropy plays in helping the marginalised in Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. These case studies show how traditional philanthropic organisations, mostly funded by individual donors and family philanthropy, can involve the community and mobilise local resources, including financial support and human resources, so they can benefit larger populations. The trust has stayed true to its community philosophy by empowering the community, giving them a say in decision-making, and involving them in management. Despite relying on family, donations, and external funding, the trust has shown the importance of tapping into local resources. This includes user charges, posters, the sense of ownership and accountability within the community, and the trust's ability to sustain for nearly five decades. This hybrid philanthropy model combines grassroots participation with external donor support and provides an effective strategy for long-term sustainable programmatic intervention for community development. The research also found that donor's motivations are largely shaped by their personal experiences, religious beliefs, empathy, luck, and trust in the organisation's transparency. These factors, rooted in the principle of community philanthropy,

are about shared responsibility to update local communities. The organisation's ability to maintain trust and show a tangible impact in healthcare and education comes from securing continuous support from local and external sources.

However, the research also identifies challenges, particularly the trust's reliance on external funding sources, which can limit the community's control over decision-making. To further strengthen its community philanthropy model, the trust could enhance local donor engagement and increase community participation in governance. Doing so could reduce dependency on external resources and empower the local population to play a more active role in shaping the future of the trust's initiatives.

In conclusion, Shri Sadguru Sangh Seva Trust is a powerful example of how community philanthropy can be effectively implemented to address the critical needs of underserved populations. Its focus on sustainability, community participation, and leveraging local and external resources provides a valuable blueprint for other philanthropic organisations adopting a community-driven development approach. This research contributes to a deeper

understanding of how philanthropic organisations can integrate community-centric strategies to create lasting social impact, particularly in regions where access to basic services remains challenging. Future efforts should aim to refine this hybrid model and further explore the role of local leadership in sustaining community philanthropy initiatives.

In the findings and conclusion of the study, we can recommend the following points.

- ◆ To abide by the principles of the community, philanthropic organisations like this trust can always leverage contacting political leaders, religious leaders, and local influencers in the geography to obtain local resources and participation.
- ◆ The organisation can work more closely with other organisations who are working in the same domain and are committed to bringing positive changes and uplifting the marginalised sections of society so that they can learn from each other and implement the best suitable interventions with optimum resources and ensure larger involvement of the community members.

6.1 Implications for Practitioners

The case study of Shri Sadguru Sang Seva Trust has several important implications for research, practitioners, and social scientists working in philanthropy, social work, and community development. We can underline these implications as follows.

Integrating Community Engagement: The practitioner should always emphasise involving people from the community in decision-making and service delivery. The community organisation model adopted by trust demonstrates how it has successfully empowered the community members through its long-term sustainable interventions, making such an approach a critical strategy for success.

Balancing External and Local Funding: While external funding and traditional philanthropy are important, community donations are vital to running the program without financial constraints. The practitioner should always try to diversify their funding sources through local contributions. This will reduce reliance on external donors and their dominance in decision-making and resource allocation.

Building Trust Through Transparency: For any organisation, it is important to maintain transparency in its operations and regular communication with its donors, whether from the community or individuals. The case study of distrust shows that maintaining donor and community trust through provisioning of quality service has sustained its functioning in the region, so the same can be applied to other

organisations as well.

Sustainability Focus: The practitioner should be cautious about designing targeted interventions and programs to ensure the community's larger benefit. The program should be sustainable in nature, and to ensure this, the participation and capacity building of those individuals should be done on interval through various educational and vocational training programs. The programmatic intervention should always consider the kind of capabilities and skill sets people from the community have and how that can be leveraged.

6.2 Implications for Future Research

Future research should explore how philanthropic organisations like the Shri Sadguru Sangh Seva Trust (SSSST) can deepen local engagement and reduce dependency on external donors. Investigating strategies to increase community control in decision-making and to enhance participatory governance would offer insights into creating more sustainable, self-reliant community philanthropy models. Additionally, examining the long-term social and economic impacts of community-driven programs in healthcare, education, and vocational training could provide valuable data on the effectiveness of local philanthropy. Comparative studies between purely community-funded initiatives and hybrid models like SSSST could further refine approaches for enhancing local ownership and sustainability in philanthropy.

7. Declaration of Conflict of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest related to the research, authorship, and publication of this study.

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Challenges and Dynamics in Community Philanthropy at the Grassroots:

A Study of Organisations led
by Development Leaders from
Marginalised Communities

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Abstract

Ensuring fair and inclusive development has been a persistent challenge, exacerbated by historical and systemic inequalities. This study examines the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and philanthropic efforts in addressing disparities within India's deeply stratified social structure. Grounded in the Human Development approach, which prioritises freedom and opportunity, the research explores how caste and class influence access to resources, leadership, and opportunities in the development sector. India's rigid caste system reinforces social and economic immobility, limiting opportunities for marginalised communities. While NGOs, inspired by Gandhian ideals and later rights-based initiatives, have worked to bridge these gaps, the introduction of the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Act in 2013 further institutionalised corporate contributions, expanding the sector. However, entrenched biases and hierarchies risk being replicated within these structures, reinforcing existing inequalities rather than dismantling them. This research highlights the significant challenges faced by NGO founders from marginalised backgrounds, including financial constraints, lack of access to mentorship and networks, and biases in funding distribution. Founders from

privileged backgrounds are often better positioned to leverage personal networks for funding and volunteer support, a disparity also observed in similar studies on social entrepreneurship. Additionally, while NGOs express support for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, caste representation in leadership and staffing remains limited. The study examines leadership approaches, resource acquisition challenges, and opportunities available to marginalised founders, aiming to identify and address systemic biases. The findings underscore the need for systemic reforms, including shifting corporate CSR priorities beyond education and health towards livelihood creation, integrating caste sensitisation programs in hiring, and incentivising small businesses to adopt inclusive DEI practices. By offering new perspectives, this study informs practitioners, policymakers, and philanthropic bodies, providing actionable insights to mitigate biases and foster inclusivity. Beyond enriching academic understanding, this research aspires to empower stakeholders to create transformative changes, promoting fairness and justice in societal advancement.

Key words: Caste, Philanthropy, Entrepreneurship, NGOs, Discrimination, Marginalised Leadership, Equity, Social Justice

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1. Introduction

The human race has always struggled in ensuring equitable growth and development of its members since time immemorial. But the problem has been exacerbated particularly in the west and mid-west with the advent of the industrial revolution. This differentiation of classes based on income and wealth inequality is not even close to being representative of the myriad kinds and levels of inequalities existing between humans. The Human Development approach defined by economist Mahbub Ul Haq, built upon the work of the Nobel Prize winning economist Amartya Sen, is framed in terms of whether people are able to 'be' what they wish to, do things that they desire, that is, the freedom of choice (UNDP). This brings us to the important aspect that we are discussing—equity. Equity in being and doing things of choice inevitably depends on the social, economic, political, and cultural positions of individuals. In addition to wealth and income, inequality persists and in many cases is increasing due to discrimination based on race, ethnicity, gender, class, and caste among other social categories.

The revolutionary philosopher Karl Marx wrote extensively on the inequalities perpetuated by the economic system of capitalism. The feminist movement shaped by Sylvia Plath and Virginia Woolf unleashed waves of feminism

across the West. Malcolm X, Martin Luther King Jr. and many other black activists and leaders militantly sought and fought to reduce racial inequality in American society. Events such as the Boston Tea Party and the Salt Satyagraha in India challenged the weaponisation of the concept of tax, which disproportionately affects the middle- and lower-income population. There are countless other such examples. However, in the words of Karl Marx: 'Multiple philosophers have tried to interpret the world in multiple ways, however, the point is to change it.' Efforts were made and are being made at multiple levels by local, national governments, trade unions, civil society, activists, economists and international bodies like the World Bank, United Nations Development Program (UNDP), etc., to address and mitigate global inequity. Another important medium of addressing inequalities is the Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). These organisations work on a host of issues that potentially address inequality, like education, healthcare, nutrition, skill development, livelihoods, ecology conservation, labour rights, women empowerment among others. Operating on the principle of not-for-profit, these organisations seek funds from individual donors, corporates, and philanthropic families to run their operations and pay their workers. Thus, the dependence of NGOs on philanthropy cannot be exaggerated.

This research study aims to understand the preferences and outlook of philanthropic institutions in granting funds. At the same time, it seeks to understand the growth trajectories, leadership style, resource mobilisation and access to opportunities of the founders of such NGOs that are either early-stage or are working at the grassroots level. The necessity for this research was felt as the Indian society is highly segregated on the basis of religion, gender, geography, class, caste and other aspects. The caste system obdurately dictates the work that must be undertaken by an individual solely on the basis of their birth. It offers no mobility and fragments the society. As Dr BR Ambedkar said, "Caste is not just a division of labour, but also the division of labourers". After independence, there was a growing discourse around social issues which led to the formation of organisations that were mostly Gandhian in nature, their legacy rooted in the independence movement. For thousands of years, India has been structured around a deeply ingrained caste system that continues to shape much of its society. The origins of this system date back nearly 3,000 years, when ancient Hindu society initially classified the population into hereditary, endogamous, and occupation-based categories known as Varnas, often referred to as castes in English. These categories consisted of the Brahmins (priests, scholars), Kshatriyas (warriors, rulers), Vaishyas (traders, moneylenders), Sudras (laborers), and the Ati Sudras, or "untouchables,"

who performed the most menial and degrading tasks. The first three groups were considered superior, with the Sudras and Ati Sudras typically grouped under the term Other Backward Castes (OBC).

The caste system, being both hereditary and endogamous, meant that individuals were born into their caste and generally married within their caste, reinforcing the hierarchy. Family surnames often provided a way to categorise individuals by caste. However, as India's economy grew more complex, the original Varna system evolved into the Jati system, which became even more intricate. While the two terms—Varna and Jati—are often used interchangeably, Jati represents a more localised and diverse structure, reflecting the continued stratification of society based on caste. This shift has led to more nuanced distinctions within the caste hierarchy, deepening social divisions and inequalities that persist to this day.

As caste membership can be identified through surnames, it makes it relatively easy to group individuals within the caste system. This method of categorisation can distort the way people perceive and evaluate each other. In cases of discrimination, the behaviour of one individual towards another is often influenced by their respective caste statuses, leading to biased judgments. These caste-based judgments create a system of taboos, where specific roles, behaviours, and types of employment are deemed appropriate or acceptable

for each caste. Consequently, such societal expectations reinforce caste-based hierarchies, limiting opportunities for individuals and perpetuating discrimination. The caste system in India has long fostered significant economic inequalities, deeply embedding stratification within society. Deshpande (2015) describes this system as “religiously sanctioned apartheid and oppression,” highlighting its entrenched social and economic injustices. In response to these inequities, India introduced affirmative action policies following its independence in 1947. These policies aimed to address caste-based disparities by reserving a minimum percentage of positions in public sector jobs, government educational institutions, and even seats in the legislature for marginalised communities, including Dalits

(untouchables) and tribal groups.

Despite these efforts, debate over the effectiveness of these measures in reducing caste-based disparities in economic, political, and educational domains, continues. Recent studies have sought to assess whether these affirmative action policies have led to substantial progress in these areas. However, it is increasingly evident that caste continues to influence many aspects of Indian society, including corporate leadership. The personal link to caste often plays a dominant role in shaping leadership dynamics within corporations. This persistent influence of caste membership underscores the challenges of achieving true social mobility and equality, even in modern, professional contexts.

2. Research Study

In the realm of philanthropy, community and social justice philanthropy represent a pivotal approach aimed at addressing and mitigating systemic inequalities. This research focuses on understanding the dynamics and challenges faced by non-profit organisations in India, particularly those led by leaders from historically marginalised communities. India’s complex social fabric, marked by caste-based hierarchies, provides a unique context to explore how these structures impact the operations, resource mobilisation, leadership, and decision-making processes within the development sector. This study seeks to unravel the intricate ways in which caste dynamics influence community and social justice philanthropy, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on equitable social development and philanthropic practices.

2.1 Research Questions

1. Do caste-based hierarchies influence leadership structures and decision-making processes within non-profit organisations engaged in community and social justice philanthropy in India?
2. Do caste-based hierarchies have an impact on the organisational development journey of grassroots organisations involved in community and social justice philanthropy in India?
3. To what extent is caste recognised within the community philanthropy sector, and how does this recognition, or lack thereof, shape efforts to address caste-related inequalities in the development sector in India?

2.2 Research Objectives

1. Explore the influence of caste-based hierarchies on leadership structures and decision-making processes within grassroots organisations engaged in community and social justice philanthropy in India.
2. Examine the impact of caste-based hierarchies on the organisational development journey of grassroots organisations involved in community and social justice philanthropy in India.
3. Evaluate the recognition of caste within the community philanthropy sector and understand how this recognition, or lack thereof, shapes efforts to address caste-related inequalities in the development sector in India.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a qualitative and a quantitative approach, focusing on approximately 10 grassroots organisations in India. The selection criteria included early-stage organisations led by development leaders from marginalised communities and those founded by non-marginalised

community leaders for comparative analysis. The organisations were chosen based on their involvement in community and social justice philanthropy and the background of their leadership. The data collection methods involved semi-structured interviews with organisational leaders, focused group

discussions, analysis of organisational documents, and participant observation. This approach aimed to provide an in-depth understanding of the interplay between caste dynamics and philanthropic activities at the grassroots and systemic levels. On the quantitative side, a questionnaire was developed which contained basic questions about the organisation and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) which was circulated through Google forms. The founders of NGOs established between 2016 and 2024 were identified and contacted to participate in the study.

The significance of the study lies in contributing nuanced insights into how caste influences leadership, decision-making, staffing patterns and organisational development within the context of philanthropy. Ethical considerations, such as obtaining informed consent and ensuring anonymity, have been adhered to throughout the research process. The limitations include the specificity of the focus on non-profit organisations in India, limiting the generalisability of findings.

Caste and Inequality in the Organisational Setting

An organisational approach focuses on the strategies within organisations that contribute to income inequality in society. It examines how decisions, structures, and practices within them impact wealth distribution. In contrast, an institutional approach offers a broader view by exploring the

institutional forces that shape these organisational strategies (Davis, 2017). Inequality is not only influenced by organisational choices but also by the underlying logics and frameworks that sustain existing institutions. These include the identities that institutions create and reinforce, as well as the everyday social and organisational practices that legitimise and perpetuate inequality. By considering both the organisational and institutional perspectives, we gain a deeper understanding of how inequality is both produced and maintained within society.

Examining inequality from an institutional perspective offers valuable insights that enhance our understanding by complementing an organisational viewpoint. While an organisational perspective primarily addresses economic factors, focusing on the financial dimensions of inequality such as wealth and income, an institutional approach delves deeper into non-economic and non-financial aspects. These aspects are deeply embedded in the sociocultural fabric of society, highlighting how factors such as caste, social status, and cultural norms contribute to persistent disparities. By integrating both perspectives, a more comprehensive understanding of inequality can be developed, encompassing both the tangible economic factors and the intangible societal structures that sustain it.

An institutional approach to studying inequality can enrich our understanding of it. We focus on the caste system, which

plays a central role in shaping social and economic hierarchies, particularly in the Indian subcontinent. The caste system, with its long-standing historical and cultural roots, profoundly influences individuals' access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility. By examining the caste system through an institutional lens, we can better understand how these deep-seated social structures perpetuate inequality, not just in economic terms, but also in social, cultural, and political dimensions. This approach highlights the role of institutions in reinforcing caste-based disparities, thereby offering insights into how these entrenched inequalities are sustained and legitimised within society.

The caste system continues to restrict the realisation of human potential, as it significantly shapes, if not outright dictates social interactions, economic activities, and transactions. Despite legal provisions outlawing caste-based discrimination, both academic and popular narratives underscore that caste remains a powerful determinant of individual identity and socio-economic interactions in the Indian subcontinent. Scholars have consistently pointed to the persistence of caste as an influencing force in social dynamics, even in modern contexts. Their accounts highlight that while formal structures may have changed, caste continues to shape access to resources, opportunities, and social mobility, thereby maintaining its influence over people's lives.

A study by Dayanandan, Donker, and

Nofsinger (2019) contends that corporate boards in India are predominantly dominated by a single caste—Brahmins. These boards often exhibit interlocking relationships within the Brahmin caste itself, as well as with other forward castes. This network of interconnected leadership further consolidates the power of Brahmins and other upper castes in the corporate sector. The prevalence of such board interlocks strengthens the influence of these groups in business decision-making and perpetuates their dominance across multiple industries. As a result, it becomes more challenging for individuals from marginalised communities to gain representation or leadership roles in these spaces, thus reinforcing caste-based inequalities in the corporate world.

In a study on growth and development, Kendall (2012) argues that human capital significantly influences the relationship between banking sector development and economic growth in the local districts of India. Specifically, individuals from backward castes tend to have lower knowledge of financial instruments compared to those from higher castes. This gap is especially prominent in areas where backward caste groups are predominant. In contrast, individuals residing in areas with a higher concentration of upper castes generally exhibit greater financial literacy.

Thus, NGOs in India and the philanthropy domain owe their origin to the Gandhian tradition. Keeping that in mind, with time,

several church-based, rights-based NGOs started taking root in India and some of them did a stellar job in the context of human development, human rights and lending voice to the unheard. A few decades later, in 2013, the Indian Government brought in the CSR Act that mandated companies with annual profits above INR 100 crores spend 2% of their profits on social welfare activities. This ensured a steady flow of resources to NGOs to carry out their developmental activities consistently and the 'NGO Sector' also known as the 'Development Sector' or the 'Social Sector' grew. With it, opportunities of decent employment and a stable and a respectable income also increased. In the NGO Darpan portal, maintained by the NITI Aayog (think-tank of the Government of India), more than two lakh NGOs have been registered encompassing numerous domains and covering almost all the states in India. Overall, the sector grew at an unprecedented scale in the past decade. However, work in this sector also carries a risk of being allotted to a specific group, based on the existing societal biases and set hierarchies. Without its awareness, understanding and conscious actions to combat it, there is a high chance that these hierarchies get reflected and reproduced, perpetuating the cycle of inequality and discrimination. Thus, an important objective of this research is to find out how such biases operate in NGOs and philanthropy which may equip them, the leadership and philanthropy institutions, make informed choices and take another step towards achieving

equality. Another contribution that the study can make is the advancement of knowledge about this sector and enrich academic scholarship while simultaneously acting as a valuable resource for practitioners, policymakers and other stakeholders working for a more equitable society.

Philanthropy—An Overview

As discussed before, philanthropy's role in the sustenance of NGOs is paramount. In this section, we will briefly discuss important aspects of philanthropy.

India's philanthropic traditions are deeply embedded in its cultural and historical framework, reflecting a rich tapestry of generosity and social consciousness that has evolved over centuries. At its core lies the concept of giving, which has been integral to various religious and spiritual practices. In Hinduism, the principles of daana (charity) and dakshina (offerings) emphasise the moral duty of individuals to share their wealth for the greater good. Similarly, bhiksha (alms) in Buddhism represents a foundational practice of humility and sustenance for monastic communities, while Islam's zakaat (obligatory charity) and sadaqaat (voluntary giving) underscore the ethical responsibility of supporting the underprivileged (Vishvanath, Dadrawala; 2004). These deeply rooted traditions have not only shaped individual and unorganised acts of kindness but have also cultivated a collective consciousness around the importance of giving within Indian society.

The transition from informal to organised philanthropy began with the influence of Buddhism and Christianity. Buddhist sanghas (monastic orders) were among the first to institutionalise the concept of service, creating structured systems to support the needy (ibid). These early efforts provided a model for organised charity, emphasising collective responsibility. Christianity further contributed to this evolution, bringing the gospel of service to India through initiatives such as schools, hospitals, homes for the elderly, and facilities for the marginalised. These establishments reflected a shift from sporadic acts of charity to sustained, institutional approaches to addressing societal needs. This legacy of organised philanthropy set a precedent for future efforts in social welfare.

Industrialisation in the late 19th century catalysed another significant transformation in Indian philanthropy. As economic opportunities expanded, business leaders began directing a portion of their corporate wealth towards social welfare. This era saw the rise of prominent industrial families who established charitable trusts and foundations as a way to give back to society. Their initiatives ranged from building educational institutions and healthcare facilities to supporting community development projects. This corporate-driven philanthropy laid the foundation for a formalised tradition of giving that subsequent generations would adopt and refine. These efforts not only reinforced the culture of

philanthropy but also demonstrated its potential to address larger societal challenges through strategic and organised means.

Philanthropy plays a pivotal role in advancing global equity beyond the broader concerns of government and narrow interests of business. The resources and ingenuity of private and voluntary sectors need to be leveraged to address key development and equity challenges. The concept of “social investing” must be swiftly and solidly established which is imperative in the Indian context. Despite having long established traditions of philanthropy and charitable engagement (since the Gandhian phase), philanthropy has not systematically addressed India’s most fundamental development problems. It has provided charitable relief to those in need but has not addressed the underlying problems of deprivation. Philanthropy, traditionally practised by private trusts, family foundations, corporate donors, etc., has had limited impact in bridging inequities. Some of factors contributing to the astronomical increase in the number of Not-for-Profit Organisations (NPOs) are weakening government delivery systems, widespread poverty and deprivation, increasing inequities, rising awareness and social concern regarding under-development and an influx of increased funding—both Indian and foreign. There are substantial obstacles and barriers in promoting social investing like knowledge and information gap in philanthropy, legal and regulatory

concerns (excessive government control), etc.

Social Justice Philanthropy: A Critical Assessment

Social justice philanthropy, which seeks to address systemic inequalities and promote human rights, faces significant challenges in India. Funding for initiatives targeting complex social issues like human rights has been steadily declining, exacerbated by governmental resistance to perceived interference in political matters by non-profit organisations. The enforcement of the Foreign Contributions Regulation Act (FCRA) has further restricted the flow of international funding, effectively curbing the activities of many organisations working in this space.

The landscape of social justice philanthropy in India remains notably underdeveloped, particularly when international initiatives are excluded. While Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funding has emerged as a substantial source of financial support, it has not filled the void left by diminishing foreign contributions. Much of the CSR funding is compliance-driven, directed primarily towards government-aligned initiatives, such as infrastructure projects like building toilets, which align with the activities deemed eligible under the Companies Act. While valuable in their own right, such initiatives often sidestep deeper, more politically sensitive issues of systemic change.

Additionally, NGOs that receive CSR

funding face stringent reporting and regulatory requirements, which can hamper their ability to innovate or focus on transformative work. The philanthropic preferences of India's newly wealthy also tend to mirror these limitations. Many prefer to fund projects that avoid contentious political or structural challenges, favouring safer, less controversial causes. As a result, initiatives addressing systemic inequities or advocating for policy changes remain underfunded.

This reluctance to engage with the complex and often political aspects of societal transformation has created a significant gap in the philanthropic ecosystem. For social justice philanthropy to thrive, it is essential to expand its scope beyond compliance and convenience, encouraging support for bold, equity-driven interventions that challenge entrenched inequalities and promote sustainable societal change.

Potential and Crisis

The potential for scaling up transformative philanthropy in India is immense. Across the country, citizens' associations and civil society organisations operate actively in every district and town, mobilising communities, advocating for their rights, and fostering self-reliance through grassroots initiatives. These organisations have played a pivotal role in enabling citizens to claim their entitlements and hold governance institutions accountable. However, such efforts face a critical threat. The lack of

flexible, sustainable funding jeopardises their very existence, leaving a vacuum in social mobilisation and advocacy efforts. This crisis has been exacerbated by the retreat of foreign funding, historically a significant contributor to human rights and complex issue-based initiatives. With foreign contributions dwindling, Indian philanthropy has yet to effectively fill the void. While there is growing attention to compliance-driven funding, such as through CSR initiatives, these often prioritise government-backed programs and infrastructure development rather than the systemic and politically sensitive causes that human rights advocacy requires.

The pressing question remains: where will future funding for human rights and other multifaceted social issues come from? For transformative philanthropy to flourish, there must be a shift towards flexible and innovative funding models that prioritise long-term impact. Encouraging Indian philanthropists to embrace the challenging, equity-driven aspects of societal change is crucial. Investments in transformative efforts, including social mobilisation and rights-based advocacy, are essential for fostering a more just and equitable society. These investments will not only sustain existing civil society initiatives but also empower them to scale up their impact, ensuring the survival and growth of a robust, inclusive civil society.

Social justice funding through community philanthropy remains a long-term prospect. Currently, much

of community giving is influenced by religious and charitable motivations, rather than a focus on systemic change. Often, those with resources have benefitted from existing inequities and hesitate to support causes challenging these structures, such as the empowerment of marginalised groups. The challenge and potential then exist for marginalised communities to create their own foundations, leveraging their networks to mobilise resources. Such initiatives could play a transformative role in addressing inequities and fostering social justice, though building this capacity will require time and sustained effort.

Wealthy individuals and corporations can contribute to social causes, but their willingness often depends on avoiding conflict with government policies. Their support tends to focus on broader and general areas like economic empowerment for women or entrepreneurship for marginalised groups, as these initiatives align with broader societal goals and remain non-controversial.

However, there is limited funding directed toward addressing systemic issues, such as conflicts between social groups or structural inequalities. To create meaningful change, donor education must emphasise shifting from “giving back” to actively solving societal problems. This involves understanding systemic challenges, adopting strategic philanthropic practices, and diversifying areas of support to achieve broader

societal impact.

For example, institutional efforts to address caste-based issues often operate under the leadership of individuals from dominant or higher caste groups, raising critical questions about power dynamics and societal acceptance (Bapuji and Chrispal; 2020). A prominent example is Sulabh International, a non-profit organisation employing a workforce of 35,000, primarily Dalits, to manage sanitation services across India. Despite working in a sector deeply stigmatised due to its association with caste hierarchies, the organisation has achieved notable acceptance and recognition. However, it is significant to note that the founder of Sulabh International comes from a Brahmin background, a privileged social position within India's caste system.

This scenario raises a pertinent question: would Sulabh International have achieved the same level of acceptance, resources, or influence if it had been founded by individuals from Dalit or other marginalised communities? (ibid). The historical and social context suggests that efforts initiated by marginalised groups often face heightened resistance, limited access to resources, and systemic barriers that hinder their scalability and societal acceptance. This underscores the deeply entrenched biases within societal structures, where initiatives are often validated or undermined based on the social position of their leaders rather than the merit of their cause.

This dynamic highlights the need for equitable representation in leadership to challenge and dismantle such biases effectively.

Way Ahead

Community philanthropy offers a sustainable pathway for developing marginalised communities by fostering local resource mobilisation and empowering smaller, community-based organisations (CBOs). Unlike larger entities that rely on institutional donors or government support, CBOs thrive on local contributions and the engagement of community leaders who intimately understand and address the unique challenges faced by their communities. These leaders, deeply rooted in the community's day-to-day activities, are more likely to gain trust and acceptance, making them effective agents of change.

However, community philanthropy presents significant challenges. A notable issue is the scarcity of effective social leadership within marginalised communities. Often, promising leaders are co-opted by national or regional political parties that prioritise divisive strategies, undermining their potential for genuine social impact. Developing systems that recognise and sustain independent social leadership is crucial to avoiding this pitfall. Resource mobilisation also remains a persistent challenge. Establishing transparency, accountability, and leadership within the community is essential for building trust and attracting contributions of money, time, and expertise. Although

credibility takes time to build, once achieved, it paves the way for broader community participation and support. While the focus is on local resource mobilisation, the role of sensitive external donors should not be overlooked. They can play a pivotal role in helping communities create sustainable assets, ultimately strengthening the foundation of community-driven development.

4. Review Of Literature

4.1 Caste and Labour

India's socio-economic landscape is profoundly shaped by the caste system, a hierarchical social structure deeply ingrained in its history and culture. This entrenched system continues to perpetuate inequality, limiting opportunities for marginalised communities. Deshpande, A (2012) discussed caste in India and how it influences the economic opportunities and the labour market of India for the marginalised communities. If inclusive growth is the ideal, it is very difficult to achieve in a complex system like India where caste system and caste hierarchy is deeply rooted.

In India, high-quality educational institutes are often found in the areas where upper castes reside, thus the quality of education received by the marginalised communities is often very low and the institutions accessible to them lack necessary resources. Because of the lower economic status, they are not able to access high-quality education in private institutions

either. In the higher education system Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) are observed to have higher dropout rates because of poor economic conditions and the students find it difficult to sustain themselves in the Higher Education Institutes (HEIs). The existing systemic barriers prevent an inclusive environment for the students, leading to dropouts and an incomplete education. Thus, the barriers in education and lack of "professional skills" eventually lead them to the informal sector of the economy.

Formal employment uplifts the economic status of the Dalits and this economic status paves the way towards achieving an higher social status. However, these linkages between caste, occupation and economic status are not accepted uncritically. It has sometimes been argued that, "the relationship between caste and occupation has been much misrepresented. It is unclear that there was at any time a complete correspondence between the two. At

any rate, even before independence many castes, probably most, had more than half their working members in occupations other than those specifically associated with their caste.” Multiple papers and data suggest that the informal sector or labour market is filled with workers from marginalised communities and they find themselves in jobs like manual scavenging, domestic work, manual labour, and other low status jobs due to poor education and lack of skills. The informal sector has no social security and no social protection measures. In India, caste plays a pivotal role in the perception of remuneration. There is a huge difference found in various caste perceptions on remunerative earnings, and the lower class has often found that they have less expectations in the remuneration compared to the upper caste (Goel, D and Deshpande, A (2018). According to the study, 82% of the individuals from the ST community considered less than Rs. 3000 to be adequate, compared to 71% in SCs and 70% in OBCs. But within the upper castes, this percentage was only 54! This perception is not just based on economic and educational status but depends upon the internalisation of caste and the discrimination they face that leads them toward low self-worth. When it comes to the formal market, that includes government and corporate jobs, it is divided into lines of caste where high paying, secure jobs and decision-making is often under the control of the upper castes. As a result, the historical caste system denying access to education and skill development to

marginalised communities makes it harder for them to get into the formal sector. If they indeed are successful in finding employment there, they may have to face discrimination in promotions, hiring, and workplace culture that continue to restrict upward mobility of this community. In such spaces, marginalised castes enjoy fewer opportunities in advancement compared to their upper caste colleagues. Various new job opportunities were created by globalisation and liberalisation policies, which were expected to reduce caste-based discrimination. However, these changes have often reinforced existing inequalities. In multinational companies, the primary ownership is often abroad and the companies are managed by the local management. This brings back discrimination into the workplace and as a result, Dalits face discrimination in the modern globalised market too. Also, new employment opportunities in the corporate sector require technical skills and fluency in English which are, most of the time, inaccessible to people from Dalit and Adivasi communities due to the historical denial of quality education. This further pushes them down the hierarchy in the formal sector. The deep-rooted caste system ensures that Dalits and marginalised communities face the exclusion of economic growth and formal employment.

Two aspects of caste inequalities deserve attention: inequality of opportunity and inequality of outcome. Centuries of caste-based social organisation have left a legacy of inequality in access

to land, education, business ownership and occupation. These processes lead to unequal access to productive resources and thereby lead to material disadvantages. However, caste-based inequalities are not simply limited to inequality in opportunity. It has also been argued that even highly qualified members of lower castes face social and economic discrimination resulting in inequality of outcomes (Thorat and Newman 2009).

4.2 Caste, Businesses and Entrepreneurship

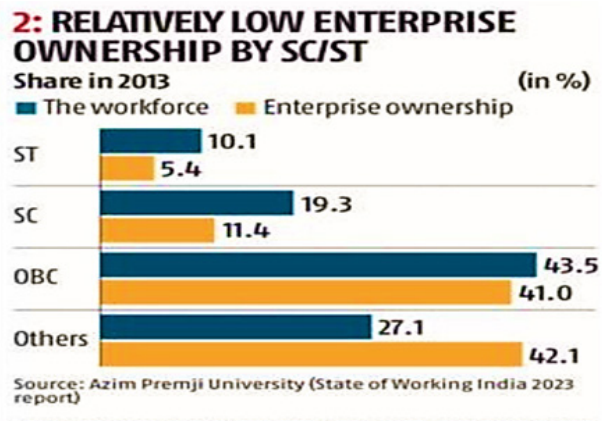
As highlighted by Mosse and Thorat (2023), systemic social discrimination spills over to the labour market as well, resulting in unfavourable employment, low wages and a lack of access to decent work opportunities for the marginalised castes. Jodhka (2016) points out that the socio-economic mobility of those towards the bottom end of the social ladder is more horizontal than vertical, that is, the transition from caste-based traditional occupations is observed to be towards low-wage and insecure employment in agriculture or the informal sector. This acts as an incentive for the oppressed groups to move towards self-employment, entrepreneurship, and businesses as a means to gain some socio-economic mobility. The vertical socio-economic mobility for the oppressed communities implies a shift to formal jobs and/or ownership of enterprises which results in economic wellbeing. Jodhka (2010) argues that the latter, that is, the ownership of enterprises, can be impactful in ensuring vertical mobility for marginalised caste groups who historically have been landless and systemically deprived of

assets. Historically and even currently, trade, business and finance have continued to be the exclusive domains of the trading and dominant castes who have accumulated massive cultural capital which paves the way for the establishment, survival and flourishing of the enterprises and businesses (Das, 1999).

Bal, G and Judge, S (2010) discuss the social, economic, and political mobility that the Scheduled Caste communities have achieved through entrepreneurship in the cities of Amritsar and Jalandhar in Punjab. It was observed that through entrepreneurship, the Dalit communities, particularly the artisan castes, were successful in acquiring higher economic status, which ultimately also raised their social status and political power in the society. Thus, the authors advocate entrepreneurship as a means to empower the oppressed communities and call upon policymakers to further encourage entrepreneurship as a tool to achieve social equality. Another example of entrepreneurship undertaken by Scheduled Caste individuals is highlighted by Linda Mayoux. It is a case

of individuals from the Scheduled Castes in small-scale entrepreneurship in the silk reeling industry in Karnataka, from Silkapura and four neighbouring villages in the district of Mysore. The individuals were former labourers who have enjoyed success as entrepreneurs in spite of the lack of capital and high levels of risk involved. An important reason behind this success was credit facilities and developmental policies targeting the vulnerable groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and women. Similar trends were pointed out by Fairlie, R (2001) in a paper that explored the dynamics of entrepreneurship of non-white communities in the United States of America. Thus, it is safe to conclude that entrepreneurship holds a lot of potential when it comes to the upward socio-economic and political mobility of disadvantaged groups. However, the percentage of ownership of enterprises by the Dalit, Bahujan, Adivasi communities remains largely disproportionate in comparison to the percentage of their population. Using the data from the Economic Census of India. Iyer et al., (2013) examining the relationship between caste and entrepreneurship, found that as late as 2005, SCs and STs share in firm ownership was abysmally low and this under-representation was observed in all major states of India irrespective of the settings being urban or rural. For example, the share of enterprise ownership among the SCs was found to be 9.8% when they formed 16.4% of the total population. Furthermore, enterprises owned by individuals from

SC and ST communities were observed to be smaller, and more likely to belong to the informal and the unorganised sector.



Source: Azim Premji University (State of working India 2023 report)

Rakshit, A and Basole, A (2024) emphasise that political gains for the oppressed caste groups in the post-Mandal period was not accompanied by similar progress in entrepreneurship. It was found that the systemic exclusion of marginalised communities in ownership of enterprises takes place in three stages:

1. Share of enterprise ownership by disadvantaged groups is lesser than their share in the workforce implying that a lower proportion of individuals from marginalised communities take up entrepreneurship/become entrepreneurs.
2. A disproportionately higher proportion of entrepreneurs from the marginalised communities are more likely to be engaged in enterprises that are subsistence-oriented.

3. Entrepreneurs from marginalised communities tend to be engaged in smaller enterprises and very less likely to have commercial and revenue-generating enterprises.

This exclusion of disadvantaged groups from entrepreneurship manifests at the social as well as institutional levels. At the social level, dominant social groups stonewall the entry of marginalised castes into businesses and entrepreneurship through their networks and informal agreements. While at the institutional level, discrimination is observed in the credit/loan market which lowers the chances for individuals from marginalised communities to avail credit. Even if credit facilities are made available, the amounts are often lowered for people from oppressed caste backgrounds. Thus, the domain of entrepreneurship, a promising option for disadvantaged groups to achieve upward socio-economic mobility remains plagued with systemic discrimination and institutional barriers.

4.3 The Development sector and Social Entrepreneurship

Non-governmental organisations and Not-for-Profit Organisations (NPOs) play a crucial role in the society by advocating for social change, working at the grassroots, and improving the lives of those belonging to underprivileged and disadvantaged backgrounds. The conventional definition of entrepreneurship is often interpreted through the lens of profit making. However, it is the entrepreneurial spirit which is key to initiating projects and mobilising resources whether for profit making or for promoting a social cause. Handy and Kassam (2001) define a non-profit entrepreneur as a self-directed and innovative leader. Handy et al (2003) identify that entrepreneurs from both these sectors face a similar set of challenges like identifying opportunities, resource mobilisation and undertaking risks. Organisations working in the development sector focus on a host of issues such as human rights, equality, and social justice. On the other hand, it replicates the systemic biases that are evident in the corporate and private sectors. The development sector forms a major chunk of the Indian civil society which also comprises trade unions, sangathans (organisations), media and lawyers. Navayan, B (2015) argues that the civil society also reinforces the norms dictated by social hierarchies, which are visible within such organisations especially in important positions. International aid agencies operating in India and the Indian unit of the United Nations (UN), are dominated by Brahmins and individuals from other oppressor castes. In the development sector, which claims to be working for the welfare of the marginalised, dominant caste individuals are heavily over-represented at the decision-making levels and positions of influence.

Contrarily, individuals from the social and economic margins of the society are over-represented in fieldwork positions (O'Reilly, 2011). Another striking example is that of the composition of the individuals in "positions of power and influence (POPI)" in Allahabad (Dreze et al 2015). These individuals were a part of educational institutions like the Allahabad University and the Indian Institute of Information Technology (IIIT) Allahabad, administrative institutions like the district administration, Allahabad Municipal Corporation, etc., and also the Allahabad High Court. Additionally, it also included individuals from civil society such as trade unions and NGOs. Findings showed that the dominance of the upper castes was stronger in the civil society than in the state institutions. 80% of People's Oriented Program Implementation (POPIs) in the NGOs and trade unions (interestingly, members of trade unions overwhelmingly belong to the oppressed caste communities) were reported to be from the upper castes. The disadvantaged communities were mostly relegated to the menial, subordinate and laborious occupations. The reinforced social exclusion of disadvantaged communities from POPIs undermines the constitutional right to equality of opportunity and reproduces class and economic inequalities. The authors argue that nothing prevents the Bar Association, NGOs and the trade unions from becoming "upper-caste clubs" and in that process, they safeguard the privileges that come with caste.

Navayan B, 2015 critically evaluates the practice of values of accountability and transparency practised by 34 developmental organisations in a study conducted in 2005. The study revealed that development organisations were not ready to share information on the caste diversity of their staff, which might put their poor track record of implementing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) policies in the public domain. Out of the 34 organisations, only two provided the information. Nevertheless, the information was inadequate.

These examples underline the systemic biases, prejudices, and discrimination in the development sector. As the literature available on the recognition of caste in the community philanthropy domain is very little, this study seeks to evaluate how this recognition or the lack of it, shapes the efforts to address caste-based inequalities in the development sector in India.

A Case Study of Eklavya India Foundation

Eklavya India Foundation empowers first-generation college students from historically caste-marginalised communities, including Scheduled Castes (Dalits), Scheduled Tribes (Adivasis), Nomadic and Denotified Tribes, and Other Backward Classes. These communities comprise 75% of India's population and 10-12% of the global population. According to Oxfam, 90% of families in these communities earn less than \$2,000 annually.

My tryst with Eklavya India Foundation (movement) begins with the Indian educational system. Coming from a background of no education in the lineage of my family and relatives, I aspired to dream big. Thanks to my uneducated parents who understood the importance of education, after finishing my 12th boards, I dreamt of going to Pune for my undergraduate studies. The prospects of quality education in local towns and cities are negligible; if one aims to dream, lest be it big, Pune and Mumbai remain the last resorts. Though it's a different matter that the cost and standard of education sometimes come to higher than the value of our dreams themselves. I came to Pune from Buldhana in Vidarbha with the dream of becoming an 'IAS officer with a siren car'. However, the entire atmosphere was overwhelming. I could not cope with city life and left Pune in the next six months due to serious financial problems. After hanging my UPSC boots in Pune and subsequent dropping out from the graduate degree, I happened to find myself in Melghat between 2012 and 2014; for a nineteen something Raju, something changed and Melghat altered the course of his life. Imagine a dropout, finds a chance to volunteer with a non-profit working in Melghat, on the border of Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. The work focused on people's movements and eradicating child mortality.

By working in Melghat, I realised, to understand India and its democratic shortcomings, you need to begin

by understanding the last possible denomination of India, in this case, a remote-most tribal area (Melghat in Maharashtra state) which had not yet seen the day of light, let alone education. The Indian education system, keeping in mind all its problems and structural inequities has not yet devised a system to gauge the merit of its vast demography of students. By working in an otherwise inaccessible, remote region for 2-3 years, I could gauge the problem grappling society, so I could work towards addressing it. In the following years, along with local activists, I started working with school children that would involve walking door to door, convincing parents and agreeing to take the whole responsibility for students' well-being. All of it just to ensure they do not drop out of school. Over the years, Eklavya has become home to students from Melghat. These students are pursuing Bachelors and Masters in prestigious universities.

During (my stay in) Melghat, I completed my undergraduation through a distance learning course. In 2014, I set out to do a Master's from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Tuljapur. After finishing it, I chanced upon Yavatmal and joined them as a guest faculty in the Savitri Jotirao College of Social Work. Through the course of my teaching undergraduate students there, I realised the lack of quality education opportunities for students. Without opportunities and access to facilities, the dreams of students would die down and thus end their pursuit of dreams. Since 2017, we have grown from supporting 7

students to impacting over 700 annually. To date, we have enabled more than 1,500 students from 20+ states and 200+ social caste groups to gain admission to 90+ prestigious universities, both in India and abroad, with many securing scholarships and fellowships. Our 400 alumni have achieved transformative outcomes, increasing family incomes tenfold and becoming role models in their communities. Women consistently represent a minimum 45–50% of our participants, and our efforts are fostering lasting socio-economic and cultural mobility.

As a first-generation social entrepreneur, I founded and led the organisation during its formative years and now oversee a dynamic team of 30 full time members and 300+ mentors. Under my leadership, Eklavya India Foundation has not only delivered measurable outcomes but also built a movement of grassroots leaders who are driving systemic change and shaping a more equitable future. For the success we see, it is necessary to begin with our story. Eklavya, started in remote areas working with the most deprived social groups in the Vidarbha belt of Maharashtra. Considering our work, the caste background of leadership, and target groups, for the first five years, we received no significant funding. From 2017 to 2021, we operated on a modest budget of ₹5 lakhs, the only way our organisation could thrive was through community participation and innovative funding efforts. Unlike CSR-backed initiatives aligned with corporate motives, Eklavya's mission-driven

approach focused on grassroots change.

Despite systemic challenges, Eklavya continues to champion critical issues, unwavering in its commitment to representing marginalised voices and addressing deep-rooted inequities with resilience and purpose. Over the years, we at Eklavya have listened to equity and justice, by amplifying the voices of those we serve. Students and alumni play an active role in shaping our programs, with 90% of mentors representing with lived experiences, the same communities they seek to mentor, serving as relatable role models to students. Their involvement creates a ripple effect of empowerment and transformation. Furthermore, our top leadership reflects this ethos—Akash Modak and Smita Tatewar, both alumni of Eklavya Foundation batches, under 30 from disadvantaged backgrounds—now serve as co-founders, ensuring our work remains rooted in justice, lived experience, and democratic values. At the decision-making levels, representation from tribal, Dalit, and marginalised communities remains minimal. This is not because they lack intellectual capacity, but due to systemic discrimination and the lack of opportunities they face at various entry points. In academia or policy, outsiders conduct research on tribal communities and present their issues. But why shouldn't the tribals articulate their own problems? Tribals should create policies and implement schemes for their welfare, ensuring that these are tailored to their needs.

The values that drive Eklavya are rooted in equity and social justice, inspired by our ancestors who fought for equality. I believe education is essential for eradicating caste-based discrimination and enabling upward social and economic mobility in India. My work focuses on dismantling systemic barriers and fostering a more inclusive society. I founded the Eklavya India Foundation (Movement) with its focus on providing the best of the Indian higher education system for the marginalised and first-generation learners of the country. Over seven years, the foundation has impacted over 1,500 students from over 20 states and 200+ social caste groups, securing admissions to 80+ top universities globally, often with \$5 million in scholarships and fellowships. With 1 million mentoring hours and over 700 one day workshops through our outreach programs for half million students, it fosters lasting socio-economic mobility. Alumni have increased family incomes tenfold, inspiring systemic change and equity in their communities. Women make up 45–50% of participants, ensuring gender equity. Eklavya India Foundation transforms education into a tool for liberation, shaping grassroots leaders and policymakers for a just society.

5. Key Analysis and Findings of NGOs

5.1 Learnings from the Field

The research on grassroots NGOs in India, particularly those led by marginalised community members, uncovers significant challenges and innovative strategies employed by founders to navigate complex socio-economic landscapes and promote community and social justice philanthropy. The NGOs discussed in the study, including Nyaay Darshak, Bandhubhaav Foundation, Sanvi NGO, Esther Foundation, and Ovi Foundation, collectively provide insights into caste dynamics, leadership challenges, and the importance of resilience in the face of resource constraints.

A common theme across these organisations is the severe resource limitations faced in their initial stages. Harshita Singhal of Nyaay Darshak highlights the emotional and financial strain experienced by founders, particularly in the absence of external funding. Founders often resort to bootstrapping, relying on personal skills and savings to sustain operations. In addition to funding difficulties, the task of managing all aspects of the organisation, from fieldwork to documentation, is overwhelming,

particularly for first-generation leaders from marginalised communities. These challenges underscore the need for diversified revenue sources and the importance of long-term sustainability strategies in the non-profit sector.

Caste Question in NGOs: Caste-based discrimination remains a persistent barrier to equitable social development, especially in rural areas. Maya Thakur of Sanvi NGO sheds light on the deeply ingrained caste prejudices that affect marginalised communities, particularly women and girls. These biases manifest in daily life, from discriminatory practices within schools to family conflicts due to inclusive practices. Maya's work focuses on empowering marginalised women and girls through skills training in areas like tailoring and IT, but her efforts are constantly hindered by societal and familial pressures, as well as a lack of institutional support. Similarly, Harshita Singhal discusses the subtle caste biases she faces as a non-Bengali within Bengal, underscoring the significance of navigating caste dynamics within the philanthropic space.

Strategies for Community Mobilisation:

Despite these challenges, the organisations have adopted creative approaches to community mobilisation and resource generation. Bandhubhaav Foundation utilises grassroots crowdfunding, collecting small donations in villages to sustain its initiatives. Networking with experienced NGOs and collaborating with government departments for funding opportunities

also helps mitigate the financial strain. Similarly, Pranali's Ovi Foundation, which works with the Dhangar community in Yavatmal, focuses on building trust within the community, an essential step before children are sent to the learning centre. The organisation collaborates with local Zilla Parishad schools to ensure that children from marginalised communities are integrated into the mainstream education system, thus fostering inclusive learning environments.

The Esther Foundation takes a proactive stance in addressing caste issues within its organisation and program design. Caste is not viewed as a peripheral issue but as a central topic that requires constant dialogue and action. The foundation promotes an inclusive environment by ensuring that a significant portion of its team (75%) comes from marginalised caste backgrounds. This organisational structure allows for open discussions around caste and discrimination, creating a psychologically safe space for team members to express their concerns. Additionally, Esther Foundation designs its programs with a deep awareness of caste dynamics, addressing the long-lasting impacts of caste on self-belief and dignity. Workshops and interventions are crafted to empower marginalised individuals, especially women from lower-caste backgrounds, and ensure equitable participation.

Female founders, in particular, face unique challenges in their leadership roles. Maya Thakur's experience

underscores the difficulties in balancing societal and familial expectations with professional responsibilities. As a woman leading a grassroots NGO, Maya faces scepticism and resistance from stakeholders, making it harder to secure funding and recognition. Gender-specific barriers also include the difficulty in traveling for fieldwork due to limited resources and support. Despite these challenges, Maya continues to make strides in her mission, fostering trust within the community and empowering marginalised women to take on leadership roles. This experience reflects the resilience and determination required to navigate gender and caste-based hurdles within the non-profit sector.

Networking and collaboration with other NGOs, corporations, and government entities are crucial for the success of these grassroots organisations. Maya's experience highlights the disparities in resources and credibility when working with larger NGOs, which often prioritise organisations with established track records. However, networking through social media and other platforms has helped her connect with other stakeholders and increased the visibility of her work and connect with other stakeholders. Similarly,

Bandhubhaav Foundation has engaged in collaborations with experienced organisations like Eklavya Foundation to expand its reach and strengthen its programs. These collaborations not only provide financial and technical support but also enhance the credibility of smaller organisations that lack institutional backing.

The findings from these case studies underscore the resilience, innovation, and determination required to overcome the various challenges faced by grassroots NGOs in India. Founders, particularly those from marginalised communities, navigate a complex socio-political landscape shaped by caste-based discrimination, limited resources, and societal biases. Despite these obstacles, these organisations continue to make meaningful strides toward promoting community empowerment, gender equality, and social justice. Their work highlights the importance of caste sensitivity, inclusive leadership, and collaborative approaches in building sustainable social impact. As these organisations evolve, the need for systemic change in the social sector becomes increasingly evident, calling for greater collaboration, resources, and support to ensure long-term sustainability and broader social equity.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Initiating steps towards establishing the NGO itself is a common challenge faced by social entrepreneurs coming from marginalised backgrounds. During an interview with a founder of an NGO, which provides mentorship for women belonging to marginalised caste backgrounds on job readiness, she explained how difficult it was for her to make the decision of starting the NGO. A lack of relatable role models, having no business or entrepreneurship background in the immediate and extended family, lack of networking skills, and self-belief were some of the reasons mentioned. Moreover, regarding the existence of casteism in the development sector, she recalls an incident while pursuing post-graduation from a reputed development institute in India. While working on a group project on people engaged in laundry services, she suggested that they look at the schemes the government provides to the “Dhobi” community and link them to these schemes as this community has traditionally been engaged in the activities. She faced opposition from her peers for this suggestion as she had directly linked a caste with a particular occupation.

Another founder from a marginalised community explained the challenges faced by her in the initial stages of

setting it up. The NGO runs a ‘learning centre’ for school going children from the “Dhangar” nomadic tribe in a village in the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra. She said that the vision was to not create a parallel system of education but to get children from this community integrated into the mainstream education system and government schools. This initiative was viewed in a negative light by government officials and she was encouraged to work with schools that were “better”. Another hurdle she encountered was when she was raising funds for the organisation. To sustain the operations and activities of the NGO, she and her partner had to dip into their savings. As financial difficulties meant that they could not employ any additional worker, all the tasks pertaining to the fieldwork, management and documentation were managed by her. Obtaining funds, establishing trust with the beneficiary community (for NGOs working at the community level), liaising with the government were some of the areas in which the founders faced challenges.

Founders from marginalised caste backgrounds were observed to be at a greater disadvantage owing to the information gap about funding opportunities like institutional funding, CSR or individual fellowships that are

provided by philanthropic organisations nationally and internationally. Founders from non-marginalised caste backgrounds were better placed at accessing funding opportunities through crowdfunding and from individual donors, fellowships than the founders of marginalised caste backgrounds, a phenomenon also observed in another study (Handy, et al. 2003) on women social entrepreneurs around Pune. It was observed in the study that personal connections gave the women entrepreneurs access to volunteer labour, often by recruiting friends and family and also, donations to run the NGO. It is important to note that 15 of the 20 women entrepreneurs studied belonged to the Brahmin caste and only one entrepreneur was a Bahujan. Similar observations regarding volunteer labour and donations have also been recorded in studies on non-profit entrepreneurs in the West (Pilz, 1995). During the interviews, it was observed that founders from marginalised castes have a profound understanding of caste and the role it plays at the individual and community levels, and how it affects socio-political-economic mobility for the historically disadvantaged communities. Founders from non-marginalised backgrounds recognised caste as a social problem and associated it with the visible aspects of caste-based practices and discrimination like untouchability, lack of education, and poverty. This might be one of the reasons behind founders from marginalised castes designing and implementing programs through their NGOs that

directly addressed caste-based inequalities. Some of the examples of the programs being run are mentoring women from marginalised caste backgrounds to ensure job-readiness for their career aspirations, making higher education accessible to first generation learners and students from marginalised communities, educational programs for students from nomadic tribal communities and career guidance programs for students at Government hostels run for students from Scheduled Tribes.

From the quantitative data collected through Google forms, founders of grassroots/early-stage NGOs are in complete support of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) measures. However, this is not necessarily reflected in the staffing patterns of the organisations. Gender diversity is visible through all the organisations at the employee as well as managerial/decision-making levels. Caste diversity at the employee and managerial levels is visible mostly in the NGOs founded by individuals from marginalised caste backgrounds. Though caste is recognised as an important social variable by the founders, inclusion of individuals from disadvantaged caste backgrounds at the project team level and the decision-making levels is not visible. Only 30% of NGOs responded positively when they were asked whether they had Dalit/Bahujan/Adivasi representation at the project team and managerial levels, compared to 70% answering "Yes" on gender inclusivity at the same levels.

When asked about the recruitment of individuals from oppressed caste backgrounds, a founder from a non-marginalised background said that during the hiring process, the caste of the individual is not asked and hence, they did not have any information regarding the caste of their employees.

6.1 Summary

The caste system creates a hierarchical structure that assigns individuals varying levels of financial and non-financial resources. This unequal distribution of resources leads to differential access to education, skills, and social opportunities. As a result, individuals are often confined to roles traditionally designated to their caste, limiting opportunities for mobility or advancement. These occupational roles, in turn, determine the financial and social rewards individuals receive. The upper castes, occupying positions of power and privilege, amass the majority of the wealth generated through economic activities, reinforcing the social and economic disparities inherent in the caste system. This systemic inequity perpetuates the division of labour along caste lines, ensuring that the lower castes remain at the margins, both economically and socially.

The unequal access to productive resources and opportunities between the wealthy and the rest of society directly influences the level of rewards individuals can earn for their contributions to value creation in organisations (Bapuji, 2018). Those who engage in opportunity-driven entrepreneurship, typically with more access to capital, networks, and resources, tend to receive higher returns for their efforts compared to those involved in necessity or subsistence entrepreneurship. The latter group, often from marginalised or lower socioeconomic backgrounds, may have limited access to the same resources, thus earning lower returns despite putting in similar levels of effort. This disparity in access and rewards further entrenches inequality, as individuals with greater opportunities can capitalise on economic activities, while those in disadvantaged positions face significant barriers to upward mobility. Social entrepreneurship, like entrepreneurship in the commercial space, faces a set of challenges from innovation to resource mobilisation. The caste background of social entrepreneurs is an important determinant of the socio-cultural capital. The abundance or the lack of socio-cultural capital can drive the journeys of the organisations in completely different directions. The fact that social entrepreneurs from marginalised communities are met with resistance at every step is seldom recognised by the philanthropy community, which further distances them from accessing resources crucial to the development of their NGOs.

Furthermore, to recommend: It is crucial that corporates shift the focus of their CSR

efforts from just education and health to creating quality livelihood opportunities and employment for marginalised communities. Many managers currently avoid discussing caste issues in the workplace, but organisations must initiate conversations about caste and its societal implications to foster awareness and encourage caste-blindness. Although policies exist to address caste discrimination, their implementation is often ineffective, so it is essential to introduce caste sensitisation programs, particularly for recruiters and hiring managers, to ensure more inclusive hiring practices. Additionally, the government should incentivise family-run businesses and MSMEs to incorporate caste and disability-based Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) practices, thereby promoting a more inclusive work environment across all sectors.

6.2 Limitations of this Study

The organisations considered for this study are all early-stage NGOs limiting the scope of the study.

6.3 Implications for Future Research

This study highlights the ways in which caste dynamics influence community and social justice philanthropy, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on equitable social development and philanthropic practices.

7. Declaration Of Conflict Of Interest

The author of this paper has no conflict of interest to declare.

Declaration of Generative AI and AI-Assisted Technologies

“In preparing this manuscript, I have used AI tools specifically for grammar checks, and I take full responsibility for the content.”

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9. Appendices

Firstly, on the quantitative side, a detailed questionnaire was finalised and circulated to the potential participants of the study via Google forms. This questionnaire included questions regarding personal, family, and organisational aspects. Secondly, for the qualitative side of the study, a set of questions was created for the in-depth interviews that were subsequently conducted. Among 20 NGO respondents, we asked if they would like to do an in-depth interview with us. We got six in-depth interviews with NGO founders. Both the questionnaires were created by the end of the first week of April. After that, Google forms were circulated for data collection, and in-depth interviews were conducted to derive insights into the subject.

Appendix 1: A Questionnaire for NGOs

1. Name of the NGO founder
2. Highest educational qualification and college/university
3. Name of the NGO
4. Year of establishment
5. Number of employees at present
6. Challenges during the organization building phase of the NGO. (MCQ)
7. Do you think Diversity, Equity and Inclusion is essential for the growth of the organisation?
8. Is the project team gender representative?
9. Does the NGO run programs/projects that directly address gender inequity?
10. Is there a representation in the project team of those who have worked with the communities that the project works on? For example, experience of working with school dropout of girls/education of marginalised communities and schedule tribes/sexual violence/human rights education, etc.
11. Is there Dalit/Adivasi/Bahujan representation in the project team?
12. Does the NGO run programs/projects that directly address inequity for marginalised/oppressed communities?
13. Is there Dalit/Adivasi/Bahujan representation at the managerial level? (Yes/No. If yes, what percentage)

- 14.** Would you be interested in participating in an interview that may help us understand your perspectives in greater detail?

Appendix 2: Respondents for In-Depth Interviews

Out of 20, based on their response, scale of work, enthusiasm, and relevancy, we shortlisted six NGO founders to interview.

No.	Name of Founder	NGO name
1.	Harshita Singhal	Nyaay Darshak
2.	Ankush Nagulwar	Bandhubhaav Foundation
3.	Pranali Jadhav	Ovi Trust
4.	Maya Singh Thakur	Sanvi Mahila Jan Seva Sansthan
5.	Ravali P	Esther Foundation
6.	Shubham Kanure	Youth for Nature

Appendix 3: In-Depth Interview Questionnaire for NGOs

Introductory Questions

- 1.** Can you share an introduction of yourself? (basic details, educational background, work, etc.)
- 2.** Can you share an introduction of your NGO? (journey of founding the NGO, the idea behind it, the vision and mission, etc.)
- 3.** What role do you think NGOs should play or are playing in the context of development?

Challenges

1. What were the challenges faced by you before/during and after founding the NGO?
2. Was acquiring funding for the NGO a major challenge and what methods did you employ to tackle it?
3. How do you think these challenges have affected the growth trajectory of your organisation?

Operations

1. Can you tell me about the programs/projects that are being implemented by the organisation?
2. Are/Is there any program/programs being run that address social inequity (gender, income, class, caste, etc.,)?
3. What kinds of challenges do you face in implementing these programs as an early-stage/ grassroots NGO?

Organisations and DEI

1. Would you explain the hierarchy of employees in the organisation?
2. What are your thoughts on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) from the perspective of organisational development?
3. Does the organisation implement any DEI measures during the hiring process?

Caste and Development

1. What role do you think gender currently plays from the context of individual social mobility/ individual development and in accessing opportunities?
2. What role do you think caste currently plays from the context of individual social mobility/ individual development and in accessing opportunities?

From the Mentor's Desk



The Research Fellowship Programme at ISDM's Centre for Philanthropy for Inclusive Development (CPID), though just two years old, has already begun creating a valuable body of work that offers key insights into critical issues within India's Social Sector.

The 2024-25 Cohort presents a fascinating range of research topics, one of which I had the privilege of engaging with through Raju Kendre's study. His research provides a thought-provoking analysis of caste-based hierarchies within India's non-profit sector, particularly in grassroots organisations focused on community and social justice philanthropy.

Raju's work is situated within a historical and sociological framework that underscores the persistence of caste as a determining factor in social and economic opportunities. Drawing on theories of inequality, the study argues that caste continues to shape leadership dynamics, decision-making processes, and access to philanthropic resources in significant ways.

The central thesis of the research is compelling: while philanthropy has undoubtedly played a crucial role in sustaining NGOs in India, it has largely failed to address the deep-rooted structural inequities, especially those tied to caste. The research employs a robust methodology, combining both qualitative and quantitative approaches—interviews, focus group discussions, and surveys with NGO founders. By including organisations led by both marginalised and non-marginalised leaders, the study explores how caste influences organisational growth, leadership, and decision-making.

The research goes beyond organisational structures to investigate the broader institutional and economic dimensions of caste-based disparities. It critically examines how caste impacts financial literacy, access to funding, and leadership representation across both the corporate and non-profit sectors.

One of the study's greatest strengths is its critical approach to philanthropy, challenging the commonly held belief that philanthropy is always an unqualified force for good. However, the research could benefit from a deeper exploration of successful models of caste-inclusive philanthropy to offer more concrete solutions for change.

Overall, this study represents a significant contribution to the ongoing discourse on equity within India's development sector, providing valuable insights for policymakers, philanthropists, and civil society actors who are committed to social justice.

An important feature of the Research Fellowship Program is the mentorship component, which allows researchers to refine their ideas with the guidance of sector specialists. Personally, mentoring Raju through this process has been very rewarding. His research highlighted a critical, often overlooked aspect of inclusion that is crucial for the development sector to address.



Malini Thadani

From the Mentor's Desk



Too often, academic rigour remains disconnected from practice, just as field realities seldom inform theoretical frameworks. The Research Fellowship Programme at ISDM's Centre for Philanthropy for Inclusive Development (CPID) is a distinctive initiative aimed at bridging this gap. Designed to generate insightful, academically grounded, and practice-oriented research, the fellowship has, in just two years, made meaningful contributions towards reimagining philanthropy for a more inclusive and equitable world.

Philanthropy in India is evolving rapidly, yet persistent challenges—such as data limitations, sectoral biases, power imbalances, and the exclusion of local communities—continue to constrain its full potential. The research compiled in this compendium seeks to address these gaps, offering fresh perspectives on how philanthropy can drive systemic change. Each paper contributes to the growing body of knowledge on community philanthropy, an underexplored yet profoundly relevant approach to social change.

One such paper that I had the privilege of engaging with is Ankit's study on the role of community philanthropy in addressing the discrimination faced by cross-regional women in rural Haryana. Working with Ankit was a pleasure—his passion for the subject was evident, particularly given his deep personal connection to the region. His insights brought a compelling and nuanced lens to the issue, and I was greatly impressed by the quality of his work. Our discussions were both enriching and thought-provoking, and I found myself learning a great deal from him in the process.

A defining feature of the CPID Fellowship is its strong emphasis on mentorship, ensuring that emerging researchers receive expert guidance to refine their arguments, strengthen their methodologies, and contextualise their insights. ISDM's commitment to this thoughtful process of mentorship is

commendable, as it fosters an environment where knowledge is co-created through dialogue between scholars and practitioners.

As a mentor, supporting Ankit in shaping his study was an immensely rewarding experience. I am confident that his work—along with the other contributions in this compendium—will serve as a valuable resource for practitioners, scholars, and funders alike. The insights presented here are not merely theoretical explorations; they are blueprints for action, expanding the boundaries of how philanthropy is conceptualised and practised in India.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "S. Husain". The signature is written in a cursive style and is positioned above a solid black horizontal line. Below the line, there are two small black dots.

Safeena Husain

Research Fellows



Ankit

Ankit is a PhD student in Sociology at University of Wroclaw, Poland and has a double Masters in Development and Social Work from Azim Premji University, and MP Bhoj Open University respectively. He previously worked in social development for four years. His research focuses on community philanthropy and women's rights in rural India.



Anurag Shukla

A public policy researcher with a decade of experience and a Ph.D. from IIMA, Anurag's focus is on documenting philanthropy interests in Education in India, having worked with organisations like Brhat, Pratham and Azim Premji Foundation.



Pankaj Kumar Mishra

Pankaj is a dedicated public health researcher with more than four years of experience in Indian states such as Bihar, UP and Odisha. He completed his MPhil dissertation on Bio-Social Determinants of Nutritional Anemia. He completed his Master of Social Work specialisation in Rural Development from Tata Institute of Social Sciences.



Raju Kendre

A tribal social entrepreneur, Raju founded Eklavya India Foundation to promote higher education and leadership among first generational learners. He holds a Masters in Social Work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences and recently completed his MSc in Development Studies at the prestigious SOAS, University of London, on a Chevening Scholarship offered by the FCDO, UK.

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