



**2024**

**DIALOGUES ON  
DEVELOPMENT  
MANAGEMENT**

*Presenting a compilation of insights  
and learning from the conference*



# Acknowledgements

The ISDM team is grateful to all the panelists and partner organisations for making Dialogues on Development Management (DoDM 2024) a day full of insights and massive learning. This report has been put together by the rapporteuring team based on the proceedings at the event.

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## Credits:

### Editors:

Lopamudra Sanyal  
Priti Dargad  
Priyanka Chhaparia

### Rapporteuring team:

Poonam Gulalia  
Ritika Sebastian  
Roopa Sharma  
Simrita Kaur Takhtar  
Shreyasi Banerjee  
Shruti Mishra

### Design:

Hatim Sham

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# Foreword

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The second edition of Dialogues on Development Management 2024 (DoDM 2024) reflects ISDM's commitment to strengthening the Indian social sector through a deeper focus on Development Management and Leadership. Building on the momentum of last year's event, DoDM 2024 once again served as a vibrant platform for collaboration among the three key pillars—Samaaj (society), Sarkaar (government), and Bazaar (market).

Our intent is to make DoDM an evolving platform that mainstreams the principles and practices of Development Management within the Indian social sector. Our collaborative approach ensures actionable and relevant takeaways to foster a collective commitment towards meaningful change.

This year's conference was made possible through the support of fifteen partners, alongside contributions from the A.T.E. Chandra Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and Rohini Nilekani Philanthropies. Guided by the learning and success of the inaugural edition, DoDM 2024 integrated insights from the previous dialogues into its themes and sessions, ensuring continuity and relevance.

The conference featured a stellar lineup of speakers, experts, practitioners, philanthropists, and academics, who engaged in discussions across four central tracks designed to address key challenges and opportunities in the sector. Held on November 21, 2024, at the Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi, the day-long event welcomed over 1100 participants representing diverse stakeholders, including social impact organisations, consulting firms, government departments, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) units, for-profit enterprises, universities, and think tanks.

The conference commenced with a star-studded plenary on the theme, 'Re-imagining Management for a Sustainable Society and Planet.' The distinguished panel featured:

- **Aamir Khan** (Actor, Producer, Director, and Founder, Paani Foundation)
- **Amit Chandra** (Co-Founder, A.T.E. Chandra Foundation)
- **Pramath Raj Sinha** (Founder and Trustee, Ashoka University)
- **Ravi Sreedharan** (President, ISDM)
- **Dr. Shamika Ravi** (Member, Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister, India)
- **Satyajit Batkal** (CEO, Paani Foundation)

The session focused on the pressing need to redefine management frameworks to drive transformative change and address critical global crises, including water scarcity, hunger, inequity, and access to vital resources.

The featured tracks for **DoDM 2024** included the following:

### **Track 1: Building the Sector of the Future**

This track delved into key topics such as impact measurement, philanthropy, scaling, and stakeholder collaboration, paving the way for a forward-looking social sector.

### **Track 2: Building Resilient Organisations**

Discussions focused on fostering resilience in social impact organisations through financial, operational, talent, and cultural strategies, emphasising long-term sustainability.

### **Track 3: Building a Voice for the Sector**

This track explored ways to enhance the sector's visibility and influence, aiming to attract talent, amplify its impact, and create a stronger collective voice for social change.

### **Research Paper Presentations**

The research track, added on popular demand this year, provided a platform for scholars, social entrepreneurs, development professionals, and academics to present research on themes related to Development Management, showcasing innovative ideas and rigorous inquiry.

The day concluded with a thought-provoking plenary, 'Philanthropy as a Force for Social Change: Big Bets for the Future.' Moderated by Amit Chandra, the session featured:

- **Mirik Gogri** (Sustainability Investor, Spectrum Impact)
- **Rekha Koita** (Director and Co-founder, Koita Foundation)

We present to you this report, which offers a detailed account of the discussions, insights, and outcomes from DoDM 2024.

# Launches and Announcements

During DoDM 2024, insightful reports, **a novel and our very own Hackathon were launched**, shedding light on critical aspects of Development Management and the Indian social sector. These initiatives, co-created with leading organisations and experts, aim to provide actionable frameworks and evidence-based insights to drive impact at scale.

The **Outcomes Readiness (OR) Framework** was officially launched during the event. Developed collaboratively by the British Asian Trust, ISDM, and Atma, with support from the 360 ONE Foundation and Citi India, the framework underpins an innovative tech tool designed to help nonprofits assess their readiness for adopting outcomes-focused approaches. This tool, set to launch soon, empowers nonprofits with a self-assessment platform to evaluate their preparedness for achieving meaningful outcomes in their work.

The tool addresses three key objectives:

1. Guiding nonprofits to align their organisational systems and programmatic capabilities with outcomes-focused approaches.
2. Helping organisations identify their strengths and areas for improvement.
3. Supporting capacity-building efforts to ensure nonprofits are fully outcomes-ready.

The **Code4Change 2024-25 Social Sector Hackathon** was officially announced, heralding an innovative collaboration between the data science and development sectors. Organised by CDSSI, this initiative seeks to empower the Social Purpose Organisations (SPOs) ecosystem to leverage data science for enhanced operations, efficiency, and impact. By fostering knowledge creation, influencing sectoral practices, and building communities of data science professionals, CDSSI is driving transformative change within the social sector.

In partnership with Knowledge Partners, Esther Foundation and Common Grounds, the hackathon addresses real-world challenges that demand data science expertise. The Code4Change 2024-25 Hackathon provides a unique platform for professionals to contribute to meaningful social change while fostering a growing community of practice at the intersection of data science and development.

The report, **Effective Philanthropy through an Inclusive Development Lens**, was launched by ISDM's Centre for Philanthropy for Inclusive Development. This report introduces the **6-Point Philanthropy for Inclusive Development (PID) Framework**, which emphasises key principles for driving equitable and impactful philanthropy. The framework highlights the importance of supporting vulnerable communities, building trust, fostering community involvement, providing flexible funding, ensuring transparency, and cultivating partnerships. Drawing on insights from a comprehensive survey conducted by the centre, the report seeks to catalyse shared learning and provides actionable strategies for fostering inclusive development through philanthropy.

ISDM's latest initiative, supported by the Ford Foundation, **Good Governance and Accountability Systems**, was also launched during the event. This initiative aims to strengthen the governance practices of SPOs by developing skilled compliance professionals, embedding strong governance frameworks, and creating communities of practice for shared learning. By focusing on governance and accountability, the initiative seeks to help SPOs adapt effectively to challenges and achieve sustainable, impactful change.



**Towards Accountability and Resilience – a needs assessment** report was inaugurated as part of this initiative. The report draws on insights from over 234 SPOs to highlight governance and compliance challenges in India’s social sector.

**Data Stories**, a graphic novel showcasing how SPOs leverage data to drive real, measurable change, was officially launched during the event. The novel narrates the inspiring journeys of three SPOs—Udayan Care, Saturday Art Class, and Nourishing Schools Foundation—highlighting how data-driven decision-making has enabled them to enhance efficiency and create a greater impact on the communities.

Presented in an innovative and engaging format, Data Stories provides a fresh perspective on the transformative power of data in the social sector. Available in digital format on the CDSSI website, it aims to inspire other SPOs, encouraging them to integrate data into their work and explore creative ways to share their own stories of impact.

# Reimagining Management for a Sustainable Society and Planet

This year's plenary was focused on capturing the confluence of Samaaj, Sarkaar, and Bazaar towards strengthening Development and Development Management in pursuit of a planet that is just, sustainable, and equitable. The first of two plenaries in the morning had representatives from all three pillars and their input focused on the issues of scale, criticality of management, and the need for civil society's stewardship to address as well as amplify developmental concerns.



**Ravi Sreedharan**  
Founder and President,  
ISDM



**Pramath Raj Sinha**  
Founder and Trustee,  
Ashoka University

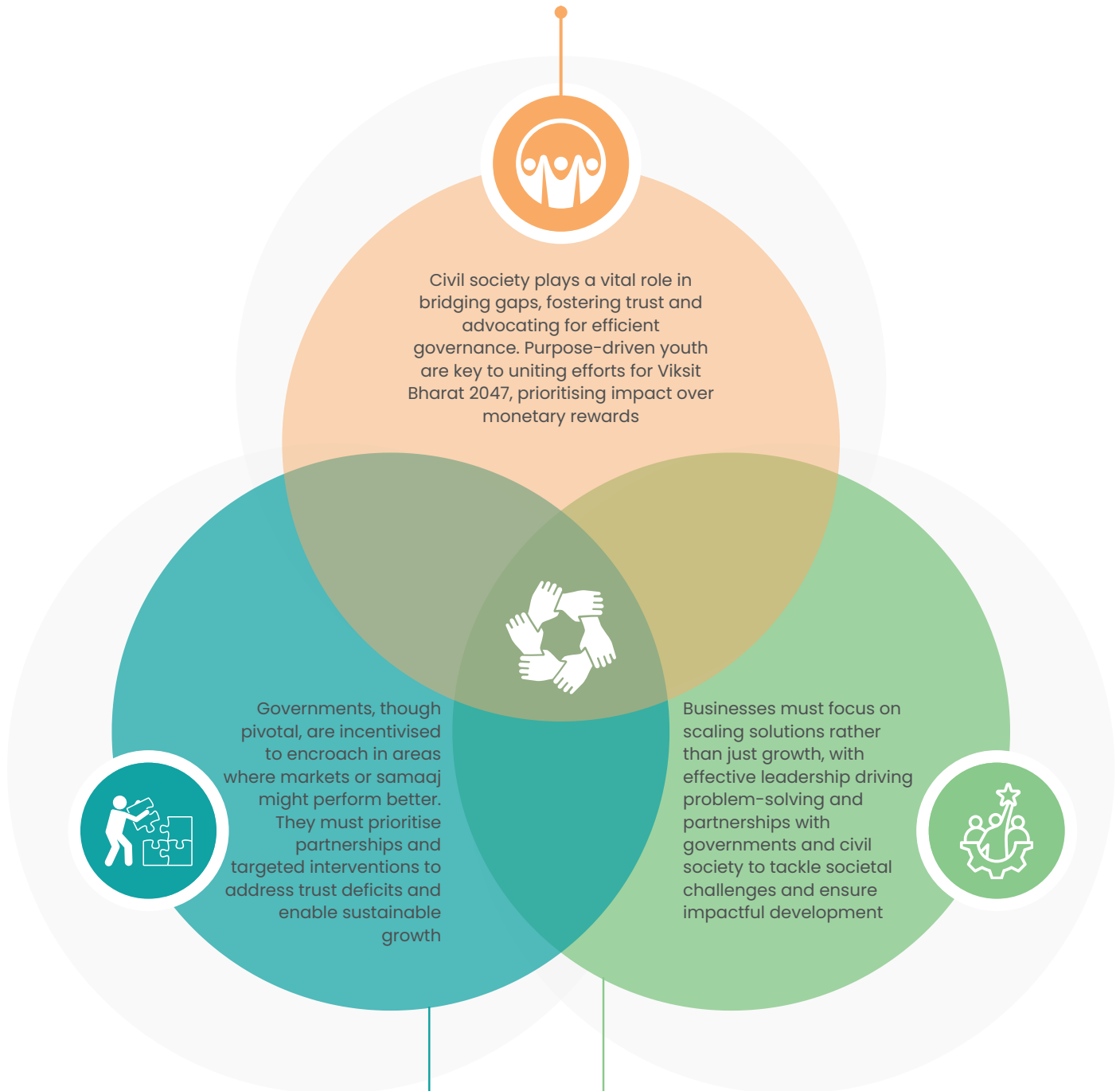


**Shamika Ravi**  
Member, Economic  
Advisory Council to  
Prime Minister, India



“While the social sector continues to do its work in the deepest corners of the country, it comprises hundreds of mini and micro SPOs. Very few organisations have an operating budget of more than INR 100 CR, and the largest NGO doesn’t quite reach 50 million people. Scale therefore becomes critical for the sector. And the largest consumer goods company reaches more than 800 million people. We need DM to ensure that samaaj reaches scales of 700–800 million people for positive impact to become visible.”

**Ravi Shreedharan, ISDM**



“Value in recognising that market failures in some spaces of ‘development’ are imminent. Revenue models do not support certain kinds of investments thus necessitating dependance on philanthropy and governments...It becomes important at times for Management to recognise and limit the roles of bazaar and sarkaar where necessary.”

**Dr Shamika Ravi, Economic Advisory Council to Prime Minister, India**

“In the universe of Bazaar, a lot of the implementation of scale is driven by the person at the top. There is ample management discourse on leadership, culture and scaling but in practice one finds that the model of scale being applied is driven from the perspective of the leader. This may not be a popular view but if a charismatic leader doesn’t bring this vision and approach in the world of bazaar, then companies flounder... Scale also often depends on being at the right place at the right time and being able to tap into that opportunity for Bazaar.”

**Pramath Raj Sinha, Ashoka University**

## ***Reimagining Management for a Sustainable Society and Planet***



The second plenary session featured urgent discussions on community participation, use of communication and appropriate intervention design towards achieving scale for what is usually seen as a seasonal and region specific issue of water scarcity and sustainable agriculture.



### **Aamir Khan**

Actor, Producer, Director  
Co-Founder,  
Paani Foundation



### **Satyajit Bhatkal**

Co-Founder,  
Paani Foundation



### **Amit Chandra**

Co-Founder,  
A.T.E. Chandra Foundation

*Amit Chandra, A.T.E. Chandra Foundation*

Building out a very well articulated Theory of Change, looking at data closely and mapping the behaviour change necessary in specific stakeholder groups has been critical in Paani Foundation being able to make an effective water and people-led positive movement in Maharashtra. Fascinating to also see how the organisation was able to involve people in this positive change and to the concept of water."

**ATECF's leadership focused on capacity building in the social sector through sustainable Theory of Change driven by data, avoiding government funding, and fostering community-led efforts like "shram daan."**

*Aamir Khan, Paani Foundation*

"Shram Daan' (concept of volunteering your labour) was able to melt differences between people and bring people together at the village level. To address these issues, bringing the community together is critical to achieve scale. We designed the whole movement around this concept."

**Aamir Khan used his influence to amplify critical issues like water. SMV Water Competition and Paani Foundation focused on unified themes, leveraging communication to drive awareness and foster community-led change via social cohesion.**



## **Community-Led Sustainable Development**

**Paani Foundation's decentralised taluka teams, corporate collaborations and community immersion enabled large-scale sustainable solutions, with initiatives like "Water Cup" and "Farmer Cup" incentivising impactful rural development.**

"There is no problem in India that hasn't been solved (or attempted to be solved). Can communication be an important part of the puzzle for the issue of water? The solution to rural drought has been known for more than 50 years. We know it is called decentralised watershed management that is low cost..."

*Satyajit Bhatkal, Paani Foundation*



# Philanthropy as a Force for Social Change - Big Bets for the Future



The broader question that we ask is, "Is this the problem worth solving, and is this the right team solving the problem?" I would actually say that philanthropy or impact investing is actually very high-risk at the end of the day—very, very high risk. And my perspective, at least, is that you should not focus on the assured impact. The chance of potential impact is much more important than assured impact.

**- Mirik Gogri**

Sustainability Investor, Spectrum Impact

The closing plenary featured a very insightful discussion between three leading philanthropists. Audacious projects that have transformative potential require sizable investments and sustained vision. How can philanthropists navigate roles that require taking risks alongside vision alignment and operational ambiguity in the pursuit of the next big bet for humanity. These are some of the areas that this session focused on.

The way we look at it is, especially when you're looking at systems change, what are the kinds of big problems out there that need to be solved? What do we need to do to solve them? And then you just put your head down, in a sense, and keep working at it. Whatever you think can work, you try. So, how do you keep that one north star without getting kind of bogged down by the day-to-day challenges? You have to constantly keep your vision on the larger goal.

**- Rekha Koita**

Director and Co-Founder, Koita Foundation

## 1. What are big bets?

- Audacious projects with transformative potential requiring huge investments, belief and vision
- Involves aspirational vision, collaboration among stakeholders, holding layers of the program together, long-term commitment and grit to take it to its logical end.

## 2. What are the big bets for India in the next few years?

- Climate
- Healthcare
- Scale evidence-building through institutionalisation.
- Focus on eliminating problems rather than alleviating them
- Focus on mindshifts
- Scale interventions for lasting impact

## 3. What is required from the philanthropists?

- Self-time, Credibility, Commitment, Vision, Entrepreneurship, Creativity
- With Stakeholders: Collaborative efforts, better coordination, and avoiding repetitions that will lead to sustainable impact
- Leveraging technology
- Data for decision-making

## 4. How do philanthropists evaluate their own philanthropy, its principles and its purpose?

- Act and learn from it
- Take a systems approach
- Don't lose sight of the purpose
- Take more risks
- Chance of potential impact is much bigger than assured impact
- Success isn't about the grants doing well, success is that the ecosystem is moving in the direction you have taken

# Strategic Focus and Philanthropic Impact

# Building Together for India@2047: The Evolving Roles of Samaaj and Sarkaar



**Ashwini Saxena**  
CEO,  
JSW Foundation



**Pushpa Aman Singh**  
Founder,  
GuideStar India



**Dr. R Balasubramaniam**  
Member-HR,  
Capacity Building Commission

## Collaborating for Sustainable Social Impact: Insights from Experts

Partnerships rooted in trust and mutual enablement amplify strengths.



Each sector—Samaaj, Sarkaar, and Bazaar—has unique roles but must collaborate.



Civil society can support the government by incorporating grassroots voices.



Sustainable social impact relies on partnerships built on trust and mutual enablement among Samaaj (society), Sarkaar (government), and Bazaar (market). Post-COVID, these sectors increasingly share resources and ideas, strengthening collective efforts. The government benefits greatly from civil society stepping in to guide and incorporate grassroots voices, ensuring inclusivity and effectiveness.

Governance and market systems must reflect societal values.



Collaboration ensures inclusivity and diversity without sacrificing scale.



Decentralisation requires Samaaj to take ownership.



Governance and market systems must align with societal norms to ensure equitable wealth distribution. Samaaj must take ownership of governance, collaborating with Sarkaar and Bazaar to develop systems that reflect cultural values. Nonprofits and corporates can add local context to government initiatives, maintaining diversity while achieving scalability and inclusivity.

Nonprofits need strong internal governance to build trust.



Communication with Sarkaar and Bazaar is key for collaboration.



Technology can bridge information gaps.



Nonprofits must showcase strong governance and compliance to build trust with Sarkaar and Bazaar. Effective communication, storytelling, and leveraging technology are critical for bridging gaps and fostering collaboration. By sharing their impact, NGOs can create stronger partnerships and align efforts toward common goals.

**Dr. R. Balasubramaniam**

**Ashwini Saxena**

**Pushpa Aman Singh**

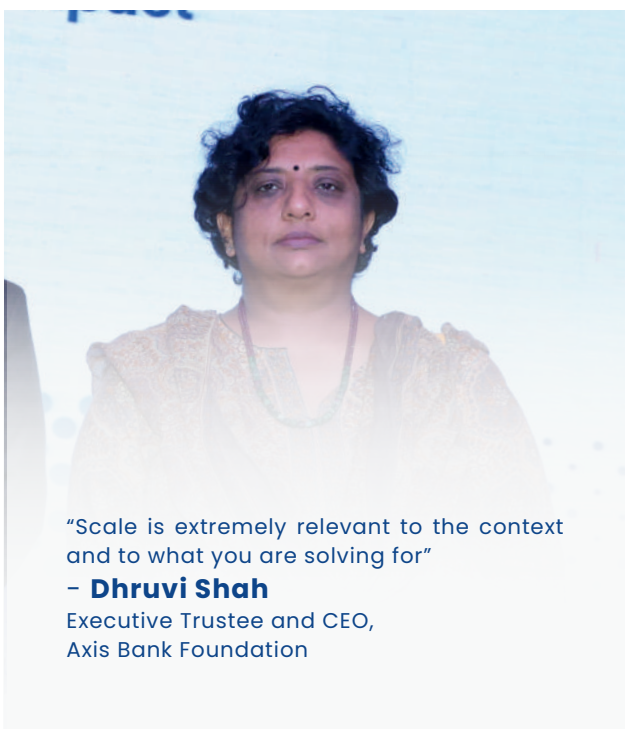
*A discussion on the collaboration between Samaaj, Sarkaar, and Bazaar to create meaningful change.*



“When we talk about horizontal expansion in scale, we talk about how simple your model is and if community stewardship is inbuilt in that model or not. If it is top-driven it will not work; it has to be the bottom-up approach, that has been our learning.”

– **Saroj Mahapatra**

Executive Director,  
PRADAN



“Scale is extremely relevant to the context and to what you are solving for”

– **Dhruvi Shah**

Executive Trustee and CEO,  
Axis Bank Foundation



“The imperative is the designing element ... if you see scale as a number in an excel sheet, I think you lose out the human element. I think the balance and focus has to be between how small is beautiful, and how can many smalls combine to become one big scale. And which is where the blend between the design people and the doing people has to merge”

– **Sudarshan Suchi**

Chief Development Officer,  
Reliance Foundation

## **Does Size Matter: Exploring Models of Scaling Impact**



The session delved into the role of organisational size in scaling impact and the various models of achieving impact at scale.

### Depth as a Definition of Scale

This model emphasised that scaling impact requires a deep, human-centered approach rather than focusing solely on numbers.



#### **Growth Approach:**

Combine rapid and deep growth for sustained impact.



#### **Depth of Intervention:**

Avoid superficial fixes; address root causes using multidisciplinary strategies.



#### **Human-Centric Scaling:**

Integrate "small is beautiful" with large-scale collaboration.

### Convergence at Scale

This model highlights the importance of community ownership and multi-stakeholder partnerships for scaling impact.

#### **Levers of Change:**

Community-driven priorities, decentralisation, and local ownership.



#### **Multi-Stakeholder Partnerships:**

Align shared goals, foster respect and learning.



#### **Government and CSO Synergy:**

Governments can formalise consortiums, while CSOs focus on capacity building through robust planning and medium-term funding.



### Scale as Organisational Scalability

This model focuses on scaling organisations that are ready for large-scale operations rather than incrementally increasing reach of interventions.



#### **Funder Perspective:**

Scalability requires strong processes, structures, and risk management.



#### **Key Factors:**

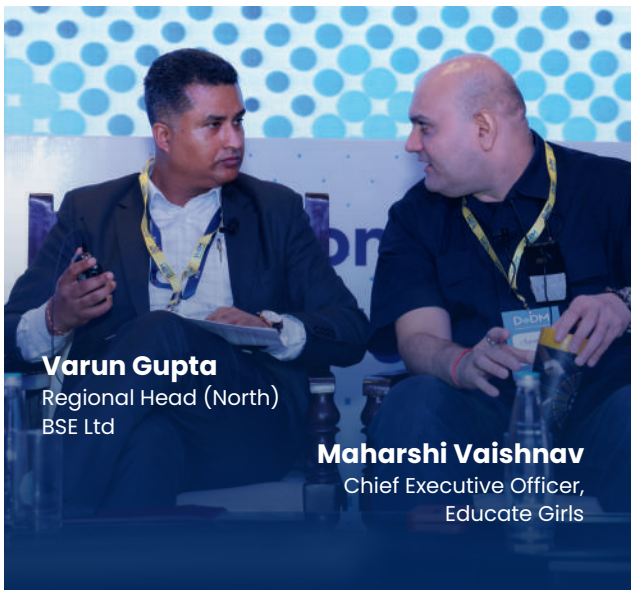
Secure funding, invest in people, and establish accountability mechanisms.



#### **Sustainability of Scale:**

Institutionalise change within communities and respect ecological or administrative boundaries.

# Philanthropy and Sustainability: How to ensure longevity of the sector?



**Varun Gupta**  
Regional Head (North)  
BSE Ltd

**Maharshi Vaishnav**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Educate Girls



**Himanshu Sikka**  
Chief Strategy and Diversification Officer,  
IPE Global

"The biggest learning for me was that we had pre-decided we wanted blended finance, rather than actually looking at the problem and seeing what is needed. Blended finance should be an option and not a pre-decided starting point"

**Aniket Doegar**  
CEO and Co-founder, Haqdarshak



**Anushree Parekh**  
Associate Director, Social Finance  
British Asian Trust



**Pooja Monga**  
Senior Investment Associate,  
Bayond Capital Ventures

"...when you are a growth branded organisation that is successful in delivering its impact outcomes, you actually can start bringing in grants as revenue."

**-Ajaita Shah**  
Founder & CEO, Frontier Markets



Philanthropy and Sustainability:  
How to ensure longevity of the sector?

21 November 2024

Michael & Susan Dell  
FOUNDATION

Building Resilient Org

500  
EMERGENCY

QUEST RESILIENCE

Building a Voice for

Masterclass  
& Tech Paper P

This session explored the different approaches for grants and philanthropic funding to support building resilient social purpose organisations, focusing on more than just program costs to drive meaningful and impactful change at scale.



### Debt capital: Case of Samridh

#### Background

**Created to address lack of access to capital for social enterprises (SEs) during COVID-19.**

**Leveraged grant funding** to mobilise commercial capital through portfolio-level instruments.

Provided 5% interest subvention and outcomes-linked incentives.

#### Challenge

Donors need to shift their mindset and **enable as catalytic capital.**

**Blended finance should be considered** only after understanding the problem and assessing financial needs, not as a pre-decided solution.

#### Success Factors

**Samridh** was flexible in approach to accommodate for unique business models among a wide range of SEs

**Built capacity of financial institutions** to understand SE requirements and ensured involvement of banks to mainstream SE lending.

#### What worked

A **well-designed facility** that balances standardisation with flexibility to meet the segment's needs.

### Grants (Social Stock Exchange)

#### Background

SSE allows Social Enterprises to **raise funds through public mechanisms** while lending credibility and visibility.

Offers benefits for both SEs (**funding, credibility**) and donors (**credible SEs, tax benefits**).

#### Challenge

Adhering to compliance as per SEBI standards is extensive and includes high costs of merchant bankers, auditors, and documentation but leads to creating organisational credibility.

#### What helped Educate girls become ready (listed on SSE):

**Engaging a merchant banker and auditors**, despite the costs, and difficult documentation.

**Preparation and learning were key**, and after overcoming these challenges, the listing process became smooth, attracting more domestic CSR interest.

#### What worked

Embracing the **courage to innovate even if outcomes are uncertain.**

### Various Equity Approaches

Insights from Frontier Markets and Beyond Capital Ventures.

#### Background

**Pioneering initiatives** like Beyond Capital use a blended approach, combining grants for testing ideas, outcome-linked grants for milestones, and recoverable grants for seasoned enterprises. They use cash flow-aligned debt, patient equity, and revenue-based mechanisms to sustain social enterprises and drive transformative change.

#### Considerations

Different types of capital require tailored strategies:

**Grants:** Best for testing markets or aligning with funders.

**Debt:** Requires confidence in cash flow and repayment capacity.

**Equity:** Mindfulness about ownership dilution and investor exit timelines.

#### Learning from the journey of Frontier markets as a social enterprise:

**Grant Funding:** Crucial for adapting to customer needs and innovating, even during crises like COVID.

**Equity Capital:** Drives rapid growth but demands returns; timing and decisions are critical.

**Debt:** Requires strong margins and consistency for sustainable returns.

**Service Contracts:** Grants structured as revenue to deliver impactful outcomes while scaling as a branded organisation.

#### What worked

Knowing how to marry purpose and capital at different stages of an organisation's journey

# Standardised Impact Metrics: Yay or Nay!

The session explored the dilemma of a one-size-fits-all approach and its implications in reference to the impact standardisation in the social sector.



**Dr. Radha Ashrit**

Deputy Director General (DMEO),  
NITI Aayog

**Nikhil Pingle**

Chief, Strategy & Research,  
Magic Bus India Foundation



**Soha Moitra**

Regional Director,  
CRY



**Liby T Johnson**

Executive Director,  
Gram Vikas



**Abhinav Bhatia**

Program Manager,  
Michael & Susan Dell Foundation India, LLP

## Reasons FOR Standardisation

“

- Builds funder and stakeholder confidence.
- Clarifies resource allocation and metrics like those in the NEP have created momentum for measurement.

”

**Abhinav Bhatia**  
(Michael & Susan Dell Foundation)

”

- Optimizes resources for long-term goals while ensuring alignment with objectives.
- Enables scale in diverse contexts like India.

“

**Dr. Radha Ashrit**  
(NITI Aayog)

“

- Aligns stakeholders through shared metrics, reducing trust deficits.
- Mixed approaches, like 70% standardized metrics with 30% flexibility, work effectively.

”

**Nikhil Pingle**  
(Magic Bus India Foundation)

## Reasons AGAINST Standardisation

”

- Needs to focus on processes, not just outcomes, to avoid rigid frameworks.
- Challenging in a VUCA (volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity) environment, involving multiple stakeholders.

“

**Liby T Johnson**  
(Gram Vikas)

“

- Excludes community voices and fails to measure complex thematic impacts.
- Rigid frameworks limit innovation and contextual adaptation.

”

**Soha Moitra**  
(Child Rights and You | NGO)

”

- Standard metrics often overlook essential aspects like fostering love for learning.
- Community-specific needs must be considered, as pressure to meet metrics can affect program design.

“

**Gayatri**  
(A.T.E. Chandra Foundatio)



# Snakes & Ladders



## A Fun-Filled Spin on Development Management Challenges!

The Development Management Challenge game played at DoDM 2024, inspired by the very popular Snakes & Ladders game, turned the (un)usual work pressure, very, very specific to the development sector, into a thrilling game of strategy, teamwork, and quick thinking!

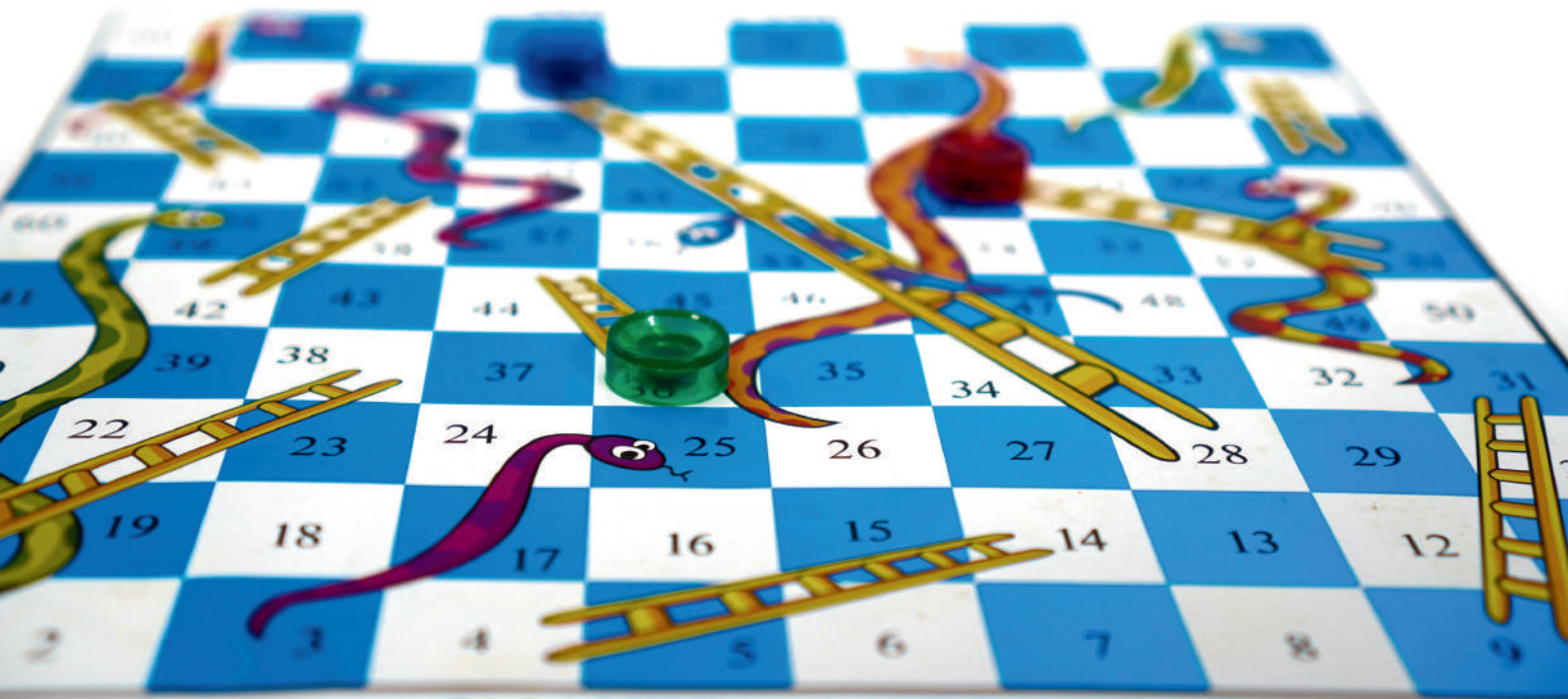
### How did we play it?

While Player A spun the wheel, Player B moved along the board—a simple start to an exciting journey.

### Rules of the game? Those were fun too!

- Teams landed on snakes and ladders and had to respond to questions based on the tricky and real scenarios development practitioners face regularly, with only 15 seconds to choose one of the three presented solutions. Without consulting each other, both players picked their answers. If they matched, the team either climbed the ladder to move ahead or skillfully dodged the snake bite.
- But the stakes were high—two consecutive snake bites or incorrect answers saw teams gracefully exit! Resilience tested and lessons learnt. Missed two ladder opportunities? That called for a well-deserved "retreat" and some thoughtful introspection!

It was a game of wit, instinct, and collaboration—where practitioners teamed up, laughed, learned, and celebrated their shared wins and challenges, proving that even the toughest development scenarios can be tackled with a little fun and teamwork.





**Shashank Rastogi**  
Partner,  
The Bridgespan Group

## *Blueprints for Resilience: Strategic Planning with Purpose*



**Jayant Rastogi**  
Global CEO,  
Magic Bus India Foundation



**Antaraa Vasudev**  
Founder,  
Civis

**Sonal Kapoor**  
Founder CEO,  
Protsahan India Foundation



**Srikanth Viswanathan**  
CEO,  
Janaagraha Centre for Citizenship  
and Democracy







Purpose of Strategic Frameworks is to aid decision-making and seizing opportunities amidst uncertainties. It must serve as a tool to navigate immediate challenges while aligning with long-term goals.

No universal guide exists; each organisation's strategy must address its unique context and challenges. Effective strategic plans integrate funds, operations, people, and processes seamlessly.



Crafting an effective strategy requires a clear and well-articulated Theory of Change. Organisations must have a clear identification of goals with a focused, high-level plan to achieve them. Efforts should focus on preventing drift and ensuring actionable outcomes by the end of the exercise.

Maintaining speed and adaptability necessitates deliberate organisational development efforts. Organisations must focus on building institutions that can endure beyond individual lifespans. These are key aspects towards building organisational agility and stamina.



The strategy must be well-understood and owned by the organisation's team. Organisational success depends on the internal team taking responsibility for implementation. Consultants act as advisors, not decision-makers!

Determination of not just the themes to focus on but also who to engage with, when to engage and how to structure engagement effectively. Establishment of a robust communication framework to support and convey strategic choices across all levels. Engage funders and the impacted community to ensure buy-in and alignment with strategic goals.





**Poonam Choksi**  
Vertical Head,  
A.T.E. Chandra Foundation



**Anushri Alva**  
CEO,  
Adhyayan Foundation



**Ajay Jayaram**  
Head, Partnerships,  
OGQ

**Arghya Sengupta**  
Founder and Research Director,  
Vidhi

## **Resilient Futures: Financial Sustainability and Operational Independence**

Building a resilient organisation requires a clear vision, diverse funding, and strong donor relationships. Aligning budgets with goals, breaking big ideas into fundable parts, and fostering trust through personalised, leadership-driven engagement are key. Storytelling, milestones, and intimate events spark advocacy and deepen connections. Resilience is built on adaptability, execution, and lasting partnerships. These insights were explored in depth during the session Resilient Futures: Financial Sustainability and Operational Independence.

### **Diversify Funding Sources**

Target foundations for funding innovation, growth, and OD.

Partner with governments or institutions to ensure sustainability.

Use creative strategies to build financial buffers and diversify funding streams.

### **Tailor Fundraising Models**

Transition to adaptable strategies that align with donors.

Break down large initiatives into smaller, fundable components.

Use compelling narratives, accomplishments, and case studies to demonstrate your vision effectively.

### **Engage Creatively with Donors**

Host unique, intimate fundraising events to foster deeper, personal connections.

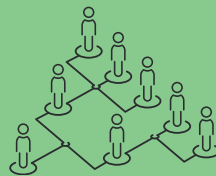
Encourage funders to advocate within their networks.

Use emotional narratives supported by data to inspire and engage.



## **Strategic Funding and Donor Engagement**

## **Organisational Resilience and Mission Alignment**



### **Invest in Fundraising Talent**

Create a multi-role fundraising team—backend operations, strategy, leadership-driven outreach.

Treat fundraising as a professional discipline by investing and nurturing specialised talent.

Ensure accountability lies with the leadership.

### **Plan and Prepare Strategically**

Clearly articulate your mission and demonstrate tangible impact.

Align fundraising and budget planning with long-term strategic goals.

Start small, refine innovative approaches based on results, and scale incrementally.

### **Innovate During Challenges**

Borrow strategies from other fields (e.g., rights issues) to approach funders innovatively during tough times.

Use corpus funds as part of a broader strategy, prioritising sustainable funding mechanisms and multi-year commitments.

Secure long-term, flexible funding agreements to enhance stability.

# Cultivating a Resilient Growth Culture



**Shrashtant Patara**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Development Alternatives



**Aakash Sethi**  
Founder and CEO,  
Quest Alliance



**Kejal Savla**  
Co-founder and CEO,  
Wisdom Tree



**Aalika Anne Peres**  
Programmes Assistant,  
Ford Foundation



**Shalini Menon**  
Facilitator,  
Culture Builder

Aren't we tired of being resilient?  
Beyond financial resilience, what does resilience mean for growing organisations?  
As organisations, are we creating space for what's not working or are we in a perpetual rush to fix things?  
How can we expand our circle of care beyond our respective organisations?

The 'Cultivating a Resilient Growth Culture' session took a deep dive into 'How to create resilient, structured, well-managed, and effective organisations in an ever-evolving landscape?'

Breakdowns can be breakthroughs, but only if we resist jumping to quick fixes. Resilience is not about toughness alone; it's about allowing space for reflection and learning to emerge stronger.

**Kejal Savla,**  
Co-founder and CEO,  
Wisdom Tree

Bringing together the feminine and masculine styles of leadership nurtures balance—humans are a blend of both. Leadership needs to move beyond control to embrace intuition, vulnerability, and connection with systems.

**Aakash Sethi,**  
Founder and CEO,  
Quest Alliance

A resilient organisation spends as much time celebrating its impact as it does deliberating on how it was achieved. Inquiry into challenges and acknowledging emotional and ground realities are vital for thriving organisations.

**Shalini Menon,**  
Facilitator,  
Culture Builder

Unrestricted funding transforms resilience it invests in wellbeing beyond fiscal years. Funders can empower organisations by resourcing resilience-building practices and internal capabilities.

**Aalika Anne Peres,**  
Programmes Assistant,  
Ford Foundation

## Resulting Questions



Beyond financial resilience, what does resilience mean for growing organisations?



Aren't we tired of being resilient? How can we expand our circle of care beyond our respective organisations?



## and Observations



As organisations, are we creating space for what's not working or are we in a perpetual rush to fix things?



Is it time that the sector reimagines 'talent retention', moving beyond the limiting definition of 'retaining talent in the organisation's payroll' to acknowledging that there will be movement of talent, especially among the fresh ones while exploring newer ways to leveraging them as alumni of organisation?



Is talent retention necessary for building organisational resilience? If so, then how do we retain talent?

# Realising India Mela

The class of 2025 of the Post Graduate Program in Development Management (PGP-DM) showcased a "Realising India Mela" that brought fascinating stories and takeaways about their district immersion through photo galleries and artefacts. Realising India is a two-week structured immersion in a district which is organised with the purpose of building an enhanced understanding of people's lived experience and various socio-economic issues in the district, as well as engaging with different actors, their roles and relationships.

PGP DM's professional learning communities this year traveled to Harda, Haridwar, Sonbhadra, Gonda, Morena, Pali, Ajmer, and Banswara. Presenting pictures of the exciting Realising India Mela and the enthusiasm of attendees and students during this mela at DoDM 2024.





# Evidence-Based Advocacy: Strategies for Influencing Government and Policy



**Neha Raykar**  
Director,  
IDinsight



**Dr. Basavaraju R Shreshta**  
Executive Director,  
GRAAM



**Shilpa Nag**  
Deputy Commissioner,  
Chamarajanagar District, Karnataka



**Madhukar Banuri**  
Founder,  
Leadership for Equity



**Praveen Khanghta**  
Head, Strategy, Investment and Portfolio  
Development,  
The Convergence Foundation



## Advocating Change: Tools and Strategies for Nonprofits to Influence Policy and Systems



**Neha Raykar**, moderator for the session, set context for the discussions with an explanation of **evidence as findings from the ground**, whatever the form or format. The objective of the session was not methodology used to collect evidence but to explore different kinds of evidence, **effective strategies for leveraging evidence, challenges and constraints in using this evidence**, and the **channels to communicate evidence** to communities.



**Madhukar Banuri** spoke from his experience about the **skill gaps in the middle layers of the government** in understanding what data is and why it is important to leverage in making decisions, especially on the ground. He provided some guidance on **evidence gathering – to keep it simple and accessible**, to use all kinds of evidence (both numbers and stories) that capture the reality of what is happening on the ground. He reiterated that **“for policies to sustain, governments need to own the data”** and therefore, it is important to ensure their **buy-in early in the process**.



**Praveen Khangta** reminded the audience that **states are the laboratories of reform** and therefore, it is risky to advocate for something until it has worked **in one state at a large scale**, with **buy-in from local government bodies**. He mentioned the role of advocacy in communicating evidence, stating that **“while evidence is the science, advocacy is the art of telling the story. Reforms happen when preparation meets opportunity. That’s been the art & science of public policy in India.”**



**Dr. Basavaraju** spoke about the **four things that are important for evidence to be effective: technical feasibility, economic & financial possibility, political viability, and administrative operability**. He provided an easy mnemonic (3CAT) to help the audience remember that effective evidence should be clear, credible, contextual, actionable, and timely.



**Shilpa Nag**, while indicating to the audience that **the government represents the chaos in society** and therefore is not perfect, spoke about how **evidence, not just at the policy stage, but also to inform planning, is very important**. She gave the example of Jala Sanjeevani, a program that incorporated evidence-based and participatory planning for NREGA work, to showcase how **institutionalising decisions that come from evidence is the key to ensuring sustenance of programs over time**.



**Prachi**  
Co-Founder & Director,  
Safe Odisha For Her

## To Talent, With Love: Redefining the Social Sector's Appeal for Youth

The panel focused on the voices of youth and those who work with them to initiate a multi-stakeholder perspective on possibilities and opportunities for the sector to build a positive image and brand for itself, and towards helping young professionals view the sector as a viable and exciting sector to work in.



**Deepika Goyal**  
Senior Manager,  
Lend a Hand India

**Divya Sharma**  
Assistant Manager,  
Lend a Hand India



**Chandrika Bahadur**  
CEO,  
The Antara Foundation



**Khushboo Awasthi**  
Co-founder and Chief Operating Officer,  
ShikshaLokam

“Should we broaden the pool of youth we engage with, extending beyond educational institutions that offer degrees in social work or development?”  
~Divya Sharma

“Trust that when a team member takes time off, they have considered its impact, without requiring cumbersome leave application processes. Overly rigid structures and policies can hinder, rather than foster, trust.”  
~ Khushboo Awasthi

“Hire local. It is the failure of the public infrastructure which doesn't level the playing field, leaving out a large segment of young talent which resides in tier 2 and tier 3 cities. How do we nurture them and provide them with growth opportunities should be an important conversation”.  
~ Prachi

“There is an insularity in the sector- we want to work for the development of the country, but as organisations we are very ill prepared to absorb people who come from very diverse backgrounds, especially those who are first generation learners and workers, or from smaller towns and cities. We hire people who talk and look like us.”  
~ Chandrika Bahadur

## What do the young professionals want?

- Seeing our impact beyond our organisation and daily work is vital, as is understanding how our skills and learning contribute to broader change.
- Purpose is important but so is our own sense of growth.
- We shouldn't be forced to make sacrifices just because we have decided to follow our passion.
- Different work styles and approaches should be acknowledged, fostering greater autonomy and collaboration.
- Nurture our sense of adventure and curiosity.
- Hire local youth - embeddedness in the context is crucial not just for fieldworkers but at the programmatic level, too. The energy and passion of youth in smaller cities and towns are often overlooked.
- Focus on human-centered testing, prioritising qualities over aptitude, knowledge, or skill sets. This sector thrives on compassion and humanity, not just what's on a CV. This will widen the pool of young talent and make the sector more inclusive.

## What can organisations do?

- Let go of our 'we know best' attitude. Focus not on what we teach the youth but what we can learn from them - their freshness of thoughts and questioning allows an organisation to grow and stay alive.
- Make explicit the career pathway and trajectory, and opportunities beyond your own organisation and the sector. Learned skills must be transferable.
- Pay well at the entry level.
- Be flexible in your working conditions.
- Make work fun! Conversations around solving wicked problems of the sector can be lively too!
- Build trust - it must run through the organisation and reflect in its behaviour.
- Hire youth from communities and places that reflect the reality of the context we want to work with.

# Is A Unified Voice for the Sector Possible & Viable?

A panel discussion with practitioners built on their experiences to make a case for the need for a unified voice for the sector, while cautioning that, for such a voice to have its desired impact, it must be mindful, inclusive, and founded on mutual respect and collaboration.



**Smita Jha**  
Strategic Advisor  
Deloitte

**Anshu Gupta**  
Founder  
Goonj and Gram Swabhimaan

**Pratyush Kumar Panda**  
CEO,  
OneStage

**Sanjeev Jha**  
Director, India Sanitation Coalition,  
FICCI



## Why do we need a unified voice for the sector?



Align  
Priorities



Amplify  
Coordination



Humanise  
the Sector



Balance  
Dominance



Include diverse  
perspectives



Strengthen  
Coalitions



Support Hard-to-  
Reach Populations

## What are the building blocks for fostering a unified voice?



Grassroots  
Listening



Internal  
Institution  
Building



Regional  
Representation



Training  
Inclusivity



Peer  
Collaboration

## Unified Voice: Building Impact Through Inclusivity and Collaboration



Form Regional  
Bodies



Revamp  
Funding Models



Unified  
Narrative



Partnership  
Advocacy



Empowered  
Program Managers

**How can we take actionable  
steps to achieve this?**



Institutional  
Strengths



Unified  
Catalyst



Collaborative  
Partnerships

**What are some  
key takeaways?**

# New Age Communication for Social Impact: A Guide for Development Communicators



**Devanshi Vaid**  
Co-founder and Director,  
India Development Review (IDR)

**Saswati Chatterjee**  
Manager, Digital Engagement,  
Breakthrough Trust



**Shalini Umachandran**  
Editor,  
Mint Lounge



**Girish Balachandran**  
Founder & Managing Director,  
ON PURPOSE

## The hacks for being an impactful communicator in the development space are:

“Empathise with the story you want to tell. Find that one thread that connects you with that story. That will make your story authentic.” **Mehak Mirza Prabhu**, Corporate Storytelling Coach



**Know Your Why:** Before you start creating content, ask yourself: What's your message? Who are you trying to reach? What impact do you want to make? A clear understanding of these elements will help you create targeted and effective content and also determine the right channel.

**Crack the Social Media Code:** To cut through the noise on social media, create content that is engaging, easy to understand, and visually appealing. Experiment with different formats, like short videos and reels, to capture your audience's attention. Be consistent until you crack the formula that works for you.



**Empower Your Team to be Influencers:** Every member of your organisation is a potential storyteller. Encourage them to share their experiences and perspectives to create authentic and relatable content.

**Leverage AI Responsibly:** AI can be a powerful tool for new-age communication. However, it's important to use it responsibly and ethically. Always prioritise human judgment and creativity.



**Create Standalone Stories:** Your content should be self-contained and easy to understand. A good story needs to capture attention and inspire action, without additional context.

**Distinguish between content and distribution channels:** Content refers to the information or message you want to convey while distribution channels are the platforms or methods used to deliver that content to your target audience.



## Research Paper Presentations

The Research Paper Presentation (RPP) track 'Linking Theory, Empirics, and Practice: Building a Resilient Social Sector to Achieve Sustainable Development' was introduced in DoDM 2024. It aimed at encouraging SPOs and development professionals to showcase their work on a larger platform. The track **received 136 abstracts, of which 12 articles were selected for presentation following a double-blind review process.** These articles are under review, with the final selected papers set to be published in an online e-book. The articles were categorised into four themes.







### **Organisational Development for Sector Resilience**

The presentation under this theme delved into how fostering a culture of learning, strategic funding, and cultural transformation contributes to organisational growth and development.

### **Sustainable Community Development**

Under this theme, presenters discussed how sustainable communities can be created through social entrepreneurship, capacity building, and empowering women to engage actively in local governance and decision-making processes.

### **Technology and Data for Social Impact**

The presentation on this theme explored how machine learning algorithms, along with geospatial and administrative data, are utilised to gain insights into multidimensional poverty and facilitate real-time monitoring and evaluation.

### **Samaaj, Sarkaar, and Bazaar as Development Catalysts**

The papers in this session emphasised the role of these three pillars of development in advancing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

# Masterclass

## ***Storytelling for the Development Sector***

The Development Sector Storytelling Masterclass, led by **Ravishankar Iyer, founder of Story Rules**, offered participants a deep dive into the art of crafting compelling fundraising pitches for development organisations. The session explored how impactful storytelling can effectively communicate an organisation's mission, inspire funders, and address critical questions such as: Why is the cause worth funding? Why does the organisation have what it takes to succeed? And can the story be told simply and powerfully? Participants learned to leverage techniques such as using human stories, credible data, analogies, and simple visuals to vividly showcase their impact and stand out in a competitive funding landscape.



## ***Data for Better Intervention Design***

The session introduced **DataSights**, a powerful tool that hosts data on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and demonstrated its potential in intervention design. Participants delved into available datasets, learning how to generate actionable insights and engaging in hands-on activities using the DataSights platform. The session featured a compelling real-world use case, demonstrating how DataSights has been effectively utilised to inform and implement data-driven interventions, inspiring participants to leverage similar approaches in their work.





## ***Unlocking the Power of Organisation Development: A Gender-Inclusive Approach***

The 90-minute Masterclass on Organisation Development (OD) explored the transformative power of OD interventions in fostering gender-responsive organisational change. The class was a mix of participatory lectures, case study analysis, and group discussions, helping attendees learn how to diagnose organisational challenges and develop actionable Gender Transformative OD Intervention Plans. Participants left with practical tools and actionable strategies to strengthen their organisations and foster long-term impact.



## **Strengthening Compliance through Effective Governance**

The Masterclass on Strengthening Compliance through Effective Governance explored how robust governance practices can bolster compliance within SPOs. It emphasised the interconnected roles of governance and compliance in ensuring legal, financial, and ethical integrity while fostering organisational sustainability. Participants gained practical insights through case studies and discussions on compliance with key regulations like the Income Tax Act, 1961, and the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010 (FCRA). The session also underscored the importance of risk management, diversity, equity, and inclusivity (DEI) policies, and building stakeholder trust.



# Reflections and Feedback

## Feedback Survey Insights

We reached out to our attendees and gathered their feedback. Sharing a few top-line takeaways from our delegates on attending DoDM 2024:

- After attending the conference, 82% respondents feel that Development Management is crucial for the sector
- The average rating for the conference is 8 (out of 10)
- 14 out of 19 sessions received favourable feedback from more than 85% respondents who attended them

“A huge shout-out to the founders of ISDM, for curating such a dynamic & collaborative space. The commitment of team ISDM to advancing the field of Development Management and fostering these crucial dialogues is truly commendable. Beyond the sessions, spaces like DoDM are invaluable for connecting with peers and allies. I look forward to continuing to build pathways that empower communities at scale.”

“What stood out for me was the design and execution of the event, which were deeply rooted in the collaborative spirit of sector leaders. The urgency to address pressing challenges, coupled with the camaraderie, warmth, and authentic human connections fostered throughout the event, made it both impactful and memorable.”

“I deeply appreciate the platform that ISDM has created to bring attention to the critical field of Development Management. The extensive participation speaks volumes about the event's significance as a space for diverse voices to be heard and valued.”

“Got deep insights into using data as evidence and influencing decisions through data. While implementation is crucial for any project, communicating evidence must be aligned with the stakeholders' agenda. What stayed with me is the importance of identifying the right people and utilising data effectively.”



# Looking Ahead

DoDM 2024 was a resounding success, serving as a vibrant platform for exchanging ideas and insights in the domain of Development Management. The day-long conference welcomed over **1,100 participants from across the country**, along with **27 international contributors** who submitted research papers. True to its collaborative ethos, **DoDM 2024** brought together the efforts of **15 track partners and over 80 distinguished speakers and moderators**.

The day's rich discussions provided practitioners, researchers, leaders, and donors with invaluable food for thought. For ISDM, these dialogues offered deep insights into critical themes, including water equity and sustainability, sectoral resilience, and amplifying the voice and visibility of Samaaj, alongside partnerships with Sarkaar and Bazaar.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to our partners, **NASSCOM Foundation, The Blended Finance Co., Michael and Susan Dell Foundation, PRADAN, Bridgespan, A.T.E. Chandra Foundation, Magic bus, Quest Alliance, BREAKTHROUGH, Lend a Hand India, IDInsights, GRAAM, and OnPurpose** for their invaluable contributions in co-creating and anchoring the sessions and tracks at DoDM 2024. Collaboration with various stakeholders was instrumental in shaping the day's meaningful outcomes.

At ISDM, our efforts are steadfastly focused on strengthening the social impact ecosystem, enabling a skilled cadre of Development Managers, and empowering the sector to optimise the principles of Development Management for greater impact at scale. We are confident that the dialogues initiated at DoDM 2024 will inspire and find resonance in the work of Social Purpose Organisations worldwide through their programs and initiatives.

There's always something exciting brewing at ISDM! We look forward to welcoming you to the next edition of DoDM and continuing this journey together.





# DIALOGUES ON **DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

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**INDIAN SCHOOL OF DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT**

C 20/5-6, SECTOR 62, NOIDA, 201301

Connect with us: [dodm@isdms.org.in](mailto:dodm@isdms.org.in)