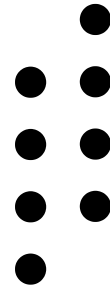




SOCIAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT



CSR PROJECTS OF FIRSTSOURCE SOLUTIONS LIMITED 2024-25

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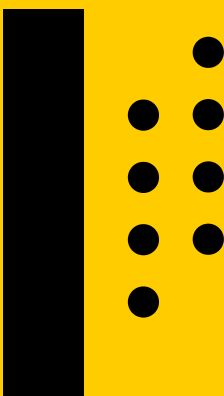


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1. Introduction

India, with its diverse landscape and population, faces a multitude of social and developmental challenges that impact its citizens. For instance, children in government schools, particularly in rural and semi-urban areas, often lack access to holistic education, including exposure to the creative arts. Young college graduates in rural areas struggle with employment opportunities, while women artisans from disadvantaged backgrounds face challenges in accessing resources and knowledge to succeed. Similarly, individuals with disabilities—such as those with hearing impairments or mobility challenges—encounter significant accessibility barriers. In addition, individuals, both young and elderly, suffering from health conditions like diabetes and cataracts, forgo necessary healthcare due to high out-of-pocket (OOP) expenses.

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) has become a crucial tool that helps in addressing social challenges in India. The Companies Act of 2013 mandates CSR contributions for companies exceeding a certain profit bracket, leading to increased corporate involvement in community welfare. Over the years, structured CSR initiatives focusing on key areas such as education, empowerment & gender equality, and healthcare have been successfully implemented across India, creating a significant positive impact on society.

Since community needs vary across regions, CSR projects need to be designed with a grassroots approach, ensuring long-term and meaningful impact in vulnerable communities. A targeted CSR approach can help bridge these gaps.

Firstsource Solutions Limited, an RP-Sanjiv Goenka Group company, is committed to creating a nurturing and empowering environment to deepen its societal engagement, with the goal of improving lives and livelihoods on a sustainable basis.

Aligned with this vision, between 2023 and 2024, Firstsource implemented six major CSR initiatives focused on education, healthcare, accessibility, and economic empowerment:

- Enhancing youth employability through a mobile employment van
- Empowering women artisans with financial and digital literacy training
- Improving accessibility by installing ramps in public spaces for persons with disabilities
- Supporting individuals with hearing impairments by providing hearing aids
- Advancing healthcare by funding cataract surgeries and providing insulin for children with diabetes.
- Fostering creativity in education through art sessions for children in government schools

With an investment of approximately INR Rs 58,74,170 (~ USD 68,500), Firstsource continues to drive sustainable change, empowering communities and fostering inclusive growth.

This report, submitted by SAN India, presents the findings of an impact assessment of these initiatives by Firstsource. It serves as a reflective tool for the organization, offering insights and recommendations to enhance the effectiveness and reach of its CSR programmes in the future.

2. Objectives of the study

In December 2024, Firstsource partnered with six organizations—NASSCOM Foundation, Samarthanam, Nirmaan Organization, VHS Hospitals, Nalandaway, and Ramp My City—to implement six CSR initiatives focused on Empowerment & Gender Equality, Education, and Healthcare. These programs benefited a diverse group, including school-going children, individuals with disabilities, young college students, geriatric patients, and rural artisan women. The initiatives provided both direct assistance and skill-based training, addressing both immediate needs and long-term empowerment to foster sustainable growth of the beneficiaries.

To evaluate the impact of these initiatives, Firstsource engaged SAN India in December 2024 to conduct a social impact assessment. The evaluation aimed to analyse the implementation process, measure key achievements, and assess the programmes' relevance to the intended beneficiaries. The primary goal was to gain insights into the effectiveness and long-term impact of these initiatives on the communities they serve. The assessment focused on understanding the socio-economic benefits for the target group, evaluating the sustainability of project outcomes, and providing actionable recommendations for future initiatives.

The study was led by Ms. Neeta N. K., Social Auditor at SAN India, under the expert guidance of Ms. Latha Suresh, Director of SAN India, and Ms. Marie Banu, Director of CSIM. As part of the assessment, on-site visits were conducted in Tarapur (Madhya Pradesh), Bengaluru (Karnataka) and Chennai (Tamil Nadu) to evaluate the initiatives firsthand.

3. Methodology & Scope

The visits included collecting feedback from stakeholders through structured consultations. The study employed a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative and qualitative research techniques to evaluate the impact of Firstsource's CSR initiatives. A preliminary review of Firstsource's CSR strategy and execution was conducted to establish a baseline understanding of the project's intended objectives and implementation.

To capture real-time insights into the project's impact, primary data was collected through:

- In-Depth Interviews: Conducted with patients, parents of patients, community members, hospital staff, and RTO staff to gain insights into their perceptions of the project.
- Focused Group Discussions: Held to understand the collective experiences of the beneficiaries regarding the project.
- Consultations: Engaged key stakeholders from the organization to gather information on the project's implementation and effectiveness.

The assessment covers the period from April 2023 to March 2024.

4. Stakeholders

Table 1 Stakeholders consulted.

Organization	Type of Stakeholder	Nos. Consulted	Type of Interaction
Nirmaan	Staff	5	FGD
	Students (online)	4	FGD
	Students (survey)	50	Online
Nalandaway	Govt school teachers	3	One to One
	Govt school HM	3	One to One
	Founder	1	One to One
	Staff	5	One to One
	Volunteer	1	FGD
	Children	8	FGD
Ramp My City	Founder	1	Telephone
	Beneficiaries	12	One to One
	Hospital staff	1	One to One
	RTO and PHC watchman	2	One to One
NASSCOM Foundation	Tarapur beneficiaries	16	FGD (one to one)
	Maheshwar beneficiaries	23	FGD (online)
	Umang staff	2	Personal
	Umang staff	1	One to one
	NASSCOM Foundation staff	4	Online discussion
	NASSCOM Foundation staff	1	One to one
VHS	Doctors	4	One to one
	PRO	1	One to one
	Nurses	4	One to one
	Cataract beneficiaries	7	Telephone
	Cataract beneficiaries	8	One to one
	JD beneficiaries	4	Telephone
	JD beneficiaries	3	One to one

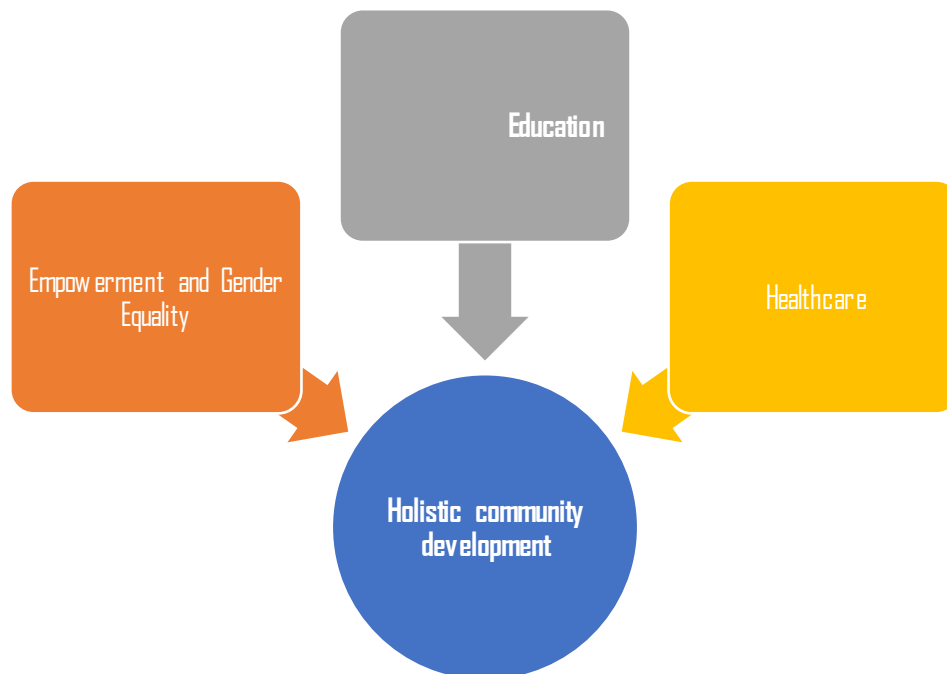
Organization	Type of Stakeholder	Nos. Consulted	Type of Interaction
Samarthanam	PRO	1	One to one
	Project manager	1	One to one
	Beneficiaries	4	One to one
	Beneficiary parents	5	Telephone
	Beneficiary parents	4	One to one
	Volunteer	1	One to one
	Disabled school teachers	2	One to one
TOTAL		192	

5. Programmes supported in 2023-2024

Overview

During the study period 2023-2024, six initiatives were supported under the thematic areas of Empowerment & Gender Equality, Education, and Healthcare. These programmes aimed to create meaningful impact by increasing financial literacy, creating skilled youth, improving accessibility, providing art-based education, and essential healthcare services to marginalized communities.

Figure 1 Firstsource CSR - Areas of focus by theme



Empowerment & Gender Equality

- In collaboration with the **NASSCOM Foundation**, Firstsource worked on a “**Women Entrepreneurship Program**” to empower 176 rural women in Madhya Pradesh. This initiative focused on training women artisans to effectively use digital devices and applications, to enable them to enhance their livelihood opportunities through technology-driven solutions.
- **The Ramp My City** initiative played a crucial role in making public spaces more accessible for individuals with disabilities. Through this program, ramps were constructed in five public spaces, including two healthcare centres, to ensure better access to essential services for people with mobility challenges.
- As part of the partnership with **Samarthanam**, Firstsource supported **individuals with hearing impairments** by providing **hearing aids** and conducting **hearing assessments**. A total of **15 persons with disabilities (PWD)** were provided these services, with the aim of improving their ability to communicate and engage more effectively in daily life.

Education

- The **Nimaan Employment Van** initiative was designed to bridge the gap between **marginalized youth** and **employment opportunities**. Through this mobile employment service, young individuals from underprivileged backgrounds received **career counselling and job placement assistance**. The program aimed to help them secure entry-level positions across various sectors, aligning with current market demands and improving their long-term career prospects.
- The **Nalandaway program** introduced a creative approach to education through a 5-day **art camp** conducted in different villages. This initiative aimed to use **artistic and interactive processes** to enhance classroom engagement, encourage self-expression, and enhance creativity among students. Over three months, approximately **900** children across six schools in Chengalpattu participated in the program. The program was designed to benefit the children via an immersive learning experience through art.

Healthcare

- The partnership with **Voluntary Health Services** focused on improving vision and providing essential **eyecare** support to those in need. **65 free cataract surgeries** were conducted for underprivileged individuals. The program also provided insulin support for **12 children with diabetes**, to ensure that children with diabetes received the necessary medical care to manage their condition effectively.

Through these initiatives, efforts were made by Firstsource Solutions Ltd to contribute to the well-being and development of communities in need.

Overall Reach

In all, at-least 4,967 beneficiaries were directly supported via the program over the duration of the audit period. This estimate could be more as the number of people using the Ramp My City ramps could not be exactly quantified given the floating population.

Table 2 Overall Reach of the Program

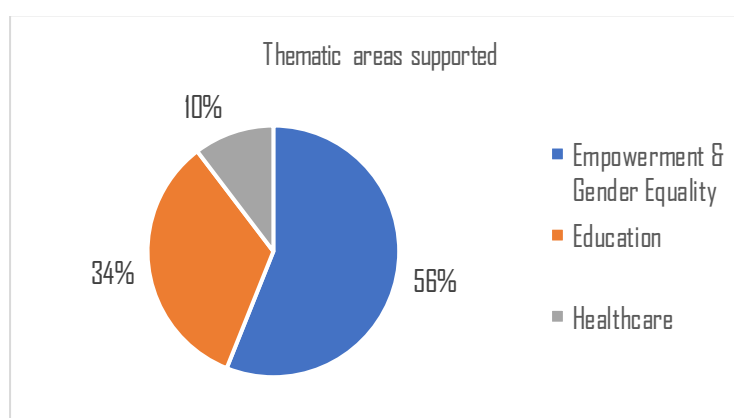
Project	2023-24	Total spend
Women empowerment via NASSCOM Foundation	176	23,92,573
Ramp My City	2,000	5,00,000
Samarthanam	15	4,00,140
Nirmaan	1,565	14,82,030
Nalandaway	1,134	4,92,000
VHS	77	6,07,567
Total	4,967	58,74,170

A total of ₹58,74,170 was allocated across six projects, with 56% directed towards 'Empowerment and Gender Equality,' 34% towards 'Education,' and 10% towards 'Healthcare.'

Table 3 CSR funds supported

Thematic Area	Amount spent
Empowerment & Gender equality	32,92,573
Education	19,74,030
Healthcare	6,07,567
Total	58,74,170

Figure 2 CSR Fund Allocation (%)



Empowerment & Gender equality

During the audit period, Firstsource actively focused on empowerment, gender equality, implementing initiatives that fostered economic independence and inclusivity.

A key project, in collaboration with NASSCOM Foundation, focused on women's financial literacy, equipping them with essential skills in budgeting, savings, and entrepreneurship to promote long-term economic independence.

Additionally, Firstsource championed accessibility and inclusion for individuals with disabilities, enhancing their opportunities in education and employment. Through partnerships with Ramp My City and Samarthanam, the company worked to improve accessibility and provide tailored support to empower persons with disabilities.

NASSCOM FOUNDATION - WOMEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP PROGRAM

Background

The handloom and textile printing industry play a major role in India's rural economy, providing jobs to millions of people, especially women. Around 31.45 lakh households are involved in handloom work with 19.1 lakh female artisans and 6.3 lakh female allied workers. These women help preserve traditional art forms and bring their products to markets. However, they often face challenges like lack of knowledge, limited access to buyers, and poor market connections. To overcome these difficulties, they need ongoing support, training, and better ways to sell their products.

MP has a history of textile printing and handloom weaving. The Tarapur region in Neemuch District is famous for making bandanas and designs like 'Champa,' 'Jalam Buta,' and 'Amba. Traditional techniques such as direct dyeing, resist dyeing, Rogan printing, and screen printing are commonly used. Maheshwar is a well-known centre for silk saree. However, many of the women artisans here struggle with financial difficulties, lack of market access, and limited knowledge of digital tools, making it hard for them to grow their businesses.

As technology becomes more important in business, it is crucial to train women artisans in financial and digital skills. To help with this, Firstsource Solutions and NASSCOM Foundation have started a program to train 176 local women artisans in the aforementioned geographic locations.

About NASSCOM Foundation

Established in 2001, NASSCOM Foundation has been at the forefront of leveraging technology for social impact. Guided by its core philosophy of TechForGood, the foundation focuses on harnessing technology to create access and opportunities for those in need. Through its initiatives, it empowers individuals to address social and economic challenges more effectively using tech-driven solutions.

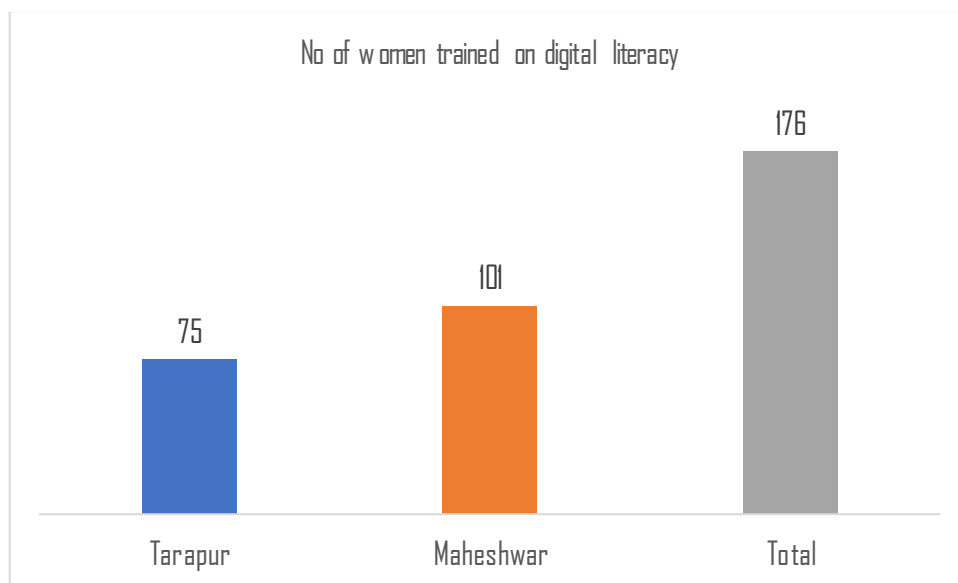
About the program

To help these women, NASSCOM Foundation partnered with entrepreneur Umang Sridhar designs and Firstsource to train 176 local women in financial management, digital skills, and business development. This training was provided to give them the

confidence and knowledge to sell their products independently, earn better incomes, and reach bigger markets. Since Maheshwar's handloom and printing traditions have received GI tagging, the training aimed at ensuring that these artisans can keep their heritage alive while using technology to improve their livelihoods.

The program was conducted from April 2023-December 2023 in two locations of MP, Tarapur in Neemuch district and Maheshwar. In partnership with a local NGO called Umang Sridhar, the team identified 176 women from the two districts.

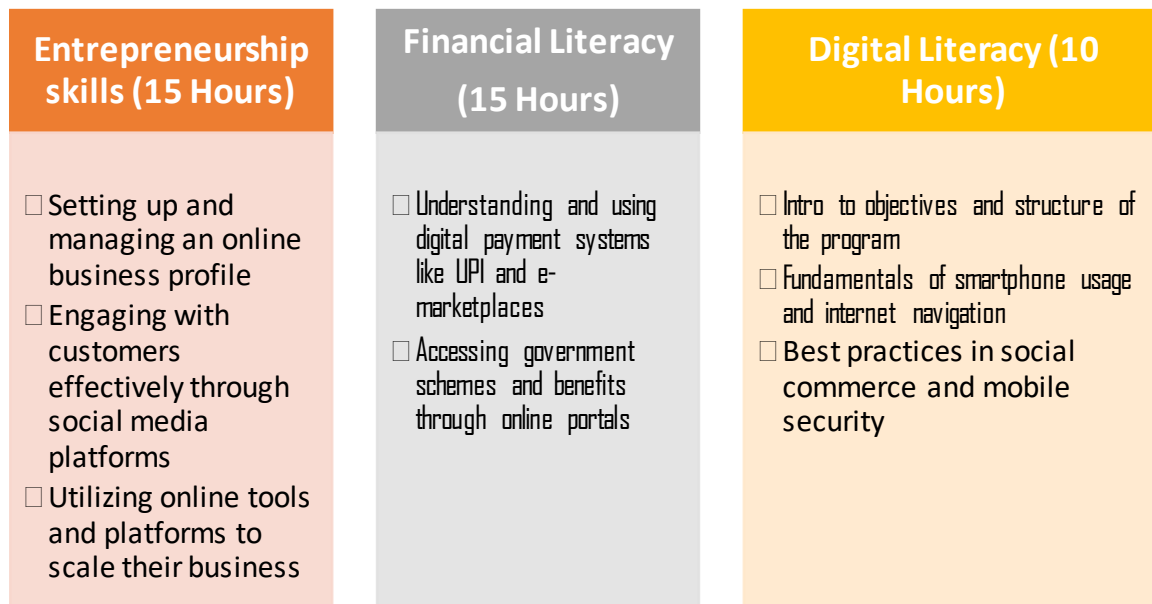
Figure 3 NASSCOM Foundation- No of beneficiaries



The program was conducted in batches of 20 to 30 women. A total of 7 batches were trained, 4 in Maheshwar and 3 in Tarapur. Over a period of 40 hours, participants received training on various topics, including digital literacy, financial inclusion, marketing, entrepreneurship, and social media marketing. They were also introduced to digital payment systems like Google Pay, Internet Banking, PhonePe, and Paytm, enabling them to carry out financial transactions with ease.

The forty-hour training was split into the following topics:

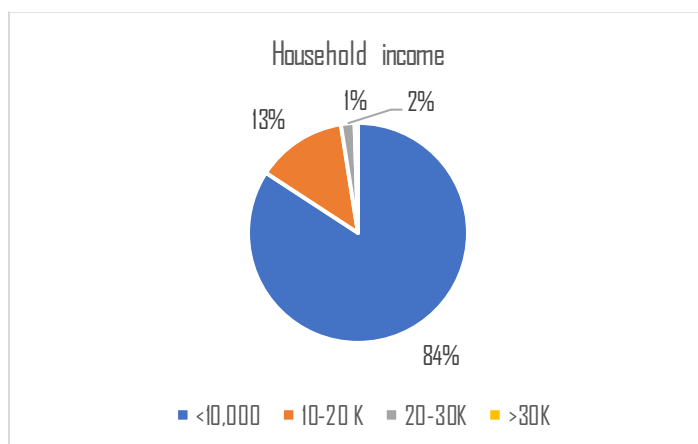
Figure 4 NASSCOM Foundation- Curriculum



The training followed a Training of Trainers (TOT) approach, where select representatives from the community played an active role in supporting the learning process. The sessions were conducted in a hybrid mode, combining both online and in-person learnings. Experts from NASSCOM Foundation led the initial training sessions, providing valuable insights and hands-on guidance. These experts continued to mentor the participants throughout the program, offering support and practical advice to help them implement what they learned.

Findings

Figure 5 NASSCOM Foundation- Beneficiary income level



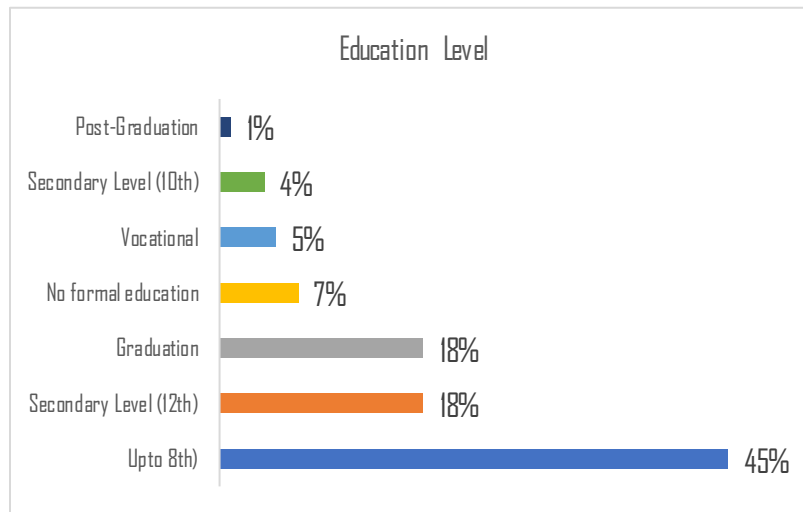
Beneficiary profile

Income levels: The majority of the women (84%), have a household income of less than ₹10,000 per month. Around 13% fall in the ₹10,000–₹20,000 range. 2%, earn between ₹20,000 and ₹30,000, while 1% have a household income above ₹30,000. This shows that most of the beneficiaries come from low-income families.

Social profile: Among the 176 beneficiaries, 72%, belong to the OBC category. 15% come from the General category, while 12% are from the SC community. This

distribution shows that most beneficiaries are from socially disadvantaged backgrounds.

Figure 6 NASSCOM Foundation- Beneficiary education



Education levels: 45% of the participants had only studied up to 8th standard. About 18% completed 12th grade, and another 18% finished graduation. Around 7%, never had formal schooling while 5% had taken vocational courses. Only 4% studied up to 10th grade and 1% went on to complete their PG. This data indicates

that the employability prospects of these women are limited.

Field visit findings

The auditor from SAN conducted a visit to the local training centre in Tarapur in Neemuch District and interacted with fifteen beneficiaries and two staff from the Umang Sridhar team. In addition, a zoom call was conducted with beneficiaries in Maheswar where 23 participants and one staff from the Umang Sridhar team joined. The evaluation included a thorough discussion with the participants about the need for the program, understanding its impact on the beneficiaries and to gather comprehensive feedback from them regarding NASSCOM Foundation's offerings.

Helping women artisans gain financial independence

"At NASSCOM Foundation, we saw how important it is to train women artisans from Maheshwar and Neemuch in financial literacy and digital skills. These women come from very poor backgrounds and have been practicing traditional crafts for generations. However, they do not realize the true value of their art, time, and hard work. Middlemen take advantage of them, paying them very little while selling their products for much higher prices.

Many of these artisans did not even own a mobile phone, making it impossible for them to market their products, receive payments directly, or connect with buyers. Because of this, their beautiful craft is slowly disappearing. Through our training program, we are teaching them how to manage their finances, set fair prices, and use digital marketing to sell their products. This will help them earn better incomes and keep their craft alive for future generations". Ms Pallavi Jalan, NASSCOM Foundation

To gain insights into the beneficiaries' perspectives in Tarapur, the audit team sought ratings from the women on several key parameters using a scale of 1 to 5 (5 representing highest). The findings are recorded in the table below.

Table 4 NASCCOM - Ratings given by beneficiaries- Feedback

Parameters	Avg rating
Free course	5
Need for the course	4
Quality of training	4
Mentorship support	4
Duration of training	3
Technology	5
Overall Average Rating	4.2

The training program in Tarapur and Maheshwar was well-received by the participants. They appreciated that the course was free, which made it accessible to everyone. The need for financial and digital literacy training was recognized more strongly in Maheshwar than in Tarapur. Participants in Maheshwar also expressed greater satisfaction with the quality of training and mentorship support. However, some felt that the duration of the training could have been longer for better learning. The use of technology in the program was particularly valued in both regions. Overall, Maheshwar residents reported a slightly better experience than those in Tarapur, especially in mentorship and training quality. Feedback suggests that extending the training could improve its impact further.

Participants Speak on

- **Free course:** *"The training being free made it possible for me to attend without financial worries. It was helpful to learn skills that I can now use in my work."* – Aarti, Tarapur
- **Need for the course:** *"I did not realize how useful financial and digital skills could be. Now I understand how they can help me manage my work better and sell my products independently."* – Meena, Maheshwar
- **Quality of training:** *"The training was clear and easy to follow. The instructors explained things step by step, which helped me understand better."* – Savita, Tarapur
- **Duration of training:** *"The training was useful, but a little more time would have helped us practice better."* – Pooja, Tarapur
- **Technology:** *"I had never used a phone for business before. Now, I know how to take product photos, post them online, and receive payments via Gpay."* – Anita, Maheshwar

The primary goal of this initiative was to empower women artisans by helping them use smartphones and digital devices to expand their businesses. Through this training, it was observed that the artisans gained a better understanding of various government

welfare schemes available to them. They also learned how to leverage e-commerce platforms and social media to market and sell their products more effectively.

Survey findings

The findings from the discussions are given below.

- **Interest in selling products independently:** In Maheshwar, 95% of the women reported increased interest in marketing their products. A few have successfully negotiated deals with clients, and three women have started selling directly through online platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp Business. In contrast, only 30% of the women in Tarapur felt more confident but still rely on intermediaries. Not many have attempted direct sales, and many expressed the need for additional support in marketing strategies.
- **Improvement in financial management skills:** In Maheshwar, 78% of respondents now maintain financial records and track income. About 65% reported being able to budget effectively for raw materials and household expenses, with some participants starting to save or invest small portions of their earnings. Meanwhile, in Tarapur, less than 20% of women actively track their income, and only 40% reported confidence in budgeting effectively. Many still depend on male family members for financial decision-making.
- **Digital literacy and use of technology:** Maheshwar saw 82% of participants using mobile phones for business communication and online sales. About 90% are comfortable using digital payment methods such as UPI and mobile wallets, and some have joined online marketplaces to expand their reach. 55% of women in Tarapur have started using digital tools but require additional training. Around 45% remain hesitant to use digital payment systems, and more support is needed to build trust and familiarity with technology.
- **Preservation of traditional handloom and printing skills:** In Maheshwar, 90% of women expressed a renewed interest in preserving their craft. Many see technology as a way to promote traditional designs to a wider audience, and some are incorporating contemporary patterns while retaining heritage techniques. However, 65% of women in Tarapur value their traditional skills but struggle with market demand. Fewer women are confident that their craft can be profitable, and there is a need for better linkage between traditional skills and modern market trends.
- **New designs learned:** Women in Maheshwar showed enthusiasm in learning new design techniques to modernize their traditional crafts while maintaining authenticity. They explored contemporary motifs, experimented with fusion patterns, and adapted to market preferences. In Tarapur, while some women engaged with new design ideas, adoption remained limited due to concerns about deviating from conventional styles.
- **New learnings from the program:** The women in both locations gained knowledge in market research, pricing strategies, and product differentiation. Maheshwar participants were more proactive in applying these insights to refine their business models, while Tarapur women expressed a need for further guidance on implementing these learnings.

- **Using Google Maps to attend exhibitions:** A significant number of artisans (75%) learned how to navigate using Google Maps, enabling them to reach exhibitions and networking events more independently.
- **Using Google Pay for transactions:** Digital payment adoption was notably higher in Maheshwar, where 70% of participants now use Google Pay for transactions, reducing their reliance on cash-based sales. In Tarapur, uptake was lower, with only 40% of women feeling comfortable using digital payments due to concerns about fraud and lack of experience.
- **Use of smartphones:** Initially, only 30% of women in Maheshwar owned or regularly used smartphones. By the end of the training, 85% had either acquired or started using smartphones for business purposes, including communication and online sales. In Tarapur, smartphone adoption grew from 10% to 35%, with most using basic apps but requiring further support to utilize advanced features.
- **Using WhatsApp to conduct business:** WhatsApp has become a key tool for business communication and marketing. In Maheshwar, 80% of women now use WhatsApp to share product images, take orders, and coordinate with customers. In Tarapur, 15% of women have started leveraging WhatsApp, but many still use it primarily for personal communication rather than business transactions.

REESS Evaluation

The impact of the NASSCOM Foundation program was assessed based on the REESS framework. *The REESS criteria answers the following questions and is defined as follows.*

Relevance	How important is the relevance or significance of the digital literacy program?
Effectiveness	Were the planned objectives of the program being achieved in the Neemuch and Maheshwar area?
Efficiency	Were objectives being achieved judiciously (time, resources, money spent)?
Sustainability	Were positive impacts sustainable and sustainability plans in place for continuation of the programmes?
Social Impact	Did the intervention contribute to social change? What is the impact or effect of the intervention on the primary stakeholders?

****Indicators were evolved separately for these five parameters. A 10- point performance rating scale was evolved to evaluate the performance of each REESS indicator.

Rating	Grade
1.1 to 2.9	Poor
3.0 to 4.9	Satisfactory
5.0 to 6.9	Good
7.0 to 8.9	Very Good

9.0 to10

Excellent

Relevance

The need to preserve traditional art forms: Women artisans in Maheshwar and Neemuch have been practicing their traditional crafts for generations. Maheshwar is known for its beautiful handwoven Maheshwari sarees, while Neemuch is famous for its hand block printing. However, these skills are now at risk because power looms and machine printing are taking over. As online shopping and digital payments become more common, many women lack the skills to use these platforms, making it even harder for them to sell their work. Some don't even know how to use smartphones, putting them at a huge disadvantage in today's market. This means women artisans often get very little money for their hard work, forcing many to leave their craft behind. Younger generations are also moving away from these traditional skills, putting the future of handloom weaving and block printing at risk. This is where Firstsource's collaboration with NASSCOM Foundation has been important. By providing financial and digital literacy training, Firstsource helps women learn essential skills to compete in today's marketplace. With the right knowledge, these artisans can access online platforms, use digital payments, and reach more buyers, ensuring that their craft continues to survive and grow.

Lack of availability of similar service providers: The program offered by NASSCOM Foundation provides a much-needed training in key areas such as digital literacy, financial inclusion, marketing, and entrepreneurship. However, similar service providers are scarce in the program areas where these trainings are most needed. A few Govt departments have offered one-time trainings, but they are not structured, multi-module training programmes.

A boon for rural women

"Maheshwari weaving and Neemuch block printing are traditional skills passed down for generations. But today, many women artisans struggle because they don't know how to use digital platforms or online payments. This program helps them learn these skills so they can sell their work better and earn a fair income. When artisans grow, our traditions stay alive." – Hitesh, Local Coordinator, Umang Sridhar team

Awareness of the beneficiary group: During the FGD discussions, only 4 of the 38 women who were spoken to mentioned that they knew how to use a smartphone. The training program by Firstsource and NASSCOM Foundation was highly relevant for these women, as it addressed critical gaps in digital and financial literacy. With most of them unfamiliar with using smartphones, banking services, or government schemes, the program provided essential skills to help them adapt to the changing market.

Breaking barriers via digital trainings

- *"Before this training, I didn't know how to use a smartphone. Now, I can check my bank balance and make payments online. It has made things easier for me."*
- *"I always depended on others for checking my messages. Now, I have learned how to do it myself. This training has given me confidence."*
- *"I never thought I could sell my products online. After this training, I understand how digital payments work, and I feel more prepared for the future."*

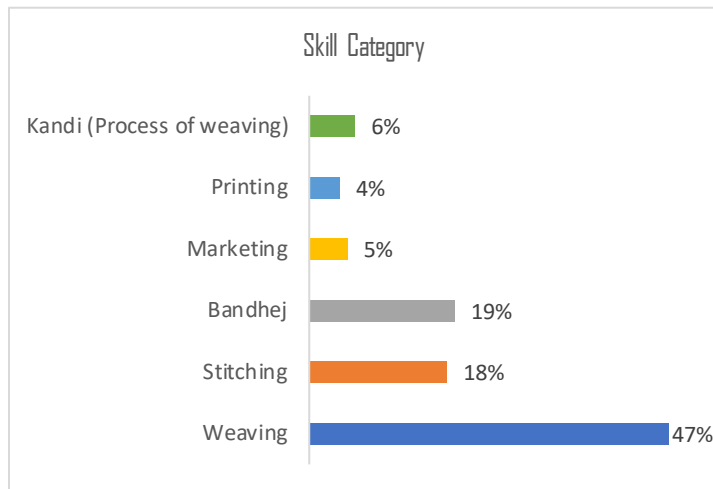
Receptivity of beneficiaries: All the beneficiaries who took part in the program shared that they were very happy to be a part of it. They felt the training was much needed and useful in their daily lives. Many even asked for a refresher program, stressing how important such trainings are for women to keep pace with the changing market.

Demographic profile of the beneficiaries: The program was specifically targeted towards economically challenged women artisans, with over 84% of the participants falling earning less than Rs 10,000. Also, 72% belong to the OBC category, highlighting the relevance of the program to groups that face inequities.

The need for the program

"Most of the women we trained had never used a smartphone or online banking. They did not know about Government schemes or how sell their products online. This training helped them learn these important skills. Many women now say that they feel more confident and even want a refresher program. Such training is essential for women artisans to keep up with changing times and improve their earnings." -Umesh, Local coordinator, Umang Sridhar team

Aligns to aspirations and skills of beneficiaries:



All the women selected were artisans, chosen for their skills and involvement in various aspects of weaving Maheshwari sarees and block printing. The program has successfully aligned with the aspirations and skills of the beneficiaries, providing them with the basic knowledge they require to jumpstart their individual professional journey.

Over 75% of the women expressed gratitude for the support and considered it an essential first step toward financial independence. Their enthusiasm for learning new styles from platforms like Pinterest and promoting their work on WhatsApp was evident during the discussions, indicating their openness to the programme.

Breaking barriers via digital trainings

"Most of the women we trained had never used a smartphone before. They did not know about Govt schemes or how sell their products online. This training helped them learn these important skills. Many women now say that they feel more confident and even want a refresher program." -**Umesh, Local coordinator, Umang Sridhar team**

Effectiveness

Overall reach and continuation: The achieved number of beneficiaries trained stands at 176, against the target of 176 and all of them were provided handholding support to drive adoption. The beneficiaries enrolled in the program continued and completed, showcasing a strong commitment to the program and the effectiveness of the support provided

Increased awareness of topics covered: The program helped the beneficiaries learn about digital payments and financial schemes. Before the program, only 3.94% knew about government schemes like Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana. After the training, 82.6% learned about UPI, 50.7% about internet banking, and 53.6% about bank transfers. This knowledge helped them understand different financial options.

Ease of understanding of topics and modules covered: The training was designed to be easy to follow. Participants rated the course 4.2 out of 5, showing that they could understand the lessons well. They learned the need to create strong passwords, recognize fake messages, and use mobile banking safely.

Breaking the digital divide: Many women had limited experience with smartphones before the training. Their ability to use advanced smartphone functions increased from 0–25% to 61–94%. Also, 87% learned how to secure their phones with passwords. This helped them use digital tools with more confidence.

Confidence levels of the beneficiaries: Before the training, none of the women had used digital payments for their business. After the program, close to 43% of those who were interviewed were able to do transactions independently. The training and mentorship (rated 4/5) gave them the confidence to manage digital payments without help.

Knowledge retention after the program: Most women needed support in remembering what they learned in the training. About 20% indicated could identify fake SMS and links, helping them avoid fraud. Awareness of financial schemes also improved, making it easier for them to access benefits.

Quality of trainers: Four trainers were involved in training the artisans, with expertise in financial training, market linkage, and social media. The trainers received a rating of 4/5. According to the beneficiaries, they explained topics in a simple way and provided practical training. This helped the women understand and apply what they learned.

Adoption of digital literacy and financial literacy tools: During the time of the audit, over 60% of the women indicated that they started using digital payment tools like UPI, internet banking, and bank transfers. They also learned how to keep their accounts secure, making digital transactions safer.

Beneficiaries say

- *"Before this training, I didn't even know about Gpay or Phonepay. Now, I can confidently make digital payments without anyone's help."*
- *"I was always afraid of using my smartphone for anything other than calls. After this program, I have learned to use mobile banking and even secure my phone with a password."*
- *"The trainers explained everything in such a simple way."*
- *"I never knew about financial schemes, but now I know about government programmes that can help me."*
- *"I used to depend on others for money transfers. Now, I can send and receive money on my own, which makes me feel more independent."*
- *"The training gave me the confidence; I now know that I can handle my money without hiccups."*

Efficiency

Affordability: The program was entirely free, ensuring that the beneficiaries who were from underprivileged backgrounds could participate without financial burden. This made the training highly accessible. However, with an overall costing of Rs 39,99,353, the cost per beneficiary was Rs 22,724, which was relatively high compared to similar

training programmes. Despite this, the program's no-fee model enabled women who would otherwise not afford such training to gain valuable skills.

Training duration & satisfaction: The training was conducted over 40 days, but more than 80% of participants felt that additional training was necessary. While the quality of training and mentorship was well-received, many women in Maheshwar found it difficult to manage the daily sessions alongside household chores, childcare, and work.

Feedback on the programme

- *"Before, we could not open up in front of people, but now we confidently present our work."*
- *"Earlier, the customer decided the price, but now we decide and negotiate better."*
- *"Our confidence has increased, and we feel more empowered in our line of work."*
- *"Pinterest has been a great source of inspiration and support for our designs."*
- *"I have learned to use Google Maps to send my location to customers, making deliveries easier."*
- *"Creating a business plan and maintaining a catalogue has helped me manage my work better."*

Timeliness of support: Once the beneficiaries were identified and funds were received, the program started without delay. This quick execution was in line with government push for supporting women's empowerment. The rollout ensured that participants received timely access to training and resources.

Adherence to program timelines: The program faced disruptions due to unexpected challenges. Flooding in Maheshwar in September affected transportation, damaged stocks and machinery, and led to training delays. Also, festivities and the Madhya Pradesh state assembly elections reduced participant availability, causing further postponements. Despite these challenges, the program adapted by rescheduling sessions and ensuring that participants could complete their training.

Successful completion of training: Despite disruptions, NASSCOM Foundation ensured that women could complete their training. The ability to adjust schedules and accommodate participants during difficulties like floods and festival-related absences showed the program's commitment to its beneficiaries.

Overall satisfaction rate: The program received an average rating of 4.2 out of 5 across various parameters. Free access and technology support were rated highest, while training duration received a lower score of 3, indicating a need for an extended or more flexible schedule. The positive ratings for training quality and mentorship highlight the program's value to participants.

Beneficiary Feedback

"I feel empowered to chase my aspirations and contribute positively to society. I am immensely grateful for the chance to be part of such a transformative program!"
Vimal

Increase in income, business opportunities and savings: While the training helped women learn the importance of digital payments in their businesses, there was no significant improvement in their business or income. However, over 20% opined that they saw a marginal improvement in their earnings (From Rs 500 average per month to Rs 5, 000 per month). Linkages with e-commerce platforms like Ajo and Fab India were also created by NASSCOM Foundation and hence, the women witnessed a marginal increase in income. Over 30% also opined that they were able to save more when compared to earlier.

Quotes by beneficiaries

- *"I was earning about ₹500 a month, but now I earn ₹4,000 a month."*
- *"I was earning about ₹9,000 a month, and now my earnings have grown further."*
- *"My savings have also increased, helping me plan better for the future."*

Sustainability

Continued access to training support: To ensure ongoing learning, various support mechanisms were put in place, including mentorship programmes, WhatsApp groups, trainer-led sessions, and a Training of Trainers (TOT) model. These initiatives helped participants stay engaged and apply their learning in real-life situations. Regular meetings were also conducted to address challenges and provide guidance. However, there is still a need for additional handholding, especially for participants who require more personalized support.

Financial sustainability of the organization: NASSCOM Foundation, with its strong network of partners and funding sources, has the capacity to support this initiative. Its existing collaborations and tie-ups with various organizations help in securing the necessary financial resources. Diversifying funding sources and engaging corporate sponsors or government bodies can further strengthen financial stability.

Organization capacity to continue support: NASSCOM Foundation follows a balanced approach by combining centralized planning with decentralized execution. NASSCOM Foundation serves as the knowledge partner, overseeing program management and ensuring expert trainers are available to deliver high-quality content. At the same time, the program relies on local partners like Umang Sridhar, who have a strong grassroots presence and a deep understanding of the artisan community's needs. This dual approach ensures that the program is well-coordinated while remaining flexible to adapt to local challenges. Having a dedicated team with

specialized expertise in training, mentorship, and community engagement further enhances the organization's capacity to provide continuous support.

Continued usage of knowledge from trainings: During the field visit, beneficiaries have already started incorporating digital tools such as Google Pay, Google Maps, and online banking into their daily lives, which is a positive outcome. However, there is still room for improvement, particularly in leveraging digital marketing tools. The participants now use platforms like Pinterest, WhatsApp, and Instagram to showcase and promote their products can significantly enhance their market reach. Training on the use of hashtags has helped them increase their online reach.

Sustained interest of the beneficiaries: Many of them are eager to enrol in advanced training sessions, which indicates their commitment to further developing their skills. To maintain their enthusiasm, new learning concept from and interactive activities are offered. Offering certification programmes or linking beneficiaries with potential employment opportunities will also help sustain their engagement.

Social Impact

Provision of access to digital platforms or newer interventions: The program introduced women to digital platforms, helping them explore new business opportunities and improve their reach. Training sessions covered the basics of using smartphones, social media, and digital payment systems, enabling participants to market their products online. E-commerce guidance was provided to help women expand their customer base beyond local markets. Considering that only 3% of the women knew how to operate their smartphones, this is a big step in the right direction towards creating digital access.

Involvement of the community: The program actively involved the local community, ensuring sustained support for the women participating. Local women were encouraged to engage in the training process by training them as trainers, which helped create a strong support system. The participation of experienced artisans and local business owners made the learning experience, collaboration and peer learning successful.

Increased self-confidence, pride, and morale: Gaining new skills and financial independence significantly boosted the confidence of the women. Many participants initially doubted their abilities, but as they progressed through the training, they gained a sense of accomplishment.

Increased gender equality: The program played a crucial role in bridging the gender gap by empowering women with skills traditionally dominated by men. By providing financial and business training, it enabled them to take the first step in contributing to their household income, creating the platform for a shift on societal perceptions of women's roles. Many women reported greater respect within their families and communities after becoming independent.

Reducing barriers: Women in marginalized communities often face multiple barriers, including financial constraints, limited mobility, and lack of education. The program

addressed these challenges by providing free training, eliminating cost as a barrier. The digital literacy training helped create a bridge between skills and business needs, enabling participants to explore more avenues for marketing their products. By reducing these obstacles, the program ensured that more women could participate and benefit from the training.

Increased aspirations (entrepreneurial or otherwise): Through skill-building and mentorship, a few women developed aspirations beyond the training program. Some women expressed interest in starting their own businesses. The training equipped a few women with a growth mind-set, encouraging them to seek long-term career goals and financial independence. The program by Firstsource also instilled a sense of ambition and motivation.

REESS Ratings

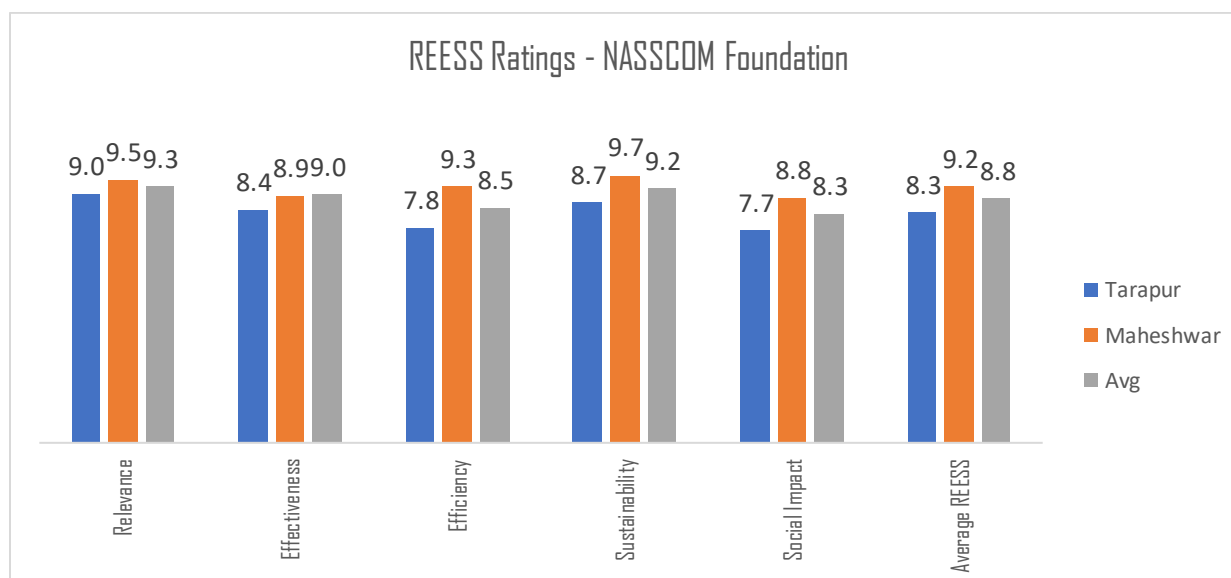
Table 5 NASSCOM FOUNDATION REESS Indicators and Ratings

REESS RATING INDICATORS		TARA PUR	MAHESH WAR	AVG RATING
RELEVANCE	Addressing the need to preserve traditional art forms	8	10	9
	Lack of availability of similar service providers	9	9	9
	Receptivity of beneficiaries, motivation for enrolment	8	10	9
	Demographic profile of the beneficiaries	8	9	9
	Aligns to aspirations and skills of beneficiaries	8	9	8
	Alignment with Firstsource's vision and mission	10	10	10
	Alignment to UN SDG	10	10	10
	Alignment with Govt Programmes	10	10	10
	AVERAGE RELEVANCE RATING	9.0	9.5	9.3
EFFECTIVENESS	Increased awareness of topics covered	9	9	9
	Ease of understanding of topics and modules covered	9	9	9
	Breaking digital divide	8	9	9
	Confidence levels of the beneficiaries	9	9	9
	Knowledge retention after the program	8	9	9
	Quality of trainers	10	10	10
	Adoption of digital literacy tools and financial literacy tools in line of work	6	8	7
	AVERAGE EFFECTIVENESS RATING	8.4	8.9	9.0
EFFICIENCY	Affordability	10	10	10
	Adequacy of training duration	8	8	8
	Satisfaction with the pace of the training	8	9	9
	Timeliness of the support	6	10	8

REESS RATING INDICATORS		TARA PUR	MAHESH WAR	AVG RATING
	Adherence to program timelines	7	10	9
	Successful completion of the training	9	10	10
	Overall satisfaction rate	8	9	9
	Increased income and business prospects	6	8	7
	AVERAGE EFFICIENCY RATING	7.8	9.3	8.5
SUSTAINABILITY	Continued access to training support	10	10	10
	Financial sustainability of the organization	10	10	10
	Organization capacity to continue support	10	10	10
	Continued usage rate of the knowledge received from trainings	7	8	8
	Sustained interest of the beneficiaries	8	10	9
	Creating networks to ensure continuity	7	10	9
	AVERAGE SUSTAINABILITY RATING	8.7	9.7	9.2
SOCIAL IMPACT	Provision access to digital platforms or newer interventions	8	9	9
	Involvement of the community	7	9	8
	Increased self-confidence, pride and boosts morale	7	9	8
	Increased gender equality	8	8	8
	Reducing barriers	9	9	9
	Increased aspirations (entrepreneurial or otherwise)	7	9	8
	AVERAGE SOCIAL IMPACT RATING	7.7	8.8	8.3

Overall REESS Score

Figure 7 NASSCOM Foundation- REESS Score



The program attained an average REESS rating of 8.8, which is considered excellent, highlighting the positive impact it has had on the women artisans.

Recommendations

Enhancing affordability and cost efficiency:

- Leverage public-private partnerships to subsidize costs and ensure sustainability without reducing program quality. Partnerships with NSDC would be an added benefit.
- Optimize batch size by increasing the number of participants per session while maintaining personalized attention.

Extending and adapting training duration

- Provide flexible learning schedules with weekend or evening sessions to accommodate women juggling household responsibilities and work.
- Offer post-training support through optional extended training programmes or refresher courses for those who need additional learning.
- Organize skill enhancement workshops for advanced training to help women transition into income-generating activities effectively.

Addressing income and business growth challenges

- Establish market linkages and sales support through partnerships with more e-commerce platforms and local business networks.
- Facilitate access to microfinance and credit by collaborating with financial institutions and government schemes like Mudra loans.
- Implement mentorship and business coaching programmes where experienced entrepreneurs guide the beneficiaries on marketing, pricing strategies, and business expansion.

Improving program resilience and timeliness

- Develop risk planning strategies to address disruptions due to natural disasters, elections, or cultural events.
- Align training schedules during periods of lower household and community obligations to ensure maximum participation.

Strengthening impact measurement and continuous improvement

- Provide recognized skill certification to enhance employment prospects and increase credibility.
- Track income progress through periodic assessments on business growth and income levels to evaluate long-term effectiveness.

Conclusion

The NASSCOM Foundation and Firstsource's digital and financial literacy program has played a crucial role in empowering women artisans in Maheshwar and Neemuch by equipping them with essential skills to navigate the modern marketplace. Despite challenges such as limited prior exposure to digital tools and external disruptions like floods and elections, the program successfully trained 176 women leading to increased confidence, digital adoption, and marginal income growth. While the

initiative has laid a strong foundation, continued mentorship, refresher training, and market linkages are essential to ensure long-term impact and sustainability, ultimately preserving traditional crafts and improving the economic independence of women artisans.

SAMARTHANAM - PROVISION OF HEARING AIDS TO THE HEARING IMPAIRED

Background

Hearing loss is a significant disability that affects millions of people worldwide, impacting their ability to communicate, engage in social interactions, and perform daily tasks. Individuals with hearing impairments often experience challenges in educational settings, workplace environments, and even personal relationships due to the difficulty in perceiving and processing auditory information. Hearing aids serve as a crucial assistive technology that amplifies sound, enabling individuals to better understand speech and ambient sounds, thereby enhancing their quality of life. By bridging the communication gap, hearing aids empower individuals with hearing impairments to participate more actively in conversations, reducing social isolation and improving mental well-being.

Apart from the social and emotional benefits, hearing aids also contribute to cognitive health and overall safety. Studies have shown that untreated hearing loss can lead to cognitive decline, memory problems, and an increased risk of dementia. Furthermore, individuals with hearing impairments are more vulnerable to accidents, as they may not hear alarms, vehicle horns, or other warning sounds in their surroundings. By restoring auditory function, hearing aids help those with hearing impairments regain their independence, navigate their environments more safely, and reduce reliance on caregivers. In turn, this alleviates stress on family members, creating a more inclusive and supportive society for people with disabilities.

About Samarthanam

Samarthanam Trust for the Disabled is a non-profit organization dedicated to empowering people with disabilities through education, vocational training, and assistive technologies. Since its inception, the organization has been instrumental in supporting individuals with visual, hearing, and physical impairments by providing necessary resources that help them lead independent and dignified lives. Samarthanam works towards creating an inclusive society by advocating for accessibility, developing skill-building programmes, and offering sustainable employment opportunities for persons with disabilities (PWDs). The trust also collaborates with government bodies, corporate partners, and community organizations to improve infrastructure, policy frameworks, and technological access for differently abled individuals.

About the program

Samarthanam's collaboration with Firstsource was a targeted initiative aimed at empowering individuals with physical disabilities by providing hearing aids. The

project's goal was to enhance the independence and dignity of PWDs by enabling them to function more effectively in both indoor and outdoor environments. Under this initiative, 15 beneficiaries received hearing aids with the aim of helping them overcome communication barriers and participate more actively in society. The project also sought to reduce the burden on caregivers by improving the self-sufficiency of the individuals they supported.

Findings

- Age of the beneficiaries: Most beneficiaries supported through the program were between the ages of 12-17, indicating that most recipients were teenagers. This highlights a significant need for hearing aids among adolescents who may have previously lacked access to such support.
- Gender: Among those who received support in the field, approximately 52% were female, demonstrating an almost equal distribution of assistance between men and women. This balance reflects the program's commitment to ensuring equitable access to healthcare, particularly for women in rural areas, who often face additional barriers to receiving medical support.
- Beneficiary hometown: All beneficiaries came from semi-rural or rural areas of Karnataka, with the largest proportion (64%) hailing from Bagepalli and Ramanagara.
- Awareness about the program: When asked how they learned about the project, 80% of beneficiaries stated that they were referred by local coordinators and Samarthanam field staff. The remaining respondents mentioned hearing about the program through doctors at hospitals. Fewer than 25% of beneficiaries had prior knowledge of Samarthanam before availing the services, highlighting the importance of on-ground outreach efforts in identifying those with hearing impairments.
- Rating of services offered: 80% of beneficiaries rated Samarthanam's services as 5/5, with only 1% giving a rating below 3/5. The program's services were widely regarded as exceptional, with staff responsiveness and behaviour receiving the highest ratings.
- Overall experience: 74% of beneficiaries described their experience with Samarthanam as excellent, while 22% rated it as good. Only 4% felt that their experience was average. Overall, satisfaction levels were extremely high, reflecting the positive impact of the initiative on beneficiaries and their families.

REESS Evaluation

Relevance

High prevalence of undiagnosed hearing impairments: Many children and adults live with undiagnosed hearing impairments, which can affect their communication, education, and overall quality of life. The Samarthanam team, through their grassroots workers known as community rehabilitators, played a crucial role in identifying and supporting such individuals with hearing difficulties through this programme.

Team member speaks

"Through this program, we were able to reach individuals who had been struggling in silence. Identifying their hearing challenges and providing them with the right support has been truly rewarding." – Govardhan, project manager

Increased risk of social exclusion and communication challenges without timely treatment: Without timely treatment and proper hearing aids, those with hearing impairments face an increased risk of social exclusion. Communication difficulties can lead to isolation, reduced educational opportunities, and limited career prospects. By ensuring early intervention and support, Samarthanam has provided these individuals a platform to integrate better into society and lead happy lives. Hence, this program was extremely relevant.

Non-availability of similar services: There are very few service providers who offer end-to-end services for hearing impairment like Samarthanam in the program. While organizations like Rotary, Lions Club, and various CSR initiatives provide support, comprehensive rehabilitation services are limited. This gap makes it challenging for individuals with hearing impairments to access continuous care and support. Samarthanam has been able to contribute to filling this gap via the distribution of these hearing aids to those who were hearing impaired.

Caretakers' feedback

- *"Before receiving the hearing aid, my child hated going to school, was bullied and often felt left out. Now, she can hear the sounds, the children are more sensitive to her."*
- *"We searched everywhere for proper support, but options were limited. Thanks to this program, my son can finally respond to me, even though slightly incoherently."*

Alignment with CSR objectives of Firstsource: The initiative aligns with Firstsource's CSR objective of promoting inclusive healthcare and accessibility. By supporting the distribution of hearing aids, Firstsource reinforces its commitment to social well-being and empowerment, enabling individuals with hearing impairments to lead more independent, connected, and fulfilling lives.

Alignment with national health mandates for disability and rehabilitation: This initiative is in line with national health policies that mandate support for disability and rehabilitation. Providing hearing aids and rehabilitation services ensures that individuals with hearing impairments receive the necessary medical and social support to lead independent lives.

Adherence to global frameworks on disability and hearing impairment: The distribution of 15 hearing aids has made a meaningful impact on the lives of individuals with hearing impairments. This initiative follows global frameworks on disability inclusion, ensuring that affected individuals have access to essential assistive technology. By improving hearing accessibility, the project promotes equal opportunities and better quality of life for those in need.

Effectiveness

Improvement in hearing abilities: There has been some progress in the hearing abilities of beneficiaries, but further improvements are needed. Those individuals who were met with received hearing aids can detect a few sounds, but all of them struggle to respond effectively. This highlights the need for continued therapy, including speech and auditory training, to help them optimally utilize their devices. A structured rehabilitation program with regular follow-ups can further enhance their ability to process sounds and communicate better in daily life.

Provision of high-quality hearing aids and accurate testing services: Ensuring that beneficiaries receive high-quality hearing aids and accurate assessments is crucial for their progress. All beneficiaries reported that the hearing aids provided were of good quality and suited to their needs. Proper testing and diagnosis played a key role in ensuring that the right hearing aid model was selected for each person.

Caretakers' response

- *"My son can now hear some sounds, but he still finds it hard to understand words. With more training, I believe he will improve even more."*
- *"The hearing aid is of very good quality, and it fits my son's needs perfectly."*
- *"Before this, we were unsure if a hearing aid would help, but now, my child can now respond to some sounds. We are hopeful for further improvement with continued therapy."*

Early detection and timely intervention: The assessment process has been instrumental in identifying individuals with hearing impairments at an early stage. By diagnosing the condition sooner, necessary support, including therapy and hearing aids, could be provided without delays.

Satisfaction of beneficiaries and their families with provided services: The beneficiaries and their families expressed a high level of satisfaction with the services they received, with many rating their experience as 5/5. Families reported noticeable improvements in the communication abilities of their loved ones. They also appreciated the care and professionalism of the team, highlighting the positive impact of the initiative.

Satisfaction levels of caretakers

- *"We are very happy with the support provided. My child can now respond better to sounds, and we feel hopeful for his future."*
- *"The team was very professional and caring. The hearing aid has made a big difference in my husband's ability to communicate with us."*

Number of beneficiaries tested and fitted with hearing aids: All 15 identified beneficiaries successfully received hearing aids, with some individuals requiring two devices for bilateral hearing loss. This initiative not only helps the beneficiaries but also supports their families and communities by facilitating better communication.

Expertise and training of audiologists and program facilitators: The Samarthanam team of audiologists and program facilitators are experts in conducting assessments and recommending suitable hearing aids. Parents and caregivers noted that the team was well-equipped to handle their concerns and provide guidance on using and maintaining the hearing aids.

Efficiency

Affordability: The hearing aids were provided free of cost, making them highly accessible to beneficiaries who may not have been able to afford them otherwise. Compared to government-provided hearing aids, the quality of these devices was reported to be superior, ensuring better auditory support. Families expressed satisfaction with the value for money, as they received high-quality hearing solutions without financial burden.

Parents feedback

- *"We could never have afforded a good hearing aid for our child. Getting it for free has been a blessing."*
- *"Government hearing aids were not effective for my son, but these are much better. The fact that we received them for free means we don't have to worry about the cost."*
- *"Quality hearing aids are so expensive, and we wouldn't have been able to buy them on our own. This program has given my child the gift of hearing without any financial burden."*

Regular follow-up and monitoring: Ensuring that beneficiaries continue to benefit from their hearing aids requires consistent follow-ups and monitoring. The team at Samarthanam has been actively conducting regular check-ins with recipients to assess their progress, make necessary adjustments, and provide ongoing support. This approach helps maximize the effectiveness of the hearing aids

Cost per beneficiary for hearing testing and hearing aid provision: The cost per beneficiary for hearing assessment and provision of hearing aids was approximately

₹25,000. This nominal cost includes screening, diagnosis, fitting, and post-distribution support. The affordability of this program makes it a sustainable model for future implementation.

Timely testing and distribution of hearing aids: The testing and distribution process was carried out efficiently. Feedback during the field visit revealed that as soon as funds were received from Firstsource, hearing aids were distributed within two weeks. This ensured that beneficiaries did not have to wait for long periods, minimizing the risk of prolonged communication challenges. The quick turnaround time reflects the well-coordinated efforts of the team.

Optimal utilization of testing equipment, staff, and resources: The initiative was implemented efficiently using a lean team of four at Samarthanam. With all operations conducted under one roof and on the field, the team was able to optimize the use of testing equipment, staff, and grassroots workers.

Maintenance and calibration of hearing testing equipment: maintenance and calibration of hearing testing equipment were carried out on a Regular preventive and need-based basis. This approach ensured that the devices used for assessments remained accurate and reliable. Well-maintained equipment helps in delivering precise test results, leading to better diagnosis and effective hearing aid fitting. This was achieved to satisfaction, as per reports from the parents and caretakers during the field visit.

Sustainability

Diversity of funding sources: Samarthanam has established strong and lasting partnerships with a diverse range of organizations, including Trusts, Foundations, non-profits, government agencies, and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives. These extensive networks have been built over years of dedicated collaboration, ensuring a steady flow of support and resources for its programmes. With such well-rooted alliances, Samarthanam is well-positioned to provide sustained assistance to those in need, even in the long run.

Maintenance and servicing plans for hearing aids provided to beneficiaries: Regular maintenance and check-ups are being conducted to ensure the functionality of the hearing aids. These measures help maximize the lifespan of the devices, ensuring that beneficiaries continue to experience improved hearing without interruptions. The servicing plans include periodic assessments and, making sure that any concerns raised by the users are addressed promptly.

Teacher's point of view

"Providing hearing aids is just the first step; without speech therapy, many children struggle to use them effectively. I have seen firsthand how therapy makes a difference. A few years ago, we had a student, David, who received hearing aids but still couldn't communicate well. With regular speech therapy, he gradually started forming words and eventually speaking in sentences. Today, he interacts with his

classmates. This proves that combining hearing aids with structured therapy is essential for real progress.” – Chithra, Teacher

Integration of hearing testing and support services into government healthcare systems: While hearing assessments are part of Samarthanam’s initiatives, these services are not currently offered in PHCs. Training PHC healthcare workers to conduct basic hearing assessments can significantly improve accessibility to quality hearing solutions for rural communities. Further, government-provided earphones, though available, are often ineffective. The organization also actively works with village communities, engaging with PWDs through a network of trained frontline workers. This engagement ensures that hearing-related issues are identified early and addressed in a timely manner.

Scalability of the model to other regions and communities: The model can be scaled to other regions and communities, provided the necessary funding and resources are available.

Capacity of the team to continue the program: Samarthanam has a dedicated team with trained staff, a helpline for ongoing support, a strong grassroots presence, and experienced field staff. Also, teachers who specialize in speech therapy play a crucial role in assisting beneficiaries in adapting to their hearing aids. With this well-equipped team, the organization is well-positioned to sustain and grow the program, ensuring that individuals with hearing impairments continue to receive the care and support they need.

Team talks

“Our team is fully committed to ensuring that every beneficiary receives continuous support beyond just providing hearing aids. With trained field staff, speech therapists, and a dedicated helpline, we make sure that no one feels alone in their journey. Our presence allows us to reach remote communities, and we are always ready to help beneficiaries in adapting to their new hearing aids.” – Govardhan, Program manager

Social Impact

Enhanced hearing and communication: The aids provided played a crucial role in improving auditory perception, enabling beneficiaries to hear sounds more clearly and communicate effectively than earlier. However, just receiving a hearing aid is not enough. Many beneficiaries require additional support, such as speech therapy, auditory training, and regular follow-ups, to fully utilize their hearing potential.

Reduced discrimination and stigma, improved inclusion: Children with hearing impairments often face social exclusion and stigma, particularly in educational settings. The provision of the hearing aids has significantly contributed to their inclusion in mainstream schools, helping them actively engage in learning, build

friendships, and integrate into society. Parents and teachers have reported that children using hearing aids experience fewer instances of bullying and discrimination.

Testimonial by a Nanjappa, volunteer from the Samarthanam Team:

"When we first met Munawar (name changed) in his village, he was struggling to communicate and had difficulty finding work. The Samarthanam team spent time understanding his needs, conducting a proper hearing assessment, and explaining the benefits of using a hearing aid. After receiving the hearing aid, Munawar's confidence grew, and he was able to take up work at a butcher shop. Even though he cannot respond well, he can now hear instructions clearly, interact with customers, and support his family. Seeing this transformation makes all our efforts truly worthwhile."

Increased happiness levels of the beneficiaries: Parents of beneficiaries have unanimously reported a noticeable increase in their children's happiness levels after receiving hearing aids. With improved confidence, children will express themselves better, engage more in conversations, and participate in social activities with greater enthusiasm. This enhanced interaction reduces feelings of frustration and isolation, contributing to their overall emotional well-being. The ability to hear and respond to sounds also brought excitement and curiosity to the patients, making their everyday experiences more enjoyable.

Increased confidence and independence among beneficiaries: Before receiving hearing aids, many beneficiaries relied heavily on caregivers for communication and daily tasks. However, with improved hearing, they have become more independent in managing their daily activities. Caregivers have opined that beneficiaries feel more confident in social situations, rode bikes, and are willing to explore new opportunities. This confidence automatically translated into better participation in academic, professional, and social settings, paving the way for greater self-reliance in the long run.

Increased prospects for beneficiaries to participate in education, employment, and community life: Hearing loss often creates barriers to education and employment, limiting opportunities for individuals to achieve their full potential. However, with access to hearing aids, beneficiaries can now attend school regularly, perform better academically, and actively participate in classroom discussions. This sets the foundation for higher education and professional development. Also, adults who receive hearing aids find it easier to secure jobs and communicate effectively in workplaces, reducing unemployment rates among individuals with hearing impairments.

Parent of a beneficiary

"Before my child received the hearing aids, she was completely dependent on me for everything. She couldn't understand sounds or respond when spoken to. Now, she can recognize my voice, react to everyday noises, and even try to communicate."

It has given her more confidence, and I can see the happiness, while she still needs support, this is a huge step forward."

Reduced dependency on caregivers: While hearing aids have made a positive impact, the reduction in dependency on caregivers has been relatively marginal. Some beneficiaries still require assistance in adjusting to their devices, attending therapy sessions, and navigating social interactions. For complete independence, additional support is needed, such as training on the proper use of hearing aids, speech therapy, counselling for social adaptation, and vocational skill development. Over time, with consistent interventions, beneficiaries can further reduce their reliance on caregivers and lead more self-sufficient lives.

Overall improvement in well-being and happiness of beneficiaries and their families: The impact of providing hearing aids has been significant, leading to notable improvements in the well-being and happiness of both beneficiaries and their families. Parents and caregivers expressed relief and joy at seeing their wards using the hearing aids. The improved emotional well-being of beneficiaries also has a ripple effect on their families, creating a more positive and harmonious living environment.

Parent of a beneficiary (Translated by Samarthanam teacher via sign language)

"My wife and I are both deaf and mute, and so are my three sons. I was constantly worried about their future while working as a carpenter and fixing windows to make ends meet. How would I support them? But with the hearing aid provided at no cost and of such good quality, my son has taken his first step forward. He is still getting used to it, but I am confident that it will help him build a better future."

REESS Ratings

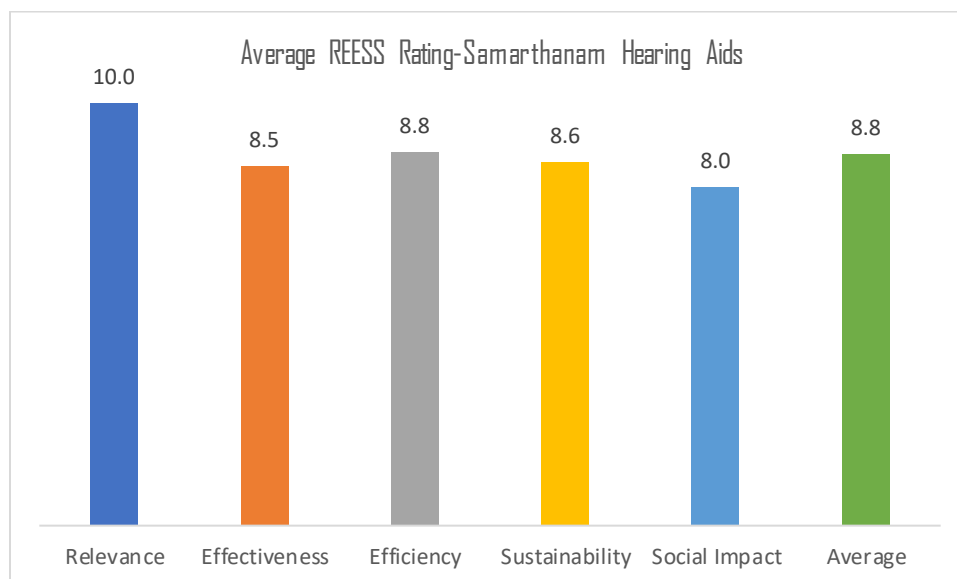
Table 6 Samarthanam - REESS Indicators and Ratings

REESS Indicators for Samarthanam Hearing Aid Project		Average Rating
Relevance	Non-availability of similar services	10
	High prevalence of undiagnosed hearing impairments among children and adults	10
	Increased risk of social exclusion and communication challenges without timely treatment	10
	Alignment with CSR policy of Firstsource solutions	10
	Alignment with national health mandates for disability and rehabilitation	10
	Adherence to global frameworks on disability and hearing impairment	10
	Average Relevance Rating	10.0
Effectiveness	Improvement in hearing abilities	5

REESS Indicators for Samarthanam Hearing Aid Project		Average Rating
	Provision of high-quality hearing aids and accurate testing services	9
	Early detection and timely intervention	8
	Satisfaction of beneficiaries and their families with provided services	9
	Number of beneficiaries tested and fitted with hearing aids	10
	Expertise and training of audiologists and program facilitators	10
	Average Effectiveness Rating	8.5
Efficiency	Affordability	10
	Regular follow-up and monitoring	8
	Cost per beneficiary for hearing testing and hearing aid provision	9
	Timely testing and distribution of hearing aids	9
	Optimal utilization of testing equipment, staff, and resources	8
	Maintenance and calibration of hearing testing equipment	9
	Average Efficiency Rating	8.8
Sustainability	Diversity of funding sources	10
	Maintenance and servicing plans for hearing aids provided to beneficiaries	9
	Integration of hearing testing and support services into government healthcare systems	6
	Scalability of the model to other regions and communities	8
	Capacity of the team to continue the program	10
	Average Sustainability Rating	8.6
Social Impact	Enhanced hearing and communication	8
	Reduced discrimination and stigma, improved inclusion	8
	Increased happiness levels of the beneficiaries	8
	Increased confidence and independence among beneficiaries	8
	Increased prospects for beneficiaries to participate in education, employment, and community life	8
	Reduced dependency on care-givers	8
	Overall improvement in well-being and happiness of beneficiaries and their families	8
	Average Social Impact Rating	8.0

Overall REESS Score

Figure 8 Samarthanam - REESS Scorecard



The program attained an average REESS rating of 8.8, which is considered excellent, highlighting the positive impact it has had on the hearing impaired.

Recommendations

- Provide follow-up support – Many beneficiaries are still adjusting to their hearing aids. Regular follow-ups, counselling, and auditory training sessions can help them maximize the benefits of their devices.
- Enhance speech therapy services – While hearing aids improve auditory perception, speech therapy is essential for effective communication. Integrating structured therapy programmes will further support beneficiaries.
- Introduce vocational training – To enhance independence, vocational skill development programmes should be offered alongside assistive devices.

Conclusion

The initiative has made a significant impact on the lives of individuals with hearing impairments. By providing high-quality hearing aids free of cost, it has helped beneficiaries improve their communication abilities, increase their independence, and integrate more effectively into society.

Positive feedback from beneficiaries and caregivers highlight the effectiveness of the initiative. However, achieving full inclusion and empowerment requires ongoing support beyond the provision of hearing aids. Speech therapy, regular follow-ups, and vocational training will be crucial in ensuring long-term benefits and sustainable impact.

RAMP MY CITY - SETTING UP OF RAMPS IN PUBLIC SPACES

Background

In India, accessibility remains one of the biggest challenges for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly population. Despite government policies, international commitments, and sustainable development goals (SDGs), most public and private infrastructure is not designed to accommodate people with mobility challenges. Schools, hospitals, workplaces, public transport, and even government buildings often lack basic accessibility features like ramps, accessible washrooms, and proper pathways, making it difficult for PwDs to live independently and participate in society. This lack of infrastructure forces many individuals to rely on others for basic tasks, leading to social isolation and exclusion.

Mobility is the foundation of an independent and dignified life. Without accessible infrastructure, PwDs face significant barriers to education, employment, healthcare, and social interactions. Even though India has a sizable PwDs population—approximately 120-140 million people—their needs are often overlooked. This results in restricted opportunities for self-growth and financial independence.

About the program

RampMyCity partnered with Firstsource to improve accessibility in Bengaluru by installing ramps in five essential public spaces. This initiative was created to ensure that Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly could move independently and access key services with dignity. By addressing mobility challenges, the project focused on creating well-designed, durable, and safe ramps that removed physical barriers. This was done primarily because of the lack of supportive mechanisms for easy mobility for the elderly and the disabled.

As part of this collaboration, ramps were installed at two Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs), one Road Transport Office (RTO), one police station, and one Bangalore One centre. These locations were chosen based on their high public utility, ensuring that essential services became more accessible to everyone. Through this effort, RampMyCity and Firstsource took a significant step toward building a more inclusive Bengaluru, setting a strong example for accessible urban development.

Table 7 Ramp My City - Areas of operation

S. No	Govt centre	Area
1	PHC	Ejipura
2	PHC	Bhuvaneshwari Nagar
3	RTO	KR Puram
4	Bangalore One	AECS layout
5	Police station	Nandini layout

Findings

Upon our initial review, all the ramps were found to be completely installed, fully functional, and in excellent condition. They are meticulously maintained, ensuring that individuals requiring mobility assistance can access facilities smoothly and safely.

Our audit team spent roughly two hours at each location, during which we carefully observed usage patterns. At the Public Health Centres (PHCs), an average of two individuals per hour utilized the wheelchair ramps. Meanwhile, at the Regional Transport Office (RTO), the usage was even higher, with about three individuals per hour benefiting from the ramps.

Conversations with both beneficiaries and stakeholders reinforced the essential role these ramps play. The feedback highlighted not only the immediate improvement in mobility and ease of access but also highlighted the long-term impact on enhancing independence and quality of life for those with mobility challenges.

REESS Evaluation

Relevance

Non-availability of accessible infrastructure in public spaces in Bengaluru: In Bengaluru, where accessible infrastructure has been limited, the installation of the five ramps represents a transformative solution. The city's public spaces often pose significant challenges for individuals with disabilities due to the scarcity of mobility-friendly facilities. These ramps offer immediate practical access to essential services.

Lack of options for mobility compromising healthcare access, dignity, education, and participation for PwDs: The absence of viable mobility options has long hindered people with disabilities from accessing healthcare, education, and other vital services, thereby impacting their dignity and societal participation. By providing a safe and reliable route, the ramps enable individuals to independently reach medical facilities, attend public spaces institutions, and engage in community activities.

User feedback

- *"Having ramps in place has truly changed my life. Now, I can independently visit the doctor, without constantly worrying about my mobility." - Deepa*
- *"Before these ramps, I struggled to reach hospitals or schools. Now, I can go by myself, and it has given me back my dignity and a sense of belonging." , Nanjamma*

Alignment with CSR policy of Firstsource Solutions: The implementation of the ramps directly reflects Firstsource Solutions' commitment to corporate social responsibility. By investing in accessible infrastructure, the company is addressing a critical community need and exemplifying its dedication to empowering marginalized groups. This initiative not only creates significant social impact but also demonstrates how corporate resources can be harnessed to build a more inclusive and equitable society.

Alignment with national accessibility standards: Designed in strict accordance with national accessibility standards, the five program ensure compliance with government-mandated criteria for improved accessibility and inclusivity. This adherence reinforces the commitment to creating equitable public spaces.

Alignment with international accessibility standards: Beyond meeting national guidelines, the ramps also adhere to international accessibility standards. By aligning with international norms, the initiative supports a broader dialogue on accessibility and highlights the importance of inclusive options while designing public buildings.

Dependency on caregivers: For many individuals with mobility challenges, reliance on caregivers is a daily reality that limits independence and self-sufficiency. The ramps significantly reduce this dependency by providing a safe and accessible route that enables users to navigate public spaces independently.

Lack of community awareness and sensibility about the rights of PwDs: A major barrier to inclusivity is the widespread lack of community awareness regarding the rights of people with disabilities. The installation of the five ramps serves as a reminder of the need for empathy and understanding in public spaces. This initiative not only provides practical accessibility but also promotes greater public awareness and sensitivity, encouraging the community to recognize the needs of people with disabilities.

Effectiveness

Number of public spaces made wheelchair accessible within the project timeline: During the project period, five public spaces in our city were equipped with new ramps, all located in high-traffic areas. This has helped ensure that wheelchair users and others with mobility needs can more easily enter and move around these important public places.

Increased access to education and community services for PwDs: The introduction of ramps has greatly improved access to public centres for persons with disabilities (PwDs). By removing physical barriers, more PwDs can now attend participate in community activities, and make full use of resources without having to rely on additional assistance.

Feedback from beneficiaries on improved mobility and accessibility: All the beneficiaries who were interviewed reported positive experiences and expressed happiness with the new ramps. They mentioned feeling more confident when traveling to public spaces, as the ramps reduce the need for help from others and allow them to move more freely and independently.

Beneficiary survey

- *"I now feel more confident traveling on my own. The ramps let me go to the hospital without seeking help from others."*
- *"These ramps have made a big difference. I can attend the hospital by myself, which makes me feel free and independent."*

- *"Before, I always needed someone to assist me, but now I can move around easily. It feels great to be in control of my own mobility."*
- *"The ramps are useful. I feel more included."*

Adherence to design standards for ramps (slope, width, material quality, etc.)

Each ramp was designed and measured according to recommended guidelines for slope, width, and material quality. The gentle slope ensures easy navigation, while the sufficient width accommodates both wheelchairs and other mobility aids. Good-quality materials were used to ensure durability and safety, making the ramps convenient for everyday use.

Increase in the number of PwDs using public spaces post intervention: Local watchmen have noticed a clear rise in the number of PwDs visiting public buildings after the ramps were installed. They have observed more people entering and exiting these spaces without hesitation, which suggests that the new ramps have encouraged individuals with mobility challenges to engage more frequently in public life.

Feedback from watchman

- *" I've seen a noticeable increase in the number of people on wheelchairs coming into the building. It is clear that the ramps have made it easier for them to be part of daily life here*
- *More people with disabilities are now confidently entering and leaving public buildings."*

Reduction in instances of exclusion from public activities due to mobility challenges: Hospital authorities and watchmen have also shared that fewer people are being left out of events or important gatherings because of physical barriers. With ramps in place, individuals who previously found it difficult to attend public activities can now participate more easily, leading to a more inclusive environment for everyone.

Efficiency

Cost per ramp installation compared to industry standards: Ramp My City was able to keep the cost of each ramp installation at an affordable total of one lakh. This figure is relatively low compared to typical industry rates, indicating that the project was cost-effective. Also provided free to the beneficiaries

Timely completion of ramp installations as per project timeline: The installation of the ramps was completed on schedule, showing planning and execution. This timely delivery ensured that people with mobility challenges could start benefiting from improved access to public spaces without delay.

Optimal utilization of funds and resources: With a budget of only one lakh, the project relied on local manpower to minimize labour costs. By engaging local workers,

the city not only saved money but also supported the community, ensuring that the funds were used wisely while meeting the required standards.

Effective monitoring and reporting of completed installations: Although monitoring was not carried out after the construction process, reporting on each completed ramp was maintained. This helped document progress and provide useful information for any future requests for ramp construction.

Ratio of funds allocated to actual infrastructure versus administrative costs: A small portion of the budget was spent on administrative tasks, which helped direct the bulk of the funds toward the actual building of the ramps. This focus on infrastructure resulted in a cost-effective approach that maximized the positive impact on accessibility.

Use of eco-friendly and durable materials in ramp construction: The ramps were built using durable materials like cement, steel, and aluminium, which are known for their longevity and efficiency. By selecting these materials, the project team ensured that the ramps would remain sturdy over time while also supporting more sustainable construction practices.

Minimization of disruptions to public facilities during installation: Beneficiary feedback indicates that the ramp setup went smoothly, with no significant issues or interruptions to daily activities. This approach helped maintain regular operations in the area and allowed the public to continue their routines without inconvenience.

Nurse feedback

"As a nurse in the hospital, I am happy that the ramp installation was done smoothly. It didn't disturb our daily work, and both patient care and better access were handled together."

Sustainability

By building ramps in key public places like Primary Health Centres (PHCs), the Regional Transport Office (RTO), and police stations, Ramp My City has set a strong example of how ramps should be integrated into everyday infrastructure. When these ramps are kept in good condition through regular upkeep, they continue to serve as a clear sign that accessibility is a priority. This focus on maintenance also encourages other institutions to follow suit, helping to create a lasting culture of inclusivity.

Doctor feedback

- *"Seeing well-maintained ramps at places like the PHC and RTO shows me that accessibility is truly prioritized."*

- *"As a doctor, I am happy to mention that the work done by them via Ramp My City It is important on how to make our hospitals accessible. Keeping these ramps sends a strong message that everyone matters."*

Diversity of funding resources: Ramp my city benefits from a wide range of donors, which ensures the sustainability of the programme. By relying on multiple funding sources—such as government grants, private donations, and community contributions—the organization can reduce the risk of budget shortfalls.

Capacity of the partner to continue the program: The founding team and staff behind this Ramp My City are known for their sensitivity, passion, and drive. Their commitment to the cause allows them to train local workers, collaborate effectively with stakeholders, and oversee the progress of ramp installations. This strong leadership and enthusiasm make it possible to sustain and expand the program in the long run.

Scalability of the ramp installation model to other towns and regions: The ramp installation strategy used can easily be replicated elsewhere. By sharing construction plans, best practices, and success stories, other towns and cities can adopt similar measures. This helps build a broader network of accessible spaces, ensuring that people with mobility challenges benefit from a uniform standard of ramp design and quality.

Partnerships with local stakeholders for continued accessibility initiatives: Working closely with local government, businesses, and community groups is vital for the long-term success of the project. By pushing for ongoing government funding and collaboration, Ramp My City can secure the necessary resources to maintain existing ramps and install new ones. These partnerships also help raise public awareness about the importance of accessibility and inclusion.

Social Impact

Increased independence and dignity: With the ramps in place, people with mobility challenges can move around on their own, without constantly relying on others for help. This freedom to navigate public spaces independently greatly boosts their sense of self-worth and respect, allowing them to live with greater dignity.

Improved access to public spaces: The ramps have ensured that important locations such as government offices and healthcare centres are within easy reach for everyone. This access makes daily tasks, like filing paperwork or shopping for groceries, much simpler and more inclusive.

Reduced social isolation: When public spaces are physically accessible with ramps, those with disabilities are more likely to leave their homes and participate in community events. This greater involvement lessens feelings of loneliness and helps them build stronger social connections.

Feedback from beneficiaries

- *Improved access to public spaces: "I used to dread trips to the PHC. Now, with these ramps, everything is easier and accessible. It has been very useful*
- *Reduced social isolation: "Before the ramps were installed, I rarely left my home because I felt isolated. Now, I'm out meeting people on my own and feeling truly connected."*
- *Reduced dependency on caregivers: "I no longer need to rely on someone else for every little errand. Being able to move around independently has given me a new sense of freedom and self-reliance."*

Reduced dependency on caregivers: Because ramps make it easier to travel independently, people with mobility challenges can do more on their own. As a result, the program will help them rely less on family members, friends, or professional caregivers, freeing those caregivers to focus on other responsibilities.

Overall improvement in well-being and community integration of PwDs: Accessible ramps help people with disabilities join in everyday activities, from attending local festivals to visiting parks. By taking part in the community, they experience a better sense of belonging, which positively impacts their mental and emotional health.

Increased public awareness and acceptance of accessibility as a basic right: Visible, well-designed ramps send a clear message that accessibility matters. They serve as daily reminders to the public that everyone has the right to use shared spaces, helping shift attitudes toward inclusivity and equal opportunity.

Increased well-being and happiness: When physical barriers are removed, people feel more confident and empowered. This confidence often translates into a brighter outlook on life, as they can pursue personal interests and interact with the community on their own terms.

Creating a platform to showcase the issues faced by PwDs on a daily basis: The successful ramp installations by Ramp My City highlight the challenges that people with disabilities face. They encourage discussions that raise awareness and inspire further improvements in other areas of public life.

Unintended positive outcomes: In addition to helping wheelchair users, the ramps have also benefitted parents with strollers, older adults with limited mobility, and even delivery workers. By making spaces more accessible for everyone, the ramps have led to more inclusive and convenient spaces citywide.

Community feedback

"The ramps were meant to help wheelchair users, but we've seen so many others benefit too—parents with strollers, elderly, and even workers. One small change can benefit everyone." – Hospital Staff

REESS Ratings

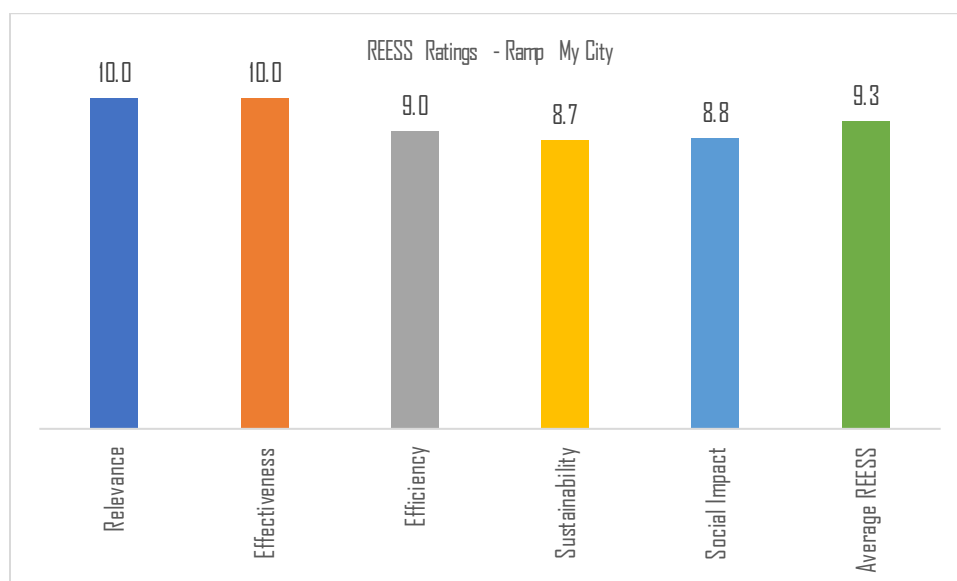
Table 8 Ramp My City - REESS Indicators and Ratings

REESS Indicators - Ramp My City		Average Rating
Relevance	Non-availability of accessible infrastructure in public spaces	10
	Lack of options for mobility compromising healthcare access, dignity, education, and participation for PwDs	10
	Alignment with CSR policy of Firstsource solutions	10
	Alignment with national accessibility standards	10
	Alignment with international accessibility standards	10
	Dependency on caregivers	10
	Lack of community awareness and sensibility about the rights of PwDs	10
	Average Relevance Rating	10
Effectiveness	Number of public spaces made wheelchair accessible within the project timeline	10
	Increased access to education, healthcare, and community services for PwDs	10
	Feedback from beneficiaries on improved mobility and accessibility	10
	Increase in the number of PwDs using public spaces post intervention	10
	Reduction in instances of exclusion from public activities due to mobility challenges	10
	Average Effectiveness Rating	10
Efficiency	Cost per ramp installation compared to industry standards	9
	Timely completion of ramp installations as per project timeline	9
	Optimal utilization of funds and resources	9
	Effective monitoring and reporting of completed installations	9
	Ratio of funds allocated to actual infrastructure versus administrative costs	9
	Use of ecofriendly and durable materials in ramp construction	9
	Minimization of disruptions to public facilities during installation	9
	Average Efficiency Rating	9
Sustainability	Adequately maintained, needs regular maintenance	8
	Diversity of funding resources	9
	Capacity of the partner to continue the program	9
	Scalability of the ramp installation model to other towns and regions	9
	Partnerships with local stakeholders for continued accessibility initiatives	9
	Ramp Maintenance	8

REESS Indicators - Ramp My City		Average Rating
	Community engagement for monitoring and maintaining accessibility infrastructure	9
	Average Sustainability Rating	8.7
Social Impact	Increased independence and dignity	9
	Improved access to public spaces	9
	Reduced social isolation	9
	Reduced dependency on caregivers	9
	Overall improvement in wellbeing and community integration of PwDs	9
	Increased public awareness and acceptance of accessibility as a basic right	8
	Increased well-being and happiness	9
	Creating a platform to showcase the issues faced by PwDs on a daily basis	9
	Unintended positive outcomes	8
	Average Social Impact Rating	8.8

Overall REESS Score

Figure 9 Ramp My City - REESS Scorecard



The program attained an average REESS rating of 9.3, which is considered excellent, highlighting the positive impact it has had on PWD.

Recommendations

- **Educational campaigns:** Conduct workshops in schools, government offices, and businesses to spread awareness about the rights of people with disabilities and the importance of accessible infrastructure.
- **Sensitization programmes:** Train security personnel, hospital staff, and local business owners on how to assist PwDs effectively.

Conclusion

The installation of five ramps by Ramp My City in collaboration with Firstsource marks a significant step toward creating a more accessible and inclusive Bengaluru. This was done primarily because of the lack of supportive mechanisms for easy mobility for the elderly and the disabled. These ramps have provided individuals with disabilities greater independence, dignity, and ease of access to essential public spaces such as healthcare centres and government offices. By addressing mobility challenges, the project created well-designed, durable, and safe ramps that removed physical barriers.

Healthcare

VOLUNTARY HEALTH SERVICES – CATARACT SURGERIES AND INSULIN SUPPORT

Background

Cataract is a common eye condition where the lens of the eye becomes cloudy, leading to blurred vision, glare sensitivity, and even blindness if untreated. It is most prevalent in older adults, but certain factors like diabetes, prolonged UV exposure, smoking, and genetic conditions can increase the risk. Cataracts can significantly impact daily activities such as reading, driving, and recognizing faces, affecting the quality of life. Surgery is the only effective treatment, where the cloudy lens is replaced with an artificial one, restoring clear vision. It is a safe and widely performed procedure that helps millions regain their eyesight each year.

Juvenile diabetes, also known as Type 1 diabetes, is an autoimmune condition where the body's immune system mistakenly destroys insulin-producing cells in the pancreas. It usually develops in children and young adults and requires lifelong insulin therapy to regulate blood sugar levels. If left unmanaged, it can lead to complications like nerve damage, kidney disease, and heart problems. Unlike Type 2 diabetes, which can sometimes be controlled with diet and exercise, Type 1 diabetes always requires insulin injections or an insulin pump. Early diagnosis and proper management with insulin therapy and a healthy lifestyle can help individuals lead a normal and active life.

However, both cataract surgery and insulin therapy can be expensive, making them inaccessible for many, especially in low-income communities. The high cost of treatment, along with limited healthcare access, often leaves individuals struggling to manage these conditions, leading to severe complications and reduced quality of life.

About VHS

The VHS Hospital, or Voluntary Health Services, is a multispecialty tertiary care referral hospital in the south Indian state of Tamil Nadu that supposedly serves the economically disadvantaged. It was created in 1958 by Krishnaswami Srinivas Sanjivi, an Indian physician and social worker, and is managed by the same-named charitable non-profit organisation.

VHS provides low-cost medical treatment to persons from low-income households, depending on their health care requirements rather than their financial ability to pay. VHS takes a holistic approach to health care, focusing on illness prevention, health promotion, supporting and serving the family as a unit, actively encouraging community involvement, and offering inexpensive treatment.

About the program

The free surgery and insulin program was a compassionate initiative aimed at restoring vision for underprivileged individuals suffering from avoidable blindness due to cataracts and juvenile diabetes. The comprehensive treatment process included proper investigations, surgery, necessary medications, and follow-up assessments to ensure successful recovery.

The project successfully conducted 65 cataract surgeries, each costing ₹8,000, which included preoperative check-ups, investigations, surgical procedures, and post-operative care. Also, the program provided essential insulin support for 12 children with diabetes, ensuring holistic healthcare for those in need. In all 77 patients were supported. The cataract patients included a mix of walk-in and camp patients while the juvenile diabetes patients were all walk in.

By offering high-quality, free-of-charge medical services, the initiative aimed at preventing blindness and also enhanced the quality of life for children with diabetes, empowering them to lead independent and fulfilling lives.

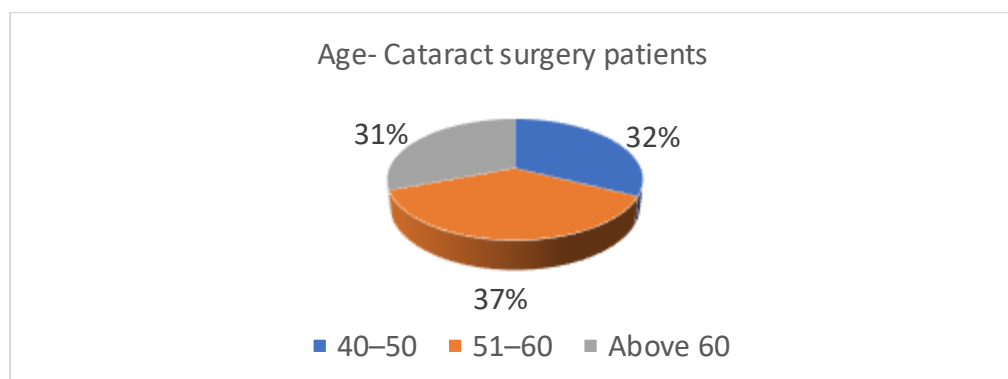
Findings

Beneficiary Profile

Age

The cataract surgery patients were aged above 40. Of this, the majority fell under the age bracket of 51-60

Figure 10 VHS – Cataract beneficiary age breakup %



On the other hand, the majority of the diabetes patients fell under the 14-18 age bracket

Table 9 VHS – JD Beneficiary age break-up %

Age category	No of children with diabetes supported
<5	10%
11 to 13	29%
14 to 18	48%
6 to 10	14%

Gender

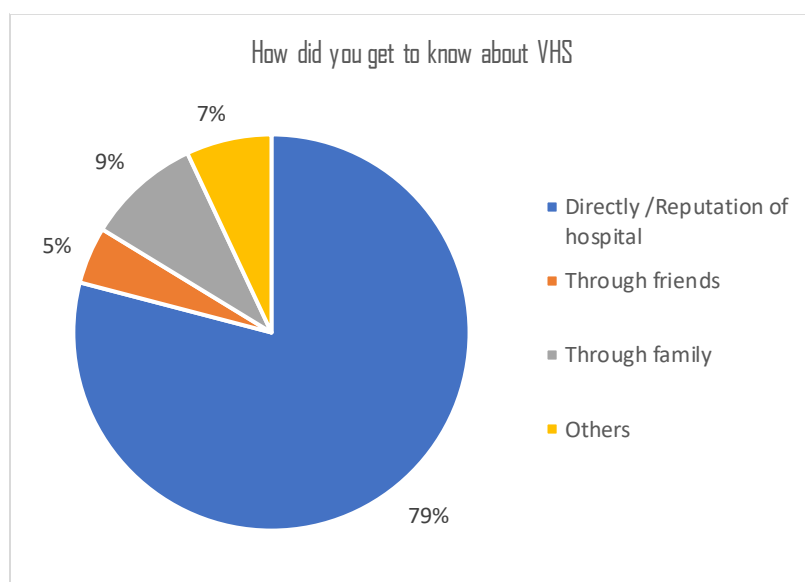
65% of the patients who underwent cataract surgery and 62% of those supported under the diabetes program for children were female. This highlights the program's significant impact in reaching women, a group that is often marginalized and tends to have poor health-seeking behaviour due to family and social commitments.

Income

All the patients came from low socio-economic backgrounds with the majority indicating that their monthly household income was less than 15,000. This indicates that the program has been successful in reaching those who would otherwise not have been able to afford the treatment.

Survey findings

Figure 11 VHS – Beneficiary's interaction with VHS



Knowledge about VHS

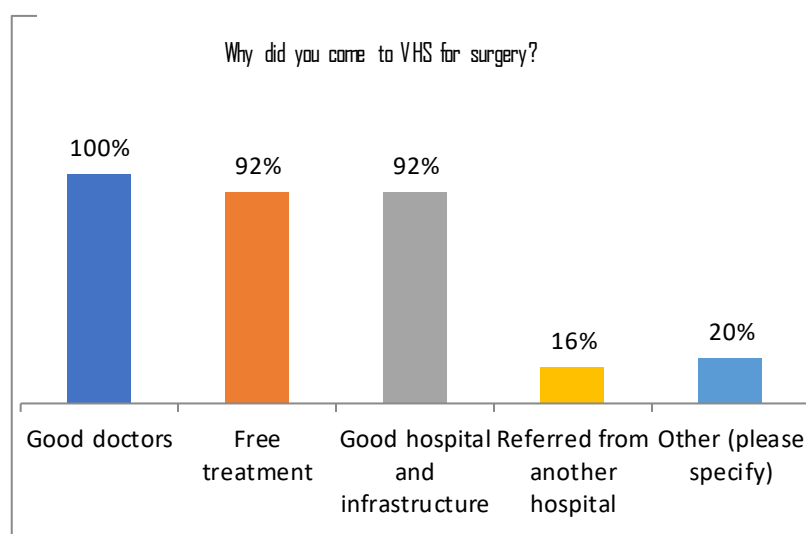
79% of the patients came to know about VHS through its reputation and 14% through friends and relatives. The rest were referred from other hospitals.

Reasons for Choosing VHS

When asked about the reasons for coming to VHS for cataract surgery, the majority of the patient and patient attendants mentioned that the top reason for getting treatment

at VHS was good doctors (100%) and free treatment, reputation as a good hospital (92%).

Figure 12 VHS - Beneficiary's reasons for choosing VHS



Satisfaction levels

On being queried about their experience with the hospital, 90% of them said that they were highly satisfied and happy with the services provided. 94% also indicated that the staff were courteous and treated them with dignity. When asked if they would recommend VHS to their friends or relatives, 100% unanimously mentioned that they definitely would do so.

REESS Evaluation

Relevance

Prevalence of issue being treated: Cataract is one of the leading causes of blindness in India, affecting millions of people, especially in low-income communities. In Chennai slums, many people cannot afford regular eye check-ups or treatment, leading to severe vision problems. Juvenile diabetes (Type 1 diabetes) is another major health issue, requiring lifelong insulin therapy and regular monitoring. Without proper care, it can lead to severe complications, affecting a child's health and quality of life. This program is therefore highly relevant as it addresses two critical needs.

Dr. Usha, Endocrinologist

"Juvenile diabetes is a lifelong condition that requires continuous monitoring and insulin therapy. Many children from low-income families struggle to access proper care, which puts them at high risk for severe complications. Early intervention, education, and affordable treatment options are crucial in ensuring these children can lead a healthy life. Programmes like this provide much-needed support, bridging the gap in diabetes care and helping young patients manage their condition effectively."

Non-availability of similar services being provided by other private service providers: When asked about private cataract surgery services, 52% of patients responded that they are available but too expensive. This makes it difficult for low-income individuals to access timely treatment. Similarly, specialized care for juvenile

diabetes is limited in private facilities, making affordable healthcare services crucial for these patients. VHS provides the treatment at a nominal rate compared to other private service providers.

Non-availability of similar services being provided within the Govt: While government hospitals provide cataract surgery, long waiting periods make timely treatment difficult. Many patients, especially daily wage earners, cannot afford to wait for months. For children with diabetes, government hospitals offer treatment, but access to comprehensive care, including insulin therapy and monitoring, is limited. VHS provides the services at a low cost but without the long waiting line of Govt.

Likely progression of disease when left untreated (prognosis): If left untreated, cataract leads to complete blindness, severely affecting the quality of life and increasing dependency on family members. Juvenile diabetes, when unmanaged, can result in life-threatening complications like ketoacidosis, organ damage, and poor growth in children. Early intervention is essential to prevent long-term health issues. Through its screening camps, the program addresses the issues that could crop up due to delayed treatment

Demographic and income profile of the beneficiaries: Over 90% of the beneficiaries of the program belong to low-income families, including daily wage workers and elderly individuals. These communities struggle to access basic healthcare due to financial constraints. Providing free or affordable cataract surgeries and diabetes management services help them lead a healthier, independent life.

Adherence to CSR policy of Firstsource Solutions: Supporting cataract surgeries and juvenile diabetes treatment aligns with Firstsource Solutions' Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) policy. The initiative helps underserved communities by providing essential medical services, improving their overall well-being, and enabling them to lead productive lives.

Adherence to national healthcare mandates: The program aligns with India's healthcare policies, that focus on providing affordable eye care and diabetes treatment to underprivileged communities. It supports the National Program for Control of Blindness (NPCB) and initiatives promoting diabetes awareness and management.

Adherence to international framework: This initiative follows global healthcare goals, including the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for good health and well-being. By addressing preventable blindness and managing chronic conditions like diabetes, it contributes to a healthier society, in line with WHO and international healthcare guidelines.

Effectiveness

Improved health outcomes: The cataract surgery and diabetes (JD) program have significantly improved the health and quality of life of patients. Cataract patients experienced 80% improvement in their vision, helping them regain independence in daily activities like reading, walking safely, and earning a livelihood. For JD patients, 100% reported better blood sugar control, with 90% showing significant improvement

in their overall health. By providing timely medical intervention, this program has ensured that people can lead healthier, more productive lives, reducing their dependency on others.

Patient Voices – Experience with the program

"I had been struggling with blurry vision for years, and it was affecting my work and daily life. I couldn't afford surgery, so I just accepted it as fate. But then I heard about this program, and within weeks, I got the treatment I needed. Now, I can see clearly again, and I feel independent." – Rajesh, 62 years old

"My son was diagnosed with Type 1 diabetes, and we were terrified because we didn't know how to manage it. The doctors and support team from this program not only provided him with insulin but also educated us on how to monitor his condition. Today, he is doing much better, and we feel more confident in managing his health. Thank you for giving us hope!" – Meena, Mother of a 10-year-old patient.

Provision of quality treatment: of the biggest challenges in healthcare is ensuring that treatment is of high quality. This program successfully provided top-class medical care to all patients, with 100% of cataract and One JD patients reporting that the treatment they received was either excellent or good. The program not only provided free or affordable surgeries and diabetes management but also ensured that patients were treated with dignity, received proper follow-up care, and were educated about managing their condition in the long run.

Selvi, beneficiary

"When my father developed cataract, we were unsure how we would afford his surgery. As a daily wage worker, he couldn't afford to wait months for government services, and private hospitals were too expensive. Thanks to the support from Firstsource, he received free surgery, and his vision has been restored. Our entire family is grateful for this initiative—it has truly changed his life and ours."

Reduced risk of complications: A key concern with medical treatments is the possibility of complications. However, this program ensured that risks were minimized. In cataract surgeries, there were no reported cases of severe complications like retinal detachment or infections. Some patients (32%) reported minor issues like dry eyes, but these were easily manageable. For JD patients, insulin treatment was well-managed, and no major complications were observed. The program's focus on careful medical supervision and post-treatment care played a major role in ensuring smooth recovery.

Doctor's words

"Patient safety is our top priority, and we have stringent protocols in place to minimize the risk of infections or complications. All cataract surgeries are conducted in a fully sterilized environment using advanced aseptic techniques. Our surgical instruments undergo rigorous sterilization procedures, and we follow strict hygiene protocols to ensure the highest standards of care. As a result, we have had no cases of severe post-operative infections or complications. Patients recover smoothly, and even minor issues like dry eyes are easily managed with proper post-surgical care."

Adherence rate: The success of any medical treatment depends on how well patients follow post-treatment care. Cataract patients strictly adhered to post-surgery protocols, ensuring a smooth healing process and long-lasting benefits. Similarly, JD patients consistently took their insulin injections and followed their treatment plans. This high adherence rate highlights the effectiveness of patient education and the support system built by the program.

Overall reach vs MOU deliverables: The program was designed with specific goals under an MOU, and it successfully met all of them. Every planned activity, from cataract surgeries to diabetes management, was executed as promised.

Patient satisfaction: Patients and their families expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program. For JD patients, caregivers were particularly happy with the quality of treatment, as they saw significant improvement in their children's health and well-being. Cataract patients, many of whom were elderly, were grateful for the surgery that helped them see clearly again, making their daily lives easier.

Program reach and accessibility: Many low-income individuals in Chennai, especially those living in slums, struggle to access quality healthcare due to financial constraints. This program bridged that gap by reaching those who needed it most. By providing cataract surgeries and JD treatment at no cost or minimal cost, the program ensured that financial barriers did not stop people from receiving life-changing healthcare. The initiative also included awareness campaigns via VHS's centres in the periphery of Madras and camps, ensuring early reach making more people aware of their health conditions and encouraging them to seek timely medical help.

Capacity of team to provide services: The success of this program was possible due to the expertise and dedication of the medical team. The Department of Ophthalmology, supported by four experienced doctors and a team of trained nurses, ensured that cataract surgeries were performed safely and efficiently. The JD treatment was led by Dr. Usha from the Department of Endocrinology, whose deep knowledge and experience helped young patients manage their condition effectively. With a strong medical team in place, the program was able to deliver high-quality healthcare services to a large number of patients.

Testimonial by Mr. Murali, camp coordinator – on the screening camps and support system

**"Our medical camps are designed to reach those who need care the most—people in peripheral and underserved areas who otherwise have little to no access to healthcare. Our mobile medical van travels to remote communities, conducting regular screenings for cataracts and children with diabetes. Each camp is well-organized, with a dedicated team performing essential tests like blood sugar screening, eye examinations, and initial diagnoses."*

Efficiency

Affordability: One of the biggest challenges for people from economically weaker sections is the high cost of medical treatment. Cataract surgeries and diabetes treatments are often unaffordable for many families, leading to delayed treatment or complete neglect of the condition. This program removes the financial barrier by providing free surgeries and treatment, ensuring that people who need it the most receive timely medical care. The impact of this affordability is immense, as it prevents unnecessary blindness due to cataracts and helps children with diabetes manage their condition effectively without the stress of financial burden.

Comparison with other cost-providers: Private hospitals charge anywhere between ₹12,000 to ₹55,000 per eye for cataract surgery, whereas VHS offers the same treatment for just ₹8,000 or completely free for underprivileged patients. The reduction in cost does not compromise the quality of treatment. Instead, it ensures that more people can access critical medical care. Patients who would otherwise delay or avoid surgery due to financial constraints can now undergo treatment, leading to better health outcomes and improved quality of life.

Timeliness (identification to treatment): Timely medical intervention is crucial, especially for conditions like cataracts and diabetes, where delays can lead to severe complications. In this program, cataract surgeries are performed on the same day or the very next day after screening camps. Unless there are serious health concerns, such as abnormal blood test results, surgeries are not postponed unnecessarily. This ensures that patients receive quick and effective treatment before their condition worsens.

For children with diabetes, regular follow-ups are scheduled to monitor the patient's health and ensure proper disease management. This proactive approach prevents long-term complications and provides continuous medical support to children with diabetes. The program's structured scheduling ensures that there are no long waiting periods, which is a common issue in many government hospitals.

Testimonial by Kavitha, mother of a patient with diabetes– on regular follow-ups and home care support

"When my son was diagnosed with diabetes, we were overwhelmed and didn't know how to manage it. But thanks to this program, we now have regular follow-ups with doctors who carefully monitor his health and adjust his treatment as needed. Unlike government hospitals, where we often had to wait for months, here, everything is scheduled properly, ensuring he gets timely care. The doctors not only treat him but also teach us how to take care of him at home. They patiently explained how to give insulin, check his sugar levels, and manage his diet. Now, I feel more confident in handling his condition, and he is much healthier and more active. VHS has been a blessing for our family."

Optimal utilization of resources, infrastructure, and manpower by the partner:

This program effectively uses available medical resources, including hospitals, surgical equipment, and expert doctors, to maximize its impact. The coordination between doctors, nurses, and support staff is well-structured, ensuring that patients receive proper pre-operative and post-operative care. By optimizing manpower, VHS is able to handle a large number of patients without compromising on quality.

Timely availability of required resources: A major success factor of this program is the timely availability of medical supplies and treatments. For diabetes patients, insulin injections and other necessary medicines are provided every month without delay. Patients reported that they never faced a shortage of medicines, and they always received their treatment on time. This is crucial in diabetes management, as missing an insulin dose can lead to serious health complications.

The hospital ensures that all necessary medications, surgical tools, and trained professionals are available when needed, preventing unnecessary delays in treatment. This level of efficiency enhances patient trust and encourages more people to seek medical help instead of avoiding treatment due to fear of unavailability.

Anita – PRO

"At VHS, we prioritize efficiency to ensure that every patient receives timely and quality care. Our hospital is well-equipped with all necessary medications, surgical tools, and a team of highly trained professionals, ensuring there are no unnecessary delays in treatment. This preparedness not only improves medical outcomes but also builds trust among patients, especially those from underserved communities."

Post-treatment follow-up and monitoring: Cataract surgery patients undergo multiple follow-ups to ensure proper recovery. The first follow-up happens on the day after surgery, where doctors check for any immediate complications. After that, another follow-up is conducted over the phone, allowing patients to report any discomfort or concerns without having to travel long distances.

Also, a final follow-up is conducted at the nearest peripheral centre, making it convenient for patients who live far from the hospital. This structured approach ensures that post-surgery care is provided efficiently, preventing complications and promoting faster recovery. For JD patients, regular monitoring helps in adjusting insulin doses and tracking overall health progress. This ensures that their treatment remains effective over time.

Outcome tracking (long-term): The impact of long-term tracking of patient outcomes is an important part of the program. By maintaining records and monitoring patients over time which is being done for patients of JD, doctors can assess the effectiveness of the insulin and make necessary improvements. This is currently not being done for Cataract patients.

Sustainability

Diversity of funding streams/donors: VHS has a well-established donor network, which ensures financial sustainability for its healthcare programmes. The presence of multiple funding sources, including CSR support, individual donors, and government schemes, allows the program to operate without financial constraints. This financial stability helps in reaching more underprivileged patients and expanding services without interruption.

Ethical fibre of the team: The program is driven by a strong spirit of volunteerism, with doctors and medical professionals offering their services either at a low cost or completely free of charge. This commitment reflects the ethical values of the team, ensuring that no patient is denied treatment due to financial limitations. The dedication of healthcare workers in providing compassionate care plays a crucial role in the success of the initiative.

Words from Dr Usha: *For children with diabetes, we provide continuous support—educating families on insulin therapy, diet management, and regular monitoring. It's not just about screening; it's about ongoing care and ensuring that every patient gets the treatment they need at the right time. The impact has been life-changing for so many, and we remain committed to bringing healthcare closer to those in need."*

Organizational capacity: With experienced leadership, efficient governance, and a well-trained team, VHS operates at a high level of organizational capacity. The hospital infrastructure is well-equipped to handle surgeries and treatments, ensuring smooth service delivery.

Ability of program to scale: Given its strong foundation, the program has the potential to be expanded to other underserved areas in Chennai and beyond. The existing model of service delivery, combined with a vast network of doctors and donors, makes it feasible to scale operations. By collaborating with more hospitals, NGOs, and community health centres, the program can reach a larger number of people in need.

Integration into the government health system: The program has successfully catered to a large section of underprivileged patients, but further collaboration with government health institutions like CMCHIS can enhance its reach. Strengthening partnerships with government hospitals and civil society organizations will allow more surgeries and treatments to be conducted, benefiting a greater number of patients. This integration will also help in improving resource utilization and service efficiency.

Social Impact

Improved long-term health outcomes: Cataract surgeries restore vision, while diabetes treatment ensures better glucose control, preventing severe complications. These interventions have helped the 77 patients supported by VHS to lead healthier lives and reduce the chances of future medical conditions, allowing individuals to remain independent and active in society.

Improved well-being and happiness: Restoring sight through cataract surgery allows individuals to regain confidence, perform daily tasks with ease, and enjoy life without visual impairment. Similarly, managing JD effectively ensures that children can grow up without constant health concerns, leading to a happier and more fulfilling life. The program has paved the way to ensuring well-being and happiness.

Testimonial by Mr. Ramasamy, cataract surgery beneficiary

"For years, my vision was fading, and I had to depend on my children for everything. I couldn't even walk outside alone. After the cataract surgery, I can finally see clearly again. I feel independent, confident, and happy to do my daily tasks without help. This program gave me my life back, and I am truly grateful for it."

Testimonial by Shyama, a child with diabetes

"Before getting proper treatment, I used to feel tired all the time and miss many school days because of my diabetes. But now, with regular check-ups and support, I feel much better and can focus on my studies. I no longer worry about my health all the time, and I know I can achieve my dreams just like any other student. This program has given me hope for a brighter future."

Reduced dependence on caregivers: With timely cataract surgeries, elderly patients no longer have to rely on family members for basic activities. JD treatment has helped the children manage their condition independently, reducing the burden on parents and caregivers, making life easier for the entire family.

Increased saving potential: Free treatments has helped support the families of the patient from spending large sums on medical care. Cataract surgeries and JD management programmes save costs by preventing severe health issues that would otherwise require expensive hospital visits and long-term treatments.

Enhanced ability of caregivers: When individuals regain their sight or manage JD effectively, caregivers can focus on their own well-being, jobs, and responsibilities. Parents of JD-affected children experienced less stress and can dedicate more time to work and family needs.

Testimonial by Anjali, mother of a diabetes patient

"When my daughter was diagnosed with diabetes, we were constantly worried about her health. We had to watch over her all the time, and managing her condition felt overwhelming. With the support from this program, she now understands how to monitor her sugar levels and take insulin on her own. She is healthier, more confident, and less dependent on us, which has made life easier for our whole family."

Reduced risk of adverse health events: By providing early treatment, these programmes prevent complications such as blindness from cataracts or organ damage from uncontrolled diabetes. This ensures that patients remain healthy and avoid emergency hospitalizations, making healthcare more efficient.

Increased prospects for advancing in career or education: Clear vision and controlled diabetes allow individuals, especially children, to continue education without interruptions. Adults can return to work, improving their earning capacity. This creates long-term social and economic benefits for individuals and their families.

REESS Ratings

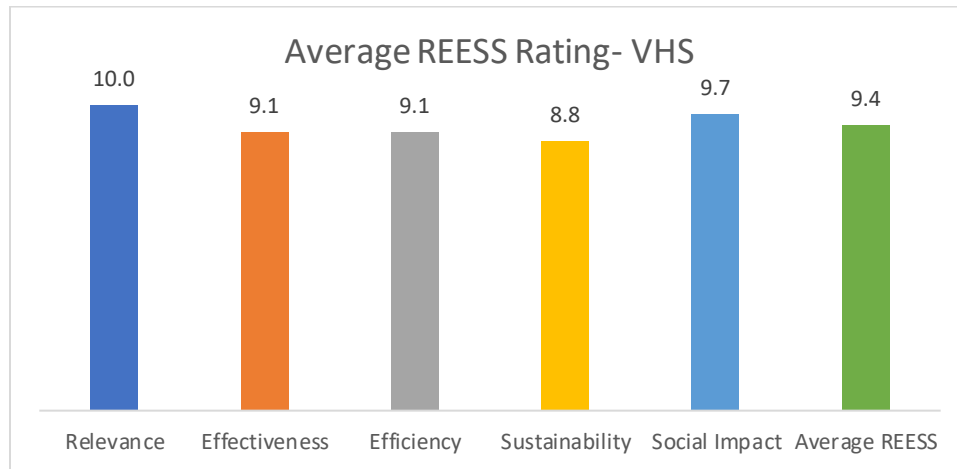
Table 10 VHS - REESS Indicators and Ratings

REESS Indicators		Avg REESS Rating
Relevance	Prevalence of issue being treated	10
	Non -availability of similar services being provided by other private service providers	10
	Non - availability of similar services being provided within the Govt	10
	Likely progression of disease when left untreated (prognosis)	10
	Demographic and income profile of the beneficiaries	10
	Adherence to CSR policy of Firstsource Solutions	10
	Adherence to national healthcare mandates	10
	Adherence to international framework	10
	Average Relevance Rating	10
Effectiveness	Improved health outcomes	10
	Provision of quality treatment	9
	Reduced risk of complications	9
	Adherence Rate	9

REESS Indicators		Avg REESS Rating
	Overall reach vs MOU deliverables	9
	Patient satisfaction	9
	Program Reach and Accessibility	9
	Capacity of team to provide services	9
	Average Effectiveness Rating	9.1
Efficiency	Affordability	10
	Comparison with other cost-providers	10
	Timeliness (Identification to treatment)	9
	Optimal utilisation of resources, infrastructure and manpower by partner	9
	Timely availability of required resources	10
	Post-treatment follow-up and monitoring	8
	Outcome tracking (long-term)	7
	Cost per Surgery	10
	Average Efficiency Rating	9.1
	Sustainability	Diversity of funding streams/donors
Ethical fibre of the team		10
Organizational capacity		10
Ability of program to scale		10
Integration into Govt health system		7
Prevention measures in place		7
Average Sustainability Rating		8.8
Social Impact	Improved long-term health outcomes	8
	Improved well-being and happiness	10
	Reduced depended on caregivers	10
	Increased saving potential	10
	Enhanced ability of caregivers	10
	Reduced risk of adverse health events	10
	Increased prospects for advancing in career or education	10
	Average Social Impact Rating	9.7

Overall REESS Score

Figure 13 VHS REESS Scorecard



The program attained an average REESS rating of 9.4, which is considered excellent, highlighting the positive impact it has had on the patients.

Recommendations

- A dedicated nurse is needed for *counselling* diabetes patients, as the current team is understaffed and struggling to manage the patient load.
- Many patients were unaware of Firstsource's support. The partner organization can enhance branding and visibility to ensure better recognition of Firstsource's contributions.
- Cataract surgery follow-ups can be referred to peripheral healthcare *centres* for better accessibility.
- Increased awareness about the ill effects of cataracts and diabetes should be promoted within the community to encourage early screening and timely intervention.
- Implementing long-term tracking of eye health outcomes for cataract patients will help assess the impact of surgeries and ensure sustained improvements in vision.

Conclusion

The cataract and diabetes treatment program has significantly improved the lives of underserved communities by providing timely medical interventions, restoring vision, and ensuring better diabetes management. Through free or affordable treatments, regular follow-ups, and patient education, the program has empowered individuals to lead healthier, more independent lives.

Education

NALANDAWAY- ART BASED EDUCATION FOR GOVT SCHOOL CHILDREN

Background

Art education in schools plays a crucial role in a child's overall development, yet it is often neglected, especially in government schools across India. Art is not just about drawing and painting; it allows children to explore their creativity, think independently, and express themselves in unique ways. It encourages problem-solving and innovation, skills that are essential for success in any field. When students engage with art, they develop a sense of curiosity and imagination that can enhance their learning experience across subjects.

Beyond creativity, art has a direct impact on academic performance and emotional well-being. Studies have shown that students involved in artistic activities perform better in subjects like mathematics and language, as art enhances comprehension, memory, and critical thinking. Also, art provides a constructive way to process emotions, reducing stress and anxiety. It helps children build self-confidence and develop resilience, as they learn to accept mistakes as part of the creative process. This emotional growth is vital for their personal and academic success.

Despite these benefits, government schools in India often lack proper infrastructure, trained teachers, and resources for art education. In the meantime, CSR initiatives can play a major role in bridging this gap. Companies can support government schools by funding art supplies, setting up creative learning spaces, and organizing workshops with professional artists. Such interventions can ensure that students from all backgrounds have access to quality art education.

About Nalandaway

Nalandaway Foundation is a non-profit organization that uses art, music, and creative learning to empower children from marginalized communities across India. Founded in 2005, the foundation focuses on integrating art-based education into schools, particularly for underprivileged children, to enhance their emotional well-being, confidence, and academic performance. Through storytelling, visual arts, theatre, and music, Nalandaway creates safe spaces where children can express themselves, build resilience, and develop essential life skills.

One of Nalandaway's key initiatives includes working with government schools to bring art into mainstream education, especially in states like Tamil Nadu, Delhi, and Bihar. They collaborate with teachers and policymakers to design creative learning modules that integrate art with subjects like language and science. Also, the foundation conducts workshops and art therapy programmes for children facing trauma and stress, helping them heal and gain confidence. By leveraging corporate and philanthropic support, Nalandaway continues to expand its impact, ensuring that art reaches children who need it the most.

About the program

The Art Vandi program by Nalandaway Foundation is a mobile initiative designed to take creative experiences to children in underserved communities. The Art Vandi project was initiated in memory of a child named Harsha, who tragically lost her life. Harsha had a deep love for indigenous art, and the program was conceived as a way of honouring her memory by providing artistic opportunities to children in rural areas.

Recognizing that many Government schools lack dedicated spaces and resources for arts education, Nalandaway launched this innovative program to make art accessible to children who otherwise have limited exposure to creative expression. The Art Vandi, which loosely translates to “Art Vehicle” or “Art on wheels” is a van equipped with materials for painting, music, storytelling, and theatre, allowing children to explore their creativity in an engaging and interactive way.

A key feature of the van was its use as a mobile classroom equipped with resources to deliver art education to remote schools. This van transported the art teachers and materials while also serving as a multimedia learning space.

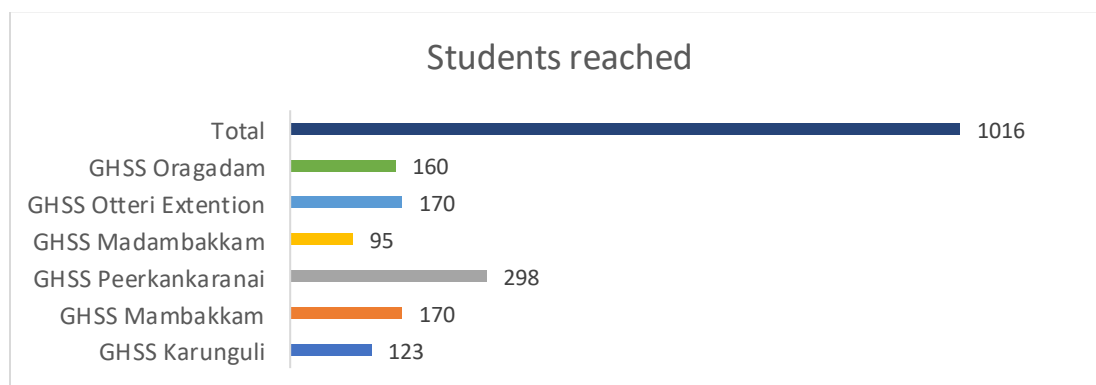
Traveling across schools and community spaces in Tamil Nadu, the Art Vandi program conducts workshops that encourage self-expression, build confidence, and enhance emotional well-being. The initiative is particularly impactful in rural and urban low-income areas, where children face social and economic challenges that limit their access to holistic education.

Survey Findings

Overview

The program reached 1,016 children in six schools over three months in Chengalpattu district, Tamil Nadu. It provided a space for children to express themselves, explore different art forms, learn through audio visual methods, and showcase their artistic talents. The initiative aimed to create a sense of community and cultural connection among children, teachers, and villagers.

Figure 14 Nalandaway -Overall reach



While the primary focus of the program was on students from Classes 6 to 8, the van also extended its reach to younger children (Classes 1 to 5) by providing interactive storytelling and audiovisual sessions. The “Art Vandī” played a crucial role in making art education accessible to students who otherwise had no exposure to structured creative learning. The van was fitted with an in-built AV system, allowing students to watch educational videos, short films, and moral stories, especially benefiting the younger classes. Each school was covered within a six-week time frame, ensuring that students received comprehensive exposure to different art forms.

The program followed a structured model over a one-week period in each school, with five sessions conducted from Monday to Friday. Each session lasted for 1.5 hours, allowing students to immerse themselves in the art forms taught. Students from Classes 6, 7, and 8 participated in the program, divided into batches of 25-30 students per session. A special feature of the week was Storytelling Wednesdays, where students had the opportunity to present their work in an exhibition format. This initiative encouraged self-expression, peer learning, and an appreciation for diverse art forms.

Words from the founder - Bridging the gap in arts education for underprivileged children

*“At NalandaWay, we believe that every child deserves the opportunity to explore their creativity and express themselves through the arts. Unfortunately, govt schools often lack dedicated arts teachers and creative spaces, leaving many children without access to this exposure. The Art Vandī plays a crucial role in bridging this gap by bringing arts education directly to these children at their doorstep. By incorporating art, storytelling and theatre, Art Vandī aims to spark creativity among young minds. The support from organizations like Firstsource enables us to continue our mission of empowering children through the arts, ensuring that creative learning becomes an integral part of their education. Thanks to Firstsource for their support.”**
- Mr. Sriram, Founder, Nalandaway

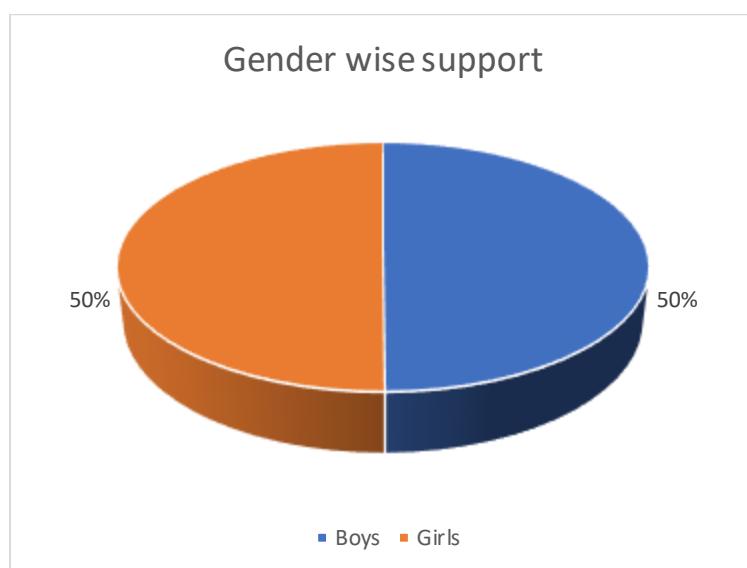
Art Forms Taught

Students explored a variety of art forms, ensuring a well-rounded creative education. The program included:

- Origami – The art of paper folding to create intricate designs.
- Watercolour painting – Techniques for blending colours and creating visual compositions.
- Warli art – A traditional tribal art form known for its geometric patterns and storytelling.
- Photography – Basic techniques in framing, lighting, and composition.
- Visual arts – A combination of drawing, sketching, and mixed-media art.
- Theatre – Performance arts that enhanced expression, dialogue delivery, and stage confidence.

- Puppet making – Crafting puppets and learning the basics of storytelling through puppetry.

Figure 15 Nalandaway Beneficiary %



Beneficiary Profile

Survey findings indicated that the program reached an equal number of boys and girls, with a total of 1,134 students participating across six schools. The students primarily came from rural backgrounds, with zero to limited prior exposure to formal art education.

Children from classes 6 to 8 made up the majority of participants, while younger students (Classes 1 to 5)

engaged in storytelling and audiovisual learning sessions.

None of the students interacted with had ever engaged in theatre, Warli art, or photography before, and their feedback highlighted newfound confidence in self-expression and creativity.

Teachers and facilitators observed that students became more engaged with learning as the program progressed. The structured format, combined with hands-on activities, helped build teamwork, patience, and problem-solving skills. Also, the Storytelling Wednesday's initiative encouraged students to present their artwork via storytelling, encouraging peer learning and appreciation for different creative expressions.

Parents and community members also expressed appreciation for the initiative, noting that it helped children develop an interest in art instead of wasting their time loitering or watching TV. Many students expressed a desire to continue exploring art beyond the program.

REESS Evaluation

Relevance

Limited access to arts education for children in rural areas: The Art Vandri initiative directly addresses the lack of arts education in government schools, where there are no dedicated arts teachers, minimal exposure to creative subjects, and no access to multimedia tools. By bringing arts education to the doorstep of children who otherwise have no avenues for artistic expression, Art Vandri ensures that they receive a well-rounded access to avenues that spark their creativity. By bringing in localised storytelling and theatre, the program also aids in increased cultural awareness.

Non-availability of similar services being provided by other organizations: Currently, Nalandaway is the only organization conducting similar programmes,

highlighting the gap in arts education services. Art Vandī fills this void by making arts accessible to children who have no alternative means of exposure to creative learning.

Team speaks

- *"Art Vandī brings arts to children who would otherwise have no access, ensuring their creativity is nurtured despite systemic barriers." Mr. Prabhakaran – Associate Director*

Likelihood of continued lack of exposure to arts without the intervention:

Children from underprivileged backgrounds attending government schools have fewer opportunities for artistic development as they progress to higher grades. In rural areas, social restrictions further limit access to arts education, especially for girls, who are often not allowed to travel outside their homes after a certain age. Art Vandī ensures sustained arts exposure by delivering programmes directly to their communities, breaking these barriers.

Demographic and cultural diversity of beneficiaries: The beneficiaries of Art Vandī come from BPL or low-income families who are typically daily wage labourers, weaving communities, and tribal groups. These children have limited access to extracurricular activities and creative education. The initiative acknowledges and integrates their cultural heritage into its programmes using puppetry and theatre, making arts education inclusive and relevant to their backgrounds.

Project manager's words

"In rural areas, where social restrictions often limit access to arts—especially for girls—Art Vandī breaks barriers by delivering programmes directly to their communities at the schools itself." Mr. Vinod Kumar – Project Manager

Adherence to CSR policy of Firstsource, national and international education mandates: Art Vandī aligns with Firstsource Solutions' CSR policy by promoting art-based education in marginalized communities. It also supports national education mandates that emphasize the inclusion of arts and culture in learning, contributing to holistic child development. It also aligns with international frameworks for cultural and educational equity, such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which advocate for inclusive and equitable quality education.

Effectiveness

Improved creative skills: The program has successfully created the first step to pique and enhance children's creative skills by providing engaging, hands-on experiences in various art forms. Through activities such as sketching, crayon drawing, and puppet-making, children have been encouraged to express themselves freely and think outside the box.

Beneficiaries speak

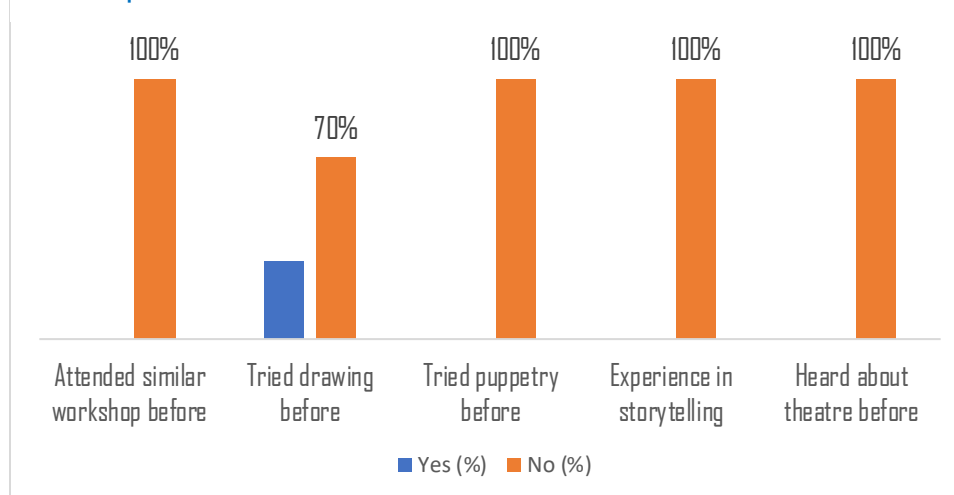
"I never knew I could draw well. Now, I practice every day!" – Kaushik, 14 years old

Provision of quality arts-based learning experiences and materials: Access to quality art materials and structured workshops has played a crucial role in setting the platform to enrich children's artistic learning. The provision of crayons, sketching tools, and puppet-making kits has allowed them to practice their skills. Also, specially designed puppet-making workshops have introduced innovative ways of storytelling, making the learning process both interactive and enjoyable.

Beneficiaries speak

- *"I love drawing with crayons! I drew a big lion, and my teacher said it was very colourful!" – Geetha, 12 years old*
- *"The art teacher gave us so many colours! I painted a big tree with birds and sea with the fish and butterflies." – Karthik, 11 years old*

Figure 16 Nalandaway – Students experience before and after the workshop



Enhanced awareness of art forms: The initiative has introduced children to various art forms, including theatre, puppet-making, and storytelling. By exposing them to these creative mediums, the

program has broadened their understanding of expressing themselves. The incorporation of doorstep art sessions has further ensured accessibility, enabling children from all backgrounds to engage with these art forms and develop an appreciation for creative storytelling.

Beneficiaries speak

- *"Making puppets was so much fun! I told a story with my puppet, and my friends laughed a lot." – Sathish, 11 years old*

Adherence to planned program timeline and deliverables: The program was conducted as per the planned deliverables, ensuring timely implementation of all activities. Right from visiting the schools to material distribution to workshop execution,

was carried out efficiently. This adherence to the timeline has contributed to the program's overall success, ensuring that all intended objectives were met without delays.

Engagement and satisfaction of beneficiaries: The auditors noticed high levels of enthusiasm and engagement among children. During the field, it was observed that participants found the sessions exciting, enjoyable, and deeply immersive. The use of interactive storytelling and puppet-making further captivated children's attention, making learning both fun and educational.

Children's point of view

"I like storytelling with puppets. It feels like I am the puppet talking to my friends!" – Vignesh, 13 years old

Overall reach & capacity of trainers: The program successfully reached all targeted schools and beneficiaries, ensuring comprehensive coverage. A team of trainers specialising in art, puppet making, creating stories and theatre played a pivotal role in delivering the sessions, effectively guiding children through each artistic exercise. The use of the Art Van initiative further enhanced accessibility, bringing high-quality arts education directly to communities. By integrating a structured curriculum with creative exploration, the facilitators ensured that every child received a meaningful creative experience.

Words from the team

Our trainers have a minimum of three years of experience in art, drawing, and theatre, allowing them to deliver lessons in an engaging and interactive manner. Also, our curriculum has been carefully designed to meet the specific needs of these children, ensuring a meaningful and effective learning experience. Mr Prabhakar, Associate Director

Efficiency

Affordability of the initiative compared to other similar interventions: This initiative was provided completely free of cost, making it accessible to children from underprivileged backgrounds. In comparison, a single art session in a city like Chennai typically costs between ₹300 to ₹500. In rural areas such as Kancheepuram and Chengalpattu, art sessions cost around ₹700 per month, making them unaffordable for many families. By offering these sessions for free, this program ensures that children who otherwise wouldn't have access to art education can participate and benefit.

Timely execution of art camps and activities in rural areas: All the camps and activities were conducted as scheduled, ensuring that children received uninterrupted

sessions. The timely execution of these camps over a period of five days per batch was essential to maintaining engagement and learning continuity. Proper planning and coordination ensured that sessions started and ended as planned, and there were no major delays or disruptions.

Table 11 Nalandaway - Timeline

School	Start Date	End Date
GHSS Karunguli	30-11-2023	03-12-2023
GHSS Mambakkam	09-01-2024	12-01-2024
GHSS Peerkankaranai	18-01-2024	24-01-2024
GHSS Madambakkam	29-01-2024	02-02-2024
GHSS Otteri Extention	05-02-2024	09-02-2024
GHSS Oragadam	12-02-2024	16-02-2024

Optimal utilization of art truck resources and manpower: The art truck and its resources were used efficiently, allowing maximum reach and impact. The manpower was well-coordinated, ensuring that each child received sufficient attention and guidance. The mobile nature of the initiative meant that sessions could be conducted in different locations without the need for children to travel long distances, making it highly effective in rural settings.

Effective tracking and reporting: Regular tracking and reporting ensured transparency and accountability. All activities were documented on time, and reports were prepared to monitor the progress of the children and the overall success of the camps. This data was useful in assessing the effectiveness of the initiative and making necessary improvements for future camps.

Cost per beneficiary or per art camp: The total cost per child for a five-day workshop was ₹484. In comparison, a similar workshop in a city costs around ₹3,500, while in rural areas, the cost ranges from ₹1,000 to ₹1,500. The doorstep delivery of these workshops significantly reduced expenses for families and eliminated barriers to participation. This cost-effective model ensured that more children could benefit from the program.

Upkeep of materials and art van

Sustainability

Diversity of funding sources: Nalandaway secures financial support from various sources to sustain its operations. In addition to Firstsource, other donors, such as Tag HR and Data Electronics, also support the project, ensuring that it continues to reach more communities. This diversified funding approach helps mitigate financial risks and allows the program to expand its reach and impact.

Incorporating innovation to promote age-old art forms: To keep traditional art forms relevant in the modern age, the program integrates innovative methods such as

audiovisual aids and exhibitions. These tools help create an immersive learning experience, making it easier for participants to engage with and understand the cultural significance of various art forms. By leveraging technology, the project ensures that heritage art is preserved while also making it accessible to younger generations in a format they can relate to.

Maintenance of materials: The Art Vandis was inspected and found to be in good condition. It was well-stocked with essential materials, including paper, charts, pens, crayons, sketch pens, and other art supplies. The resources used in the project, including the mobile art truck and its contents, are well maintained to ensure their longevity. The art truck is regularly serviced, ensuring that workshops and demonstrations can be conducted smoothly without interruptions due to logistical issues.

Scalability to other regions: The Art Vandis model has the potential to be expanded to other regions, making arts education accessible to a wider audience. Given its mobility and structured approach, the initiative can be replicated in different areas, especially where access to arts education is limited. This scalability ensures that more communities, particularly those in remote or underserved locations, can benefit from exposure to traditional and contemporary art forms.

Integration into existing government systems: The project aligns well with existing government initiatives, such as the Kalai Thiruvizha, which aims to promote cultural education. By integrating with such programmes via exhibitions, the art truck initiative ensures that its impact extends beyond a standalone effort and that the children get the recognition they deserve. This collaboration not only strengthens the project's credibility but also provides a platform for children to showcase their talent and for parents to understand the need to hone their children's latent artistic talents.

Measures to ensure continuity: Currently, the project is designed as a one-time intervention, with no structured follow-up or refresher activities. To ensure a lasting impact, the program could consider conducting refresher sessions or follow-up workshops that allow participants to continue building on their skills and knowledge. Establishing long-term engagement strategies would help reinforce the value of arts education and create a sustained impact within the communities served.

Social Impact

Improved long-term creative and cultural engagement: The initiative sets the tone for the possibility of a deep-rooted interest in the arts by introducing children to creative experiences that they may not have experienced otherwise. Through hands-on activities like drawing, puppetry, and storytelling, children develop an appreciation for artistic expression.

Increased self-expression in children: Many children lack platforms to freely express their thoughts and emotions, but this program provides them with a supportive space to do so. Activities such as puppetry and storytelling help children articulate their ideas and perspectives in unique ways. By engaging via the Art Vandis, children gain

confidence and develop better communication skills. This will extend into other aspects of their lives.

Enhanced pride through collective artistic experiences: The program creates opportunities for children to collaborate and pride in their collective work. When children see their creations displayed or performed in the exhibitions, they develop a sense of ownership and cultural identity. These shared experiences help strengthen bonds among participants and instil a sense of community pride in preserving and celebrating artistic traditions.

Improved prospects for children to explore creative opportunities: By exposing children to different art forms, the program creates the platform for an understanding of potential career options in art both for children and their partners. Many children, especially in underserved communities, may not consider arts as a viable profession. However, through this initiative, they learn about opportunities in fields such as design, theatre, illustration, and storytelling. This early exposure can inspire them to pursue further education or skill development in creative fields.

Increased community appreciation for arts and cultural diversity: The program not only benefits children but also impacts parents in appreciating arts. Parents, teachers witness the positive effects of art on children's well-being and happiness.

Increased well-being and happiness in children: Engagement in creative activities has been shown to improve emotional well-being, and this program provides children with a joyful and stress-free learning environment. Art allows children to express themselves freely, relieving stress and promoting mental health. Through group activities and creative exploration, children develop a sense of joy, accomplishment, and belonging, contributing to their happiness and personal growth.

REESS Ratings

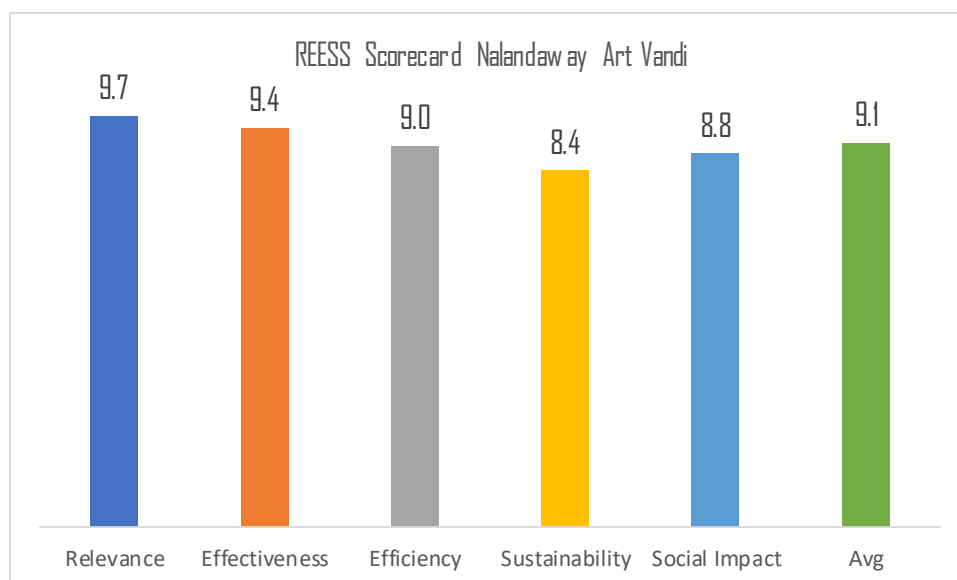
Table 12 Nalandaway - REESS Indicators and Ratings

REESS Indicator - Nalandaway Art Vandii Project		Rating
Relevance	Limited access to arts education for children in rural areas	10
	Non-availability of similar services being provided by other private or Government organizations	10
	Likelihood of continued lack of exposure to arts without the intervention	10
	Demographic and cultural diversity of beneficiaries	10
	Adherence to CSR policy of Firstsource solutions	10
	Alignment with national education mandates for arts and cultural inclusion	9
	Consistency with international frameworks for cultural and educational equity	9
	Average Relevance Rating	9.7
Effectiveness	Improved creative skills	9
	Provision of quality arts-based learning experiences and materials	9
	Enhanced awareness of art forms	9
	Adherence to planned program timeline and deliverables	10
	Engagement and satisfaction of participating children, teachers, and community members	10
	Overall reach compared to target schools and beneficiaries	10
	Adherence and completion levels	9
	Capacity and expertise of facilitators to deliver art-based pedagogy	9
Average Effectiveness Rating	9.4	
Efficiency	Affordability of the initiative compared to other similar interventions	10
	Timely execution of art camps and activities in rural areas	10
	Optimal utilization of art truck resources and manpower	10
	Effective tracking and reporting	5
	Cost per beneficiary or per art camp	10
	Upkeep of materials and art van	9
	Average Efficiency Rating	9.0
Sustainability	Diversity of funding sources for the organization	10
	Incorporating innovation and technology to promote age-old art forms	8
	Maintenance of materials	9
	Commitment and expertise of the implementing team	10
	Scalability of the art truck model to other regions	10
	Integration into existing government or community education systems	7
	Measures to ensure continuity and lasting impact of arts education	5
Average Sustainability Rating	8.4	

REESS Indicator - Nalandaway Art Vandii Project		Rating
Social Impact	Improved long-term creative and cultural engagement among children	9
	Increased self-expression in children	9
	Enhanced pride through collective artistic experiences	9
	Improved prospects for children to explore creative careers or opportunities	8
	Increased community appreciation for arts and cultural diversity	9
	Increased well-being and happiness in children	9
	Average Social Impact Rating	8.8

Overall REESS Score

Figure 17 Nalandaway - REESS Scorecard



The program attained an average REESS rating of 9.1, which is considered excellent, highlighting the positive impact it has had on the children.

Recommendations

- Follow-up support: Periodic visits to schools to track student progress and provide continued engagement is necessary to ensure sustained interest and follow-on.
- Advanced training: Identifying students with exceptional talent and offering further training to refine their skills.
- Stakeholder awareness: Engaging IAS officers and policymakers to gain permissions for increased session frequency.
- Artwork return: Ensuring students take home their artwork to showcase their achievements to parents, increasing a sense of pride and ownership.

- Leveraging social media for outreach: Expanding the program’s visibility through digital platforms to showcase student artwork and raising awareness about the impact of art education in rural communities to attract further CSR funding and support.

Conclusion

The “Art Vandī” initiative by Nalandaway has had a positive impact on students by bringing art to schools that lack dedicated art teachers. By encourage the concept of creativity and artistic expression, the program has helped students understand the basics of art. It has also created a platform for collaborative learning, encouraging teamwork and communication among students. Also, by introducing traditional and contemporary art forms, Art Vandī has enriched students' cultural awareness, helping them appreciate diverse artistic traditions. Through these efforts, Nalandaway has contributed to a holistic and inclusive learning environment.

NIRMAAN – MOBILE EMPLOYMENT VAN

Background

In India, while youth literacy rates are steadily increasing, translating education into meaningful employment remains a significant challenge. With 75% literacy among youth (18-29 years), many are acquiring educational qualifications, yet the employment outcomes are far from promising. The unemployment rate stands at 8.02% in rural areas and 7.6% in urban centres. Women's participation in both the labour force and workforce has seen a notable decline, further exacerbating the employment issue.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded these challenges, disrupting education systems, confining students to their homes, and shifting learning to online platforms. This abrupt transition has led to a lack of practical exposure, disrupted career plans, and increased confusion among students, particularly those from underprivileged and marginalized communities.

In light of these challenges, there is a growing need for doorstep delivery of employment knowledge and skill development services. By bringing this directly to students, particularly those in rural or underserved areas, doorstep delivery can bridge the gap between access to career opportunities and the acquisition of relevant skills.

About Nirmaan

Nirmaan NGO is a non-profit organization dedicated to addressing the educational, skill development, and employment challenges faced by underprivileged communities in India. Founded with the mission of empowering marginalized youth, Nirmaan works to bridge the gap between education and employment through various programmes aimed at enhancing access to quality education, vocational training, and skill-building opportunities. The organization focuses on providing holistic support to students, particularly those from economically weaker sections, ensuring that they not only receive an education but also develop the necessary skills to secure stable livelihoods.

Through its initiatives, Nirmaan offers a range of services, including career counselling, vocational training, mentorship, and placement support, all aimed at preparing youth for the workforce. The NGO works in collaboration with schools, colleges, and corporate partners to create a sustainable ecosystem for skill development and job creation. By focusing on practical skills and industry-relevant knowledge, Nirmaan helps bridge the existing skill gap, providing students with the tools to navigate an ever-evolving job market and contribute meaningfully to their communities and the broader economy.

About the program

The Mobile Employment Van project, initiated by Nirmaan with support from Firstsource, aimed to bridge the gap between underprivileged youth and employment opportunities. The van was designed to be a mobile hub for job application assistance, resume building, interview preparation, and goal setting, particularly targeting youth from Below Poverty Line (BPL) communities and rural areas. By bringing these services directly to communities, the project ensured that individuals who would otherwise struggle to access such resources due to geographical or financial barriers were not left behind.

The Mobile Employment Van served both the youth and employers. For youth, it aimed to provide access to job opportunities, career guidance, and skill development programmes tailored to industry needs. With an implementation timeline from February 1st, 2023, to March 31st, 2023, the Mobile Employment Van offered a unique and impactful solution to the challenges faced by underprivileged youth in rural areas.

Survey Findings

The program successfully impacted 1,565 youth aged 18-27 years from three districts in Telangana (Hyderabad, Ranga Reddy, and Medchal). Among the 2000 applications received, 1565 students were selected, with 640 of them being girls, reflecting gender diversity.

Table 13 Nirmaan- Gender-wise Reach

Gender	No of youth screened
Women	640
Men	925
Total	1565

The initiative provided job counselling and career guidance to the youth, with 150 individuals directly employed in various sectors through a Mobile Employment Van. Also, 50+ potential employers were onboarded for student placements. The program also inspired the formation of Employment Career Points, empowering community volunteers to support local students. Furthermore, the youth were connected to the Nirmaan Employment Helpline, reaching out to a wider group of indirect beneficiaries.

REESS Evaluation

Relevance

Limited access to jobs for youth in rural areas: High demand for jobs but limited opportunities remain a significant challenge for rural youth. This project addresses these gaps by providing career guidance, skill development, and interview preparation. Many academically proficient students from economically weaker sections struggle to clear interviews, preventing them from securing jobs aligned with their abilities. Through targeted interventions, the program bridges this gap, ensuring better employability for rural youth.

Benefits the truly underprivileged: The project exclusively supports rural and underserved communities, focusing on those who lack access to career guidance and job opportunities. By prioritizing economically disadvantaged students, the initiative ensures that aid reaches those most in need, equipping them with the skills and knowledge to secure sustainable employment.

Beneficiary speaks

- *"I've been looking for a job since I finished my studies in 2021. For two years, I struggled to find the right opportunity, but Nirmaan helped me in 2023. The staff is very friendly, and they provided excellent guidance throughout my job search. I'm very thankful to Nirmaan for giving me a chance to finally find a job!" – Sai Teja*
- *It feels great to have finally secured a job after such a long search. I was frustrated and feeling lost, but Nirmaan made all the difference. The staff are approachable and really care about your success. I never thought I'd find a job in my field, but with their support, I did!"- Pavan*
- *"Nirmaan provided me with valuable career guidance and resources that helped me land my dream job. The team was always available to answer my questions, and I felt supported at every step. I'm so grateful for the opportunities they've opened up for me." –Karthik*

Availability of organizations that do similar work in the project area: There are no other NGOs operating in the area that provide similar employment and career counselling services. This highlights the project's significance, as it fills a crucial gap in employment support and career guidance that rural youth would otherwise lack.

Demand for jobs: Unemployment rates remain high in both rural (8.02%) and urban (7.6%) areas, with a large portion (41.49%) of the workforce engaged in agriculture and allied sectors. These sectors contribute only 18% to the Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP), while the services sector, employing just 28% of the workforce (mostly skilled labour), contributes 62% to GDP. Also, female participation in the workforce has declined, further exacerbating the employment challenge. The project aims to bridge this gap by equipping job seekers with relevant skills and connecting them to better opportunities.

Likelihood of continued lack of employment opportunities without the intervention: Without this intervention, rural youth would continue to face significant employment barriers. Awareness about job opportunities remains low, and the lack of accessibility further limits their chances. By strategically parking the Mobile Employment Van in key localities, the project ensures doorstep delivery of crucial career guidance and job-related information, significantly improving employment prospects for these communities.

Demographic and cultural diversity of beneficiaries: The beneficiaries come from various socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, including tribal, marginalized, and economically weaker sections. The program is inclusive of both men and women, ensuring equal access to job opportunities, career counselling, and skill development, encouraging a diverse and inclusive employment landscape.

Adherence to CSR policy of Firstsource Solutions: The project aligns with the CSR policy of Firstsource Solutions by focusing on skill development, employment readiness, and youth empowerment. By addressing employability challenges and promoting sustainable livelihoods, the initiative meets key CSR objectives, ensuring meaningful social impact.

Effectiveness

Increased job competitiveness and employability skills: A total of 200 students were screened and 150 identified for the program, with most of them coming from economically disadvantaged backgrounds. These students, primarily first-generation learners, lacked exposure to skill-based courses essential for entry-level job seekers. The initiative provided crucial guidance on resume writing, interview attire, and interview expectations, bridging the gap between academic qualifications and real-world job readiness.

Addresses job sector needs: The project went beyond interview training to act as a comprehensive career resource for students who lacked home-based guidance on employability skills. It also focused on office etiquette, ensuring that students not only secured jobs but also retained them. By creating awareness about skills that enhance job prospects, students could seamlessly register for Nirmaan's free technical skills courses, eliminating the burden of searching for external training opportunities.

Beneficiary speaks

- *"This program taught me the importance of office etiquette. It's not just about getting a job, but about maintaining it and growing in the workplace."- Kalyan, – First-generation learner participant*
- *"I never had access to career guidance at home, but this initiative gave me the tools I needed to understand what employers expect and how to meet those expectations."*

- *"Thanks to the technical skills courses offered through Nirmaan, I no longer have to worry about finding training on my own. It's made me more employable and ready for the job market."- Karthik*

Ability of beneficiaries to find jobs: Out of 2,000 applications received, 1,500 students were screened, demonstrating a strong interest in employability support. Of this 150 found jobs. The demand for skilled employees in Hyderabad was high, with companies such as WNS Global Services Ltd, Caliber, Skyquad Electronics, and Radiant actively seeking candidates. The project played a crucial role in linking job-ready students with these potential employers.

Beneficiary receptivity: Feedback from surveyed participants indicated high levels of satisfaction with the services provided. The training and counselling sessions effectively addressed students' needs, equipping them with practical skills and boosting their confidence in job-seeking and workplace readiness.

Efficiency

Affordability of services: The program ensures that services remain affordable and accessible to all participants by offering it for free. By leveraging strategic partnerships and funding support, the initiative negates the financial burden on beneficiaries. This approach allows youth from diverse socio-economic backgrounds to benefit from career counselling, job placements, and skill development without worrying about high costs.

Beneficiary speaks

- *"Without this program, I would never have been able to afford the career counselling and skill development courses. The fact that it's offered for free is a huge blessing, especially for someone like me who's been struggling to make ends meet."*
- *"I had always wanted to improve my job prospects, but I couldn't afford the expensive training programmes or consultations. This initiative has been a lifeline for me, giving me the skills and opportunities I wouldn't have been able to access otherwise."*

Optimal utilisation of funding: The program has successfully utilized its financial resources in an efficient manner, ensuring that every rupee contributes to its intended objectives. Well-planned budgeting and careful allocation of funds have led to the successful execution of activities, maximizing the benefits for participants. The effective financial strategy has strengthened the overall impact of the program.

Completion of course on time: All planned activities and training sessions were completed within the expected timeframe. The structured implementation of the program allowed participants to receive timely career guidance and job placements. Meeting deadlines has helped maintain the program's credibility and reliability among both beneficiaries and funding partners.

Use of technology to leverage the efficiency of the program: The program effectively integrates technology to enhance efficiency and outreach. The fully equipped van, fitted with a TV, Wi-Fi, and a robust battery system, requires minimal maintenance, making it readily available for deployment in rural areas. Its nine-seating capacity allows for interactive awareness sessions in local communities, providing a flexible approach to reaching students. The trained staff ensures smooth operation and continuity of the program. By parking the van on college campuses, the initiative can first create awareness and then conduct large-scale training sessions inside classrooms. This mobile model enables the program to reach more students efficiently while maintaining adaptability in different environments.

Optimal Usage: The mobile employment van enabled accessibility to students across diverse locations, with counselling sessions covering essential job-readiness topics such as time and money management, resume building, interview preparation, workplace communication, and professional attire. The program was facilitated by a dedicated team, including a counsellor, a trainer, and an MIS staff member. One beneficiary, recognizing the need for further skill enhancement, was directed by the counsellor to the Impact Hiring Program and the Microsoft Skill Centre, further strengthening her employability prospects.

Sustainability

Leveraging diverse funding mechanisms: With continued funding from Firstsource for the last financial year, the program has a strong financial foundation to expand its impact. The involvement of multiple funders provides additional resources, ensuring that the program can scale effectively and reach more youth. This multi-funding approach enhances sustainability and allows for the introduction of new initiatives that strengthen career guidance and employment opportunities.

Formation of networks: For employers, it offered a chance to recruit and retain entry-level talent, especially from disadvantaged groups who faced systemic barriers to employment. Companies were encouraged to hire from these communities, contributing to social equity while filling entry-level positions with committed, well-prepared candidates.

Linkages with colleges: This initiative also strengthened partnerships with skill centres and colleges backed by CSR initiatives, non-profits, and government agencies. These institutions were willing to prepare youth with skills that met industry requirements, ensuring that they were job-ready. The project helped set the tone for the critical issue of underexposure to job markets for students from government colleges and BPL communities, thus promoting economic growth and social mobility for disadvantaged groups.

Empowerment of rural communities: The program strengthens rural communities by making education, employment, and skill development accessible to everyone. When young people find stable careers, they become role models within their communities, inspiring others to follow the same path. This cycle of empowerment

leads to long-term positive change, where communities take charge of their economic and social well-being.

Staff speaks

"We focus on creating local job opportunities, not just in cities, but in nearby businesses and through entrepreneurship." – Mr. Krishna, Program in charge

REESS Ratings

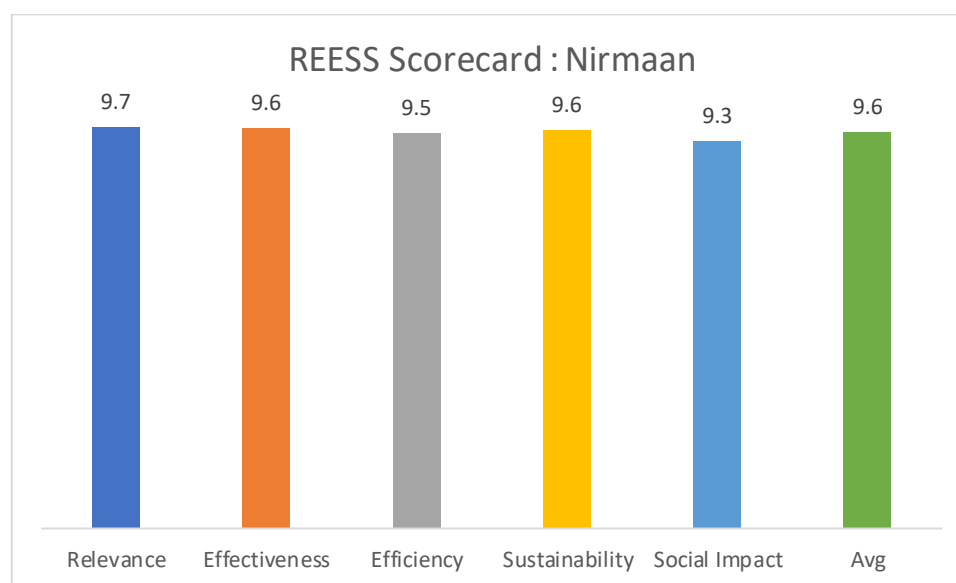
Table 14 Nirmaan: REESS Indicators and Ratings

Indicators		REESS Rating- Nirmaan
Relevance	Limited access to jobs for youth in rural areas	10
	Benefits the truly underprivileged or needy	10
	Availability of organizations that do similar work in the project area	8
	Demand for jobs	10
	Likelihood of continued lack of employment opportunities without the intervention	10
	Demographic and cultural diversity of beneficiaries	10
	Adherence to CSR policy of Firstsource solutions	9
	Alignment with national education mandates for arts and cultural inclusion	10
	Consistency with international frameworks for cultural and educational equity	10
	AVG RELEVANCE	9.7
Effectiveness	Increased job competitiveness and employability skills	9
	Addresses job sector needs	10
	Ability of beneficiaries to find jobs	9.2
	Were the beneficiaries happy with the services provided	10
	Meeting industry requirement	10
	AVG EFFECTIVENESS	9.6
Efficiency	Affordability of services	10
	Leveraging diverse funding mechanisms	8
	Optimal Utilisation of funding	9.6
	Completion of course on time	10
	Use of technology to leverage the efficiency of the program	10
	AVG EFFICIENCY	9.5
Sustainability	Network and Collaboration	10
	Financial Sustainability	10

Indicators		REESS Rating- Nirmaan
	Improved career aspirations among rural youth	10
	Continuity of services	10
	Govt Leveraging Govt Schemes	8
	AVG SUSTAINABILITY	9.6
Social Impact	Social equality and inclusion	9
	Increased self-confidence among rural youth	10
	Creation of local employment in rural areas	9
	Potential to reduce poverty	10
	Empowerment of rural communities	10
	Boost in rural economy	9
	AVG SOCIAL IMPACT	9.3

Overall REESS Score

Figure 18 Nirmaan: REESS Scorecard



Recommendations

- Increase the number of vans: Expanding the number of vans and strategically positioning them in more underserved rural areas could further enhance outreach and impact.
- Longer Deployment Periods: Extending the duration of service in each locality could allow for deeper engagement with youth, giving them more time to participate in skills training, career counselling, and other job readiness activities.
- Collaborate with more local businesses: Partnering with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in rural areas can help ensure that job opportunities are closer to home for the youth, thereby reducing the barriers related to relocation and travel.

Conclusion

The Mobile Employment Van project by Nirmaan NGO addresses the significant employment challenges faced by underprivileged youth, particularly in rural Telangana. By providing career counselling, job application assistance, resume building, and interview preparation directly at students' doorsteps, the initiative ensures that rural and economically disadvantaged communities, including marginalized groups, have access to employment resources they would otherwise lack. The project has successfully screened 1,500 youth, including 640 women and placed 150 youth, through skills development and placement support, significantly improving their job readiness and employability.

6. Alignment with UN SDGs

The programs by Firstsource Solutions align with one or more of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), aiming to address key issues such as education, healthcare, gender equality, and inclusive employment. Here's how these organizations align with the SDGs:

NASSCOM Foundation:

- **SDG 1: No poverty:** The program helps women artisans improve their financial stability by training them in business skills, digital marketing, and financial management.
- **SDG 5: Gender equality:** By providing targeted training, the program empowers 176 women artisans with skills that enhance their economic participation and leadership in the industry.
- **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth:** By equipping artisans with digital and financial literacy, the program enables them to access better markets, gain fair pricing for their products. This contributes to sustainable local economies and the growth of the traditional handloom industry.
- **SDG 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** The program integrates digital tools and financial technology to modernize traditional handloom work. Women are trained to leverage e-commerce platforms and social media marketing, ensuring they remain competitive in a technology-driven market.
- **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities:** Many women in rural MP face social and economic barriers that limit their access to professional opportunities. By providing tailored training, mentorship, and market connections, the program helps bridge the gap between rural artisans and urban buyers, reducing income inequalities.
- **SDG 17: Partnerships for goals:** The initiative demonstrates the power of collaboration between NASSCOM Foundation, Firstsource Solutions, and local NGO Umang Sridhar to drive social impact. By pooling resources, expertise, and networks, these organizations create scalable and sustainable change for women artisans.

Samarthanam:

- **SDG 1: No poverty:** By providing hearing aids to those who are hearing impaired, the program enhances the ability of individuals with hearing impairments to engage in education and employment opportunities, reducing financial dependence and improving economic stability.
- **SDG 3: Good health and well-being:** Untreated hearing loss is linked to cognitive decline, social isolation, and mental health challenges. The program helps individuals regain confidence, participate in social interactions, and improve their overall well-being.
- **SDG 4: Quality education:** Hearing impairments can create significant barriers in learning environments. By supporting individuals with assistive devices, the program promotes inclusive education and equal learning opportunities.
- **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth:** With improved communication abilities, beneficiaries have better access to job opportunities, allowing them to participate in the workforce, achieve financial independence, and contribute to economic growth.
- **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities:** People with disabilities often face discrimination and exclusion. The initiative promotes equal access to resources and opportunities, promoting a more inclusive society.

Ramp My City:

- **SDG 3: Good health and well-being:** Ensuring access to healthcare facilities is crucial for the well-being of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) and the elderly. By making Primary Healthcare Centres (PHCs) more accessible, the program improves their ability to receive medical attention without barriers.
- **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth:** Accessibility improvements at government offices such as the Regional Transport Office (RTO) and Bangalore One centres enable PwDs to access employment-related services, reducing barriers to work and economic participation.
- **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities:** By creating accessible infrastructure, the program addresses systemic mobility challenges faced by PwDs and the elderly, promoting equal access to essential services.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities:** The initiative enhances urban infrastructure by ensuring that public spaces are inclusive, safe, and accessible to all, contributing to the broader goal of sustainable city development.
- **SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals:** The collaboration between RampMyCity and Firstsource demonstrates the impact of cross-sector partnerships in driving social change and encouraging inclusivity in urban infrastructure.

VHS Hospitals:

- **SDG 1: No poverty:** By providing free cataract surgeries and insulin therapy, the program reduces the financial burden on economically disadvantaged individuals, ensuring they receive essential medical care without falling deeper into poverty.
- **SDG 3: Good health and well-being:** The initiative directly improves health outcomes by restoring vision through cataract surgeries and managing children

with diabetes with insulin support, preventing complications and enhancing overall quality of life.

- **SDG 4: Quality education:** Ensuring proper vision and diabetes management allows children and young adults to participate in education without health-related barriers, promoting better learning opportunities.
- **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth:** By preventing blindness and managing a chronic condition like diabetes, the program enables individuals to remain independent and contribute to the workforce, improving their economic stability.
- **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities:** The initiative bridges the healthcare gap by offering free, high-quality treatment to marginalized communities, ensuring that financial constraints do not prevent access to life-saving medical interventions.

Nalandaway:

- **SDG 3: Good health and well-being:** By providing children with a creative outlet through art, the program supports emotional well-being, reduces stress, and helps children develop resilience, contributing to their overall mental health.
- **SDG 4: Quality education:** The Art Vandī program enhances learning by integrating art into education, ensuring that children from underserved communities have access to creative learning opportunities that promote critical thinking and self-expression.
- **SDG 5: Gender equality:** The program creates an inclusive environment where both boys and girls are encouraged to participate in artistic activities, promoting equal opportunities for creative expression and personal growth.
- **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities:** By bringing art education to government schools and low-income communities, the initiative bridges the gap between privileged and underprivileged children, ensuring equitable access to quality education.
- **SDG 11: Sustainable cities and communities:** By encouraging creative expression among children in underserved areas, the program contributes to the social and cultural sustainability of communities, strengthening their artistic heritage.

Nirmaan:

- **SDG 1: No poverty:** By offering doorstep employment assistance and skill development services, the project helps underprivileged youth overcome financial barriers and improves their economic prospects.
- **SDG 4: Quality education:** The initiative enhances practical learning by delivering career guidance and vocational training directly to communities, complementing formal education with essential real-world skills.
- **SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth:** Through tailored job application support, resume building, and interview preparation, the program equips youth with the tools to secure meaningful employment and contribute to sustainable economic growth.

- **SDG 10: Reduced inequalities:** By targeting marginalized and rural communities, the project addresses disparities in access to employment opportunities, ensuring that vulnerable youth can access the support they need.

7. Conclusion

The diverse CSR initiatives of Firstsource undertaken by organizations like NASSCOM Foundation, NalandaWay Foundation, Ramp My City, and Nirmaan NGO have significantly contributed to empowering marginalized communities across India. Supporting individuals with hearing impairments by providing free, high-quality hearing aids, through Samarthanam and ensuring Cataract treatment and better diabetes management through affordable treatments by VHS has fostered healthier and more independent lives. By focusing on digital literacy, accessibility, healthcare, art education, and employment support, these programs have promoted confidence, independence, and economic growth among beneficiaries. These initiatives illustrate how strategic CSR can be a powerful catalyst for change, ensuring that business success is intertwined with the positive transformation of society and the environment.

To ensure the sustainability and long-term impact of these efforts, it is crucial to provide continuous support, mentorship, and appropriate resources. Periodical monitoring visits to be conducted by the Firstsource CSR team for all the projects as it was observed that some of the program areas were not visited by the team. The regular feedback from the CSR team will enable the implementing partners to strengthen the initiatives and the documentation.