An SDG Philanthropy Platform Event

THE INCREASING ROLE OF PHILANTHROPY IN FINANCING FOR DEVELOPMENT

In partnership with UN Global Compact, Dasra and Samhita

Thursday 30 May 2019
Grand Hyatt Hotel, Mumbai, India
About UNDP India: UNDP has worked in India since 1951 in almost all areas of human development, from system and institutional strengthening to inclusive growth and sustainable livelihoods, as well as on sustainable energy, environments and resilience. UNDP’s programmes continue to fully integrate a global vision for catalytic change, with India’s national priorities. With over 30 projects on the ground in almost every state, UNDP India works to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by transforming traditional models to do development differently.

About the SDGPP Philanthropy Platform (SDGPP): The SDGPP is a global initiative that connects foundations and philanthropists with knowledge and networks that can deepen collaboration, leverage resources and sustain impact.

In India, SDGPP is an innovative and collaborative partnership implemented by UNDP and Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors. The India chapter collaborates with the Oak Foundation, Global Fund for Women and Avasant Foundation to implement programmes on specific issues in certain geographies.

Knowledge Partners of the Event:

**United Nations (UN) Global Compact Network India:** UN Global Compact Network India (GCNI), formed in November 2000, was registered in 2003 as a non-profit society to function as the Indian local network of the UN Global Compact (UNGC) in New York. It was the first local network in the world to be established with full legal recognition. It is also a country level platform for businesses, civil organizations and the public and private sector. It aids in aligning stakeholders' responsible practices towards broad goals, including the SDGs, and other key sister initiatives of the UN and its systems; and the ten universally accepted principles of UNGC, in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

**Dasra:** Dasra began as a venture philanthropy fund to invest in early stage non-for-profit organizations in India. The aim was to bridge the gap between funders and non-for-profits by educating funders to be more strategic in their support, and to help non-for-profits use the funds in an optimal way. Dasra partners with leading family foundations and philanthropists in India and abroad to help them shape their vision and dream big.

**Samhita Social Ventures:** Samhita is a social enterprise that collaborates with companies to develop impactful corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives. The focus areas of the enterprise include CSR strategies and programme design and sector research. Samhita’s CSR consulting practice has worked with leading companies across India to shape their social good strategies, facilitate programme implementation, and assess the on-the-ground impact of such initiatives.

**Lead Authors**
Suruchi Aggarwal, UNDP India
Ragini Menon, Samhita Social Ventures
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Speakers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Registration and refreshments</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:15 a.m. – 10:25 a.m.</td>
<td>Opening remarks</td>
<td>Shoko Noda&lt;br&gt;Resident Representative, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:25 a.m. – 10:35 a.m.</td>
<td>Launch of the philanthropic guide and toolkit</td>
<td>Shoko Noda, UNDP&lt;br&gt;Sonvi Khanna, Dasra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:35 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.</td>
<td>The Guide: Practical tools for alignment</td>
<td>Suruchi Aggarwal, UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:45 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.</td>
<td>Changing face of philanthropy in India</td>
<td>Arnav Kapur, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (Moderator)&lt;br&gt;Aparna Dua, Asha Impact&lt;br&gt;Nimesh Sumati, Caring Friends&lt;br&gt;Jashodhara Dasgupta, National Foundation for India</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45 a.m. – 12:45 a.m.</td>
<td>High impact philanthropy and the ecosystem</td>
<td>Prabhat Pani, Tata Trusts (Moderator)&lt;br&gt;Meenakshi Batra, Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) India&lt;br&gt;Priya Naik, Samhita Social Ventures&lt;br&gt;Vishal Kapoor, Dasra</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:45 a.m. – 13:15 a.m.</td>
<td>Interactive session on use of evidence in philanthropy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13:15 a.m. onwards</td>
<td>Networking lunch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

The 2019 Bain Philanthropy Report\(^1\) showed that social sector funding has grown at a pace of 11% over the past five years. While the contribution of the government remains the largest, 6% of national gross domestic product (GDP), private philanthropy’s growth rate of 15% has outstripped that of public funding, at 10%. Therefore, the financial support contributed by domestic corporations and individual philanthropists is integral to enable India’s progress towards achieving the SDGs by 2030.

The event, which saw participation from over 50 representatives from philanthropy, a spectrum of multilaterals, the private sector, foundations, and civil society organizations, brought together key actors from within the social sector to discuss the increasing role of philanthropy in financing for development and the importance of collaboration in addressing India’s most pressing social, economic, and environmental challenges. An essential part of ensuring effective alignment is to embrace the SDG framework as a shared narrative that all stakeholders in the development ecosystem can rally around, to set objectives and measure progress collectively.

Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP India delivered the opening address for India’s second annual SDGPP forum by reiterating the opportunity that philanthropic contributions to funds for development presents, and sharing stories of the SDGPPs success in convening public and private actors around critical issues in other countries, including Ghana, Colombia, and Kenya. As a global initiative currently operational in 8 countries, the SDGPP connects foundations and philanthropists with knowledge and networks that can deepen collaboration, leverage resources and sustain impact.

She emphasized that achieving the 17 SDGs will require deep commitment and trillions of dollars in investment, along with innovative ideas and approaches. Investment from the private sector into social development is an important piece to solve the financial puzzle, particularly when it comes to mobilizing capital to maximize development spending in priority areas for the government.

She stated that India is at the cusp of an unprecedented opportunity and together, we can transform entire sectors through disruptive partnerships, unlock financial resources and fuel innovation for social and sustainable development at a much greater scale than ever before. The SDGPP can support India in building meaningful and lasting state-philanthropy partnerships.

The SDGPP and UNDP, in collaboration with Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors, developed two guides on “Philanthropy and the SDGs”. The first one is a “Getting Started” guide and the second one is a toolkit to advise on “Practical Tools for Alignment”. These publications provide advice on how to align the interventions to SDGs. Most philanthropic funders will see that their missions are affirmed by the SDGs, whether they fund domestically or internationally. That is because virtually every cause that philanthropists and foundations support is included in the ambitious scope of the SDGs, which encompass a wide range of issues in the economic, social, and environmental spheres.
Sonvi Khanna from Dasra remarked on the importance of realising that philanthropists cannot and should not attempt to work on their own on issues at the scale that India demands, and encouraged adopting a field approach and leveraging complementary skillsets and partners, through the methods laid out in the toolkit.

Suruchi Aggarwal from UNDP reiterated that the SDGs were signed by 193 countries in September 2015 at the UN and serve as a common language, universal framework, and an impetus to adopt a systems approach to solving problems. She laid out some of the frameworks included in the guides, including a three-pronged approach through which organisations can contextualise their work within the SDGs, through planning, assessing progress, and reporting and using data. She also discussed a pathway for collaboration and addressed challenges in working with the SDGs.

There are a number of tools available to facilitate SDG alignment, including the SDGPP’s SDG Indicator Wizard\(^2\), which helps organisations identify the goals and indicators their work is most aligned with, as well as the SDG India Index\(^3\) developed by the National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog), designed to provide an aggregate assessment of the performance of all Indian States and Union Territories, and to help leaders and changemakers evaluate their performance on social, economic and environmental parameters. The SDG India Index does this by tracking the progress of all the States and Union Territories on a set of 62 national indicators, measuring their progress on the outcomes of interventions and schemes of the Government of India.

Funders may also find that the SDGs can help them frame issues, connect with other changemakers, strengthen partnerships, and communicate their progress. Foundations and their grantee partners can take part in this global effort by contributing funds, implementing programs, sharing knowledge, and aligning their objectives with those of the SDGs.

---

\(^2\) SDGPP. SDG Indicator Wizard. Available at https://www.sdgphilanthropy.org/sdg-indicator-wizard

Panel 1: The changing face of philanthropy in India

Philanthropy has emerged as one of the most significant catalysts in the implementation of the SDGs worldwide. Philanthropic frameworks have moved beyond simple funding to leveraging cross-sectoral resources, setting long-term goals, igniting scalable social and technological innovation, and building creative partnerships for impact.

Arnav Kapur (moderator)  Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation (BMGF)  
Aparna Dua  Asha Impact  
Nimesh Sumati  Caring Friends  
Jashodhara Dasgupta  National Foundation for India (NFI)

Arnav Kapur led the panellists in a discussion on how the growth and increased formalisation of philanthropy in India has affected the development ecosystem. Retail giving has also risen steadily with the advent of new platforms to facilitate individual donations of all sizes. The panellists discussed how the typical approach has shifted from chequebook, to strategic, to impact investing, and beyond. More thoughtful approaches are becoming the norm, with an emphasis on outcomes through reporting and data.
Nimish Sumati attributed this to the new generation of funders being more exposed to systematic approaches. He pointed out that implementing non-government organisations (NGOs) are not always able to adapt to these requirements, and on the other hand, ‘gross field time’ spent by most philanthropists is low, leading to a limited understanding of practical challenges faced at the grassroots level. The panel agreed that there needs to be a stronger bridge between these organisations, longer-term engagement, and more effort placed on understanding the needs of implementing organisations – from institution strengthening and talent sourcing, to more effective communication strategies – to improve the already high levels of innovation organisations conduct in local contexts and build the visibility of that work.

Approaches have also evolved from being set on working within a specific domain – education, sanitation, or livelihoods – to conceptualising the bigger picture. Jashodhara Dasgupta spoke on NFI’s approach, which goes beyond being cause-specific to take on cross-cutting priorities, with a focus on strengthening civil society as a whole to give rise to better governance and more inclusive growth, which is very relevant to SDG 16: Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.

When discussing the key role of partnerships in building effective programs, the panellists agreed that building trust and understanding between stakeholders within government, philanthropy, civil society organisations, and communities is essential. More research and advocacy also need to be done to ease collaboration, for example, within CSR, the Companies Act 2013 encourages companies to collaborate and drive projects together, but requires reporting to be done on an individual basis. In addition, it would be beneficial to explore how funding channels could be managed better to
ensure that partnerships give rise to scale and facilitate innovation. Aparna Dua explained that Asha Impact is exploring opportunities to scale inclusive business models, expand the scope for impact investment, and building support for social entrepreneurship, which is key in driving innovation within the sector.

This increased emphasis on outcomes reporting gives rise to an even more pressing need for all actors within the development ecosystem to further align to the SDGs and to have a common understanding of the data that is relevant for collection and analysis, and benchmarks to refer to. Many organisations are also working on developing standard measures for impact, since its definition is often so subjective. The panel discussed examples of community dynamics and infrastructural issues within particular contexts that can pose obstacles to the intended outcomes of a particular intervention, and the importance of ensuring last-mile delivery and verification.

**Panel 2: High impact philanthropy and the ecosystem**

A panel which saw deliberations that mainly focused on increasing measures to engage and empower Indian corporations, foundations, and individual donors, to support evidence-backed, highly effective interventions and non-for-profits.

**Prabhat Pani** (moderator)  
Tata Trusts

**Meenakshi Batra**  
Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) India

**Priya Naik**  
Samhita Social Ventures

**Vishal Kapoor**  
Dasra
Prabhat Pani led this panel, which was composed of a selection of people and organisations that work at the intersection of various stakeholders, and act as intermediaries to maximise impact. The panellists discussed the recent success of Indian philanthropy, including the achievement of a CSR spend upwards of INR 50,000 Cr by 21,000 eligible companies, against the expected 16,000, all within the past five years since the inclusion of Schedule VII to the Companies Act 2013. However, despite the private sector's increased contribution to the endeavour, India is still resource-scarce considering the magnitude and breadth of its development roadmap.

In light of this scarcity, Priya Naik from Samhita spoke on the importance of focusing on the efficacy of particular policies, programs, and interventions, to ensure that the available resources are being invested productively. While up until now the focus has generally been on evaluating and improving the credibility and capability of civil society organisations, there needs to be increased dialogue around interpreting and using evidence on what actually works and rallying multiple stakeholders to invest collectively in those interventions.

Within the discussion on collaboratives, of particular note was the emphasis on engaging with the government, not just in project transition or handover phases, but from conception, to ensure that project models are ones that the government can take on and support to sustainability. This requires a shift in the approach, to see all initiatives at some level for and by the government, so that public involvement and ownership is built in. Vishal Kapoor explained that the capability to do this is now a critical tenet of Dasra’s due diligence framework for evaluating NGOs. Prabhat Pani brought up the Government of India’s Transformation of Aspirational Districts program as a good example of the use of data and management information systems to measure and rank progress and inform strategy for some of the most under-developed areas in the country.
The panellists agreed on the need for increased dialogue and discussion about what alignment to the SDGs means in practice. Meenakshi Batra from CAF India stressed the need for more practice-oriented language on what counts as a quality contribution towards the goals, and enable co-learning within the sector to do so. Priya Naik brought up the need to incentivise corporate leaders to respond to, adopt, and embrace the framework by framing it as a global reporting framework that can bring visibility and acclaim to individuals and brands, and perhaps institutionalising it as a mandatory reporting format.

**Interactive session on the use of evidence in philanthropy**

This session, led by Samhita’s Anushree Parekh and Anshula Madhavan, laid out the case for the more systematic and purposeful use of robust forms of evidence to guide decision making in philanthropy. They started the session by showcasing a series of research questions from various studies, evaluating the impact of particular approaches and engaging with the audience members through a show of hands voting system on hypotheses they guessed were proven true. The diversity of responses in the audience demonstrated that outcomes are not always intuitive, and it is important to consult the results of rigorous scientific studies to inform where funds can be best used.

Anushree and Anshula introduced High Impact Philanthropy (HIP), a joint initiative with The Life You Can Save Foundation. HIP aims to inspire and empower philanthropic donors and/or organizations in India to support evidence-backed, highly effective interventions that advance the nation’s development goals.
Closing remarks

Suruchi Aggarwal from UNDP thanked everyone for being a part of the second successful event of the SDGPP. She said, “We are at a very inspiring stage for philanthropy in India, where an increasing number of philanthropists are joining the cadre of structured and strategic philanthropy, irrespective of their quantum of giving.” It was highlighted that the SDGPP is an innovative vehicle to enable partnerships in global development to bring about transformational collaboration and strengthen the role of philanthropy in the 2030 Agenda. Through this initiative, philanthropy is increasingly adopting a systemic and inclusive approach to funding and policy work, shifting from fragmented individual projects to long-term collaborative efforts in line with national priorities and the SDGs.

The event saw a number of compelling discussions on the changing face on philanthropy and its potential for charging the development space within India with financial support, innovation, and rigour, supported by data. This is all underwritten into a larger, comprehensive narrative by the SDG framework, which anchors all efforts for greater inclusive growth for the country.