

DIGNITY RISING

ANNUAL REPORT

2025- 26'



Head
Held
High

FOREWORD

A Bharat That Builds Itself

Something has shifted in India this past year. Growth is no longer the question. The question is: Who gets to shape it?

Across the country, technology is moving at a pace that leaves no one untouched. Artificial Intelligence is no longer confined to labs and boardrooms. It is reaching into villages, small towns, and the everyday lives of ordinary people reshaping how they learn, work, and imagine what is possible. But technology alone does not transform. Agency does.

At Head Held High, our work has always been about enabling people to move from aspiration to agency. What we are witnessing today is something deeper a generation that is not waiting to be included. It is stepping forward to shape its own future.

We invite you to join this revolution!

Over the past year, three interconnected initiatives have anchored that belief in practice:

YouGRAF

YouGRAF is our response to the question of capabilities and opportunities at scale. It helps us understand the Growth, Resilience, Aspirations and Future-Readiness of our youth and creates pathways for young people from undeserved communities to access dignified, sustainable work not as beneficiaries of a system, but as participants who are building one. YouGRAF recognizes that growth is not just an economic outcome, it is the foundation of self-worth, voice, and belonging.

Managing
Trustee
Head Held High
Foundation

Madan Padaki

JanAI

JanAI is our commitment to ensuring that Artificial Intelligence does not become another tool of exclusion. We are working to make AI a capability that can be built, not just accessed by young people from small towns and rural communities who bring with them the lived experience of Bharat. When they engage with these tools as creators and problem-solvers, innovation begins to reflect the realities most of India knows.

Rubanomics

Rubanomics challenges a deeper assumption that rural and urban are separate worlds. They are not. They are part of one connected system. India cannot progress if opportunity remains concentrated at one end of that system. Rubanomics insists that opportunity must flow, adapt, and take root within local ecosystems creating value where people already are, not where systems assume they should be.

Together, these three efforts represent a fundamental shift in how we work. From skilling to capability. From access to ownership. From programmes to ecosystems. This is not an inclusion story. It is a sovereignty story. A story about individuals and communities who have the confidence, tools, and agency to participate fully in shaping the economy not on someone else's terms, but on their own. The most resilient progress will not come from systems built for people. It will come from systems built by them. That is the power emerging across Bharat today.

Into that Heaven of Freedom, my Father let my Country awake!



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DIGNITY RISING

From Poverty to Abundance

For millions of families across rural India, poverty has never been defined only by low income. It is experienced through limited opportunity, fragile livelihoods, restricted agency and constant vulnerability to disruption. It is reflected in the aspirations young people suppress because they believe opportunity exists elsewhere. It is visible in the entrepreneurial energy of women that remains disconnected from markets, capital and networks. It is present in communities whose talent and potential continue to remain underleveraged. Yet across India's districts, a powerful transformation is beginning to emerge.

Rural youth are preparing for careers in the future economy. Women are building enterprises connected to digital marketplaces. Communities are experimenting with new forms of entrepreneurship and technology adoption. Artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure are beginning to dissolve barriers that once separated rural citizens from opportunity.

India's next phase of growth will not be shaped only by metropolitan economies. It will increasingly be shaped by districts, small towns and rural communities participating meaningfully in the economy of tomorrow.

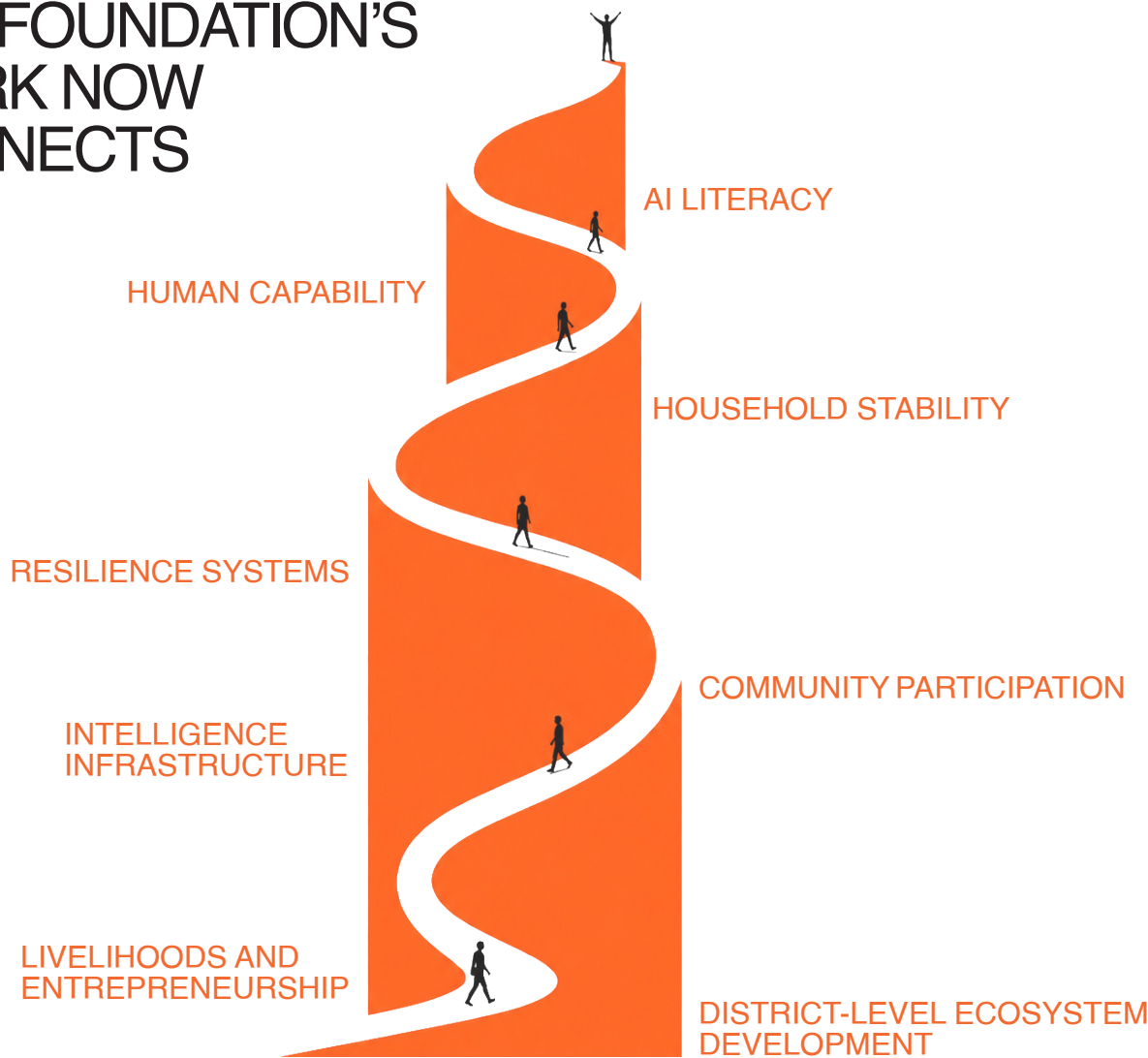
This year's theme is Dignity Rising which reflects this transition.

Over the past decade, Head Held High Foundation has evolved from delivering programmes to building integrated systems of economic mobility for rural India. This report documents a year of deepening systems transformation.

It is a story of individuals gaining confidence and communities building resilience. Women stepping into economic leadership. Rural youth engaging with emerging technologies. And ecosystems beginning to create pathways from poverty toward prosperity.

Because the goal is not simply poverty alleviation. The goal is to build a future where dignity, opportunity, intelligence and abundance become accessible to everyone.

THE FOUNDATION'S WORK NOW CONNECTS



WHAT IS HEAD HELD HIGH FOUNDATION

Head Held High Foundation is an organisation dedicated to building pathways of economic mobility for rural India. Founded on the belief that poverty is not merely a lack of income but a limitation on agency, participation, confidence, and opportunity, the Foundation works to enable rural youth and women to participate fully in the economic life of the nation.

Over the years, Head Held High Foundation has evolved from implementing capability-building programmes into designing integrated systems that connect:

- Human development
- Employment pathways
- Entrepreneurship ecosystems
- Intelligence infrastructure
- Digital access
- Resilience systems
- Household stability
- Long-term economic participation

Today, the Foundation works across 22 states and 161 districts, partnering with governments, institutions, technology ecosystems, philanthropic organisations, market actors and communities.

The goal is not simply to train individuals or create isolated livelihoods. The goal is to build ecosystems where economic mobility becomes possible at scale.

By combining human development with market access, emerging technologies, and household resilience, HHH is helping shape a future where rural citizens are not passive recipients of development but active participants in a thriving economy.

DIGNITY AS DEVELOPMENT

At the core of Head Held High Foundation lies a simple but transformative belief:

Development must restore dignity.

For millions of rural youth and women, poverty is experienced not only as economic deprivation but also as a gradual erosion of confidence, aspiration and choice.

Young people often grow up believing opportunity exists somewhere else. Women with entrepreneurial potential remain disconnected from systems that enable participation. Families continue navigating economic uncertainty that can reverse years of progress.

Traditional development approaches frequently address these challenges through fragmented interventions such as short-term training, financial support or isolated livelihood programmes. While, these approaches often fail to address the deeper systems that determine whether individuals can sustainably move out of poverty. Head Held High Foundation approaches development differently.

The Foundation focuses on restoring agency and the ability of individuals to imagine, pursue and sustain a better future.

Agency emerges when people:

- Gain confidence in their abilities
- Access meaningful economic opportunities
- Participate in future economies
- Strengthen household stability
- Build resilience against uncertainty
- Become active contributors within communities

When these conditions come together, development stops being something delivered to people. It becomes something created with them. This philosophy, dignity as development continues to shape every aspect of Head Held High Foundation's work.



Vision

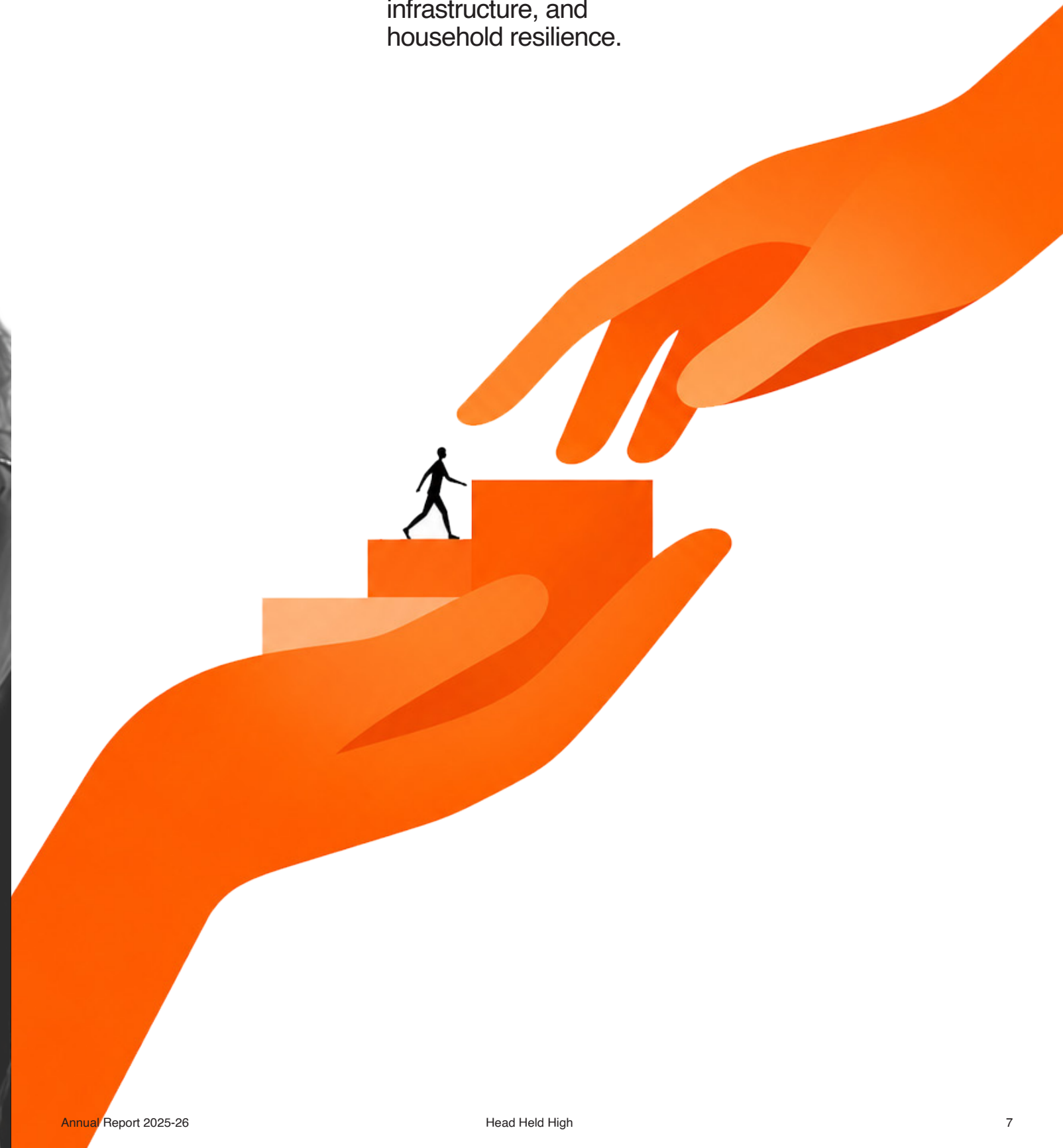
To enable a world where every individual, regardless of geography or background, has the confidence, opportunity, intelligence, and support required to live with dignity and prosperity.

Mission

To build systems of economic mobility for rural youth and women by connecting human development, livelihood pathways, entrepreneurship ecosystems, intelligence infrastructure, and household resilience.

Purpose

To ensure that the next generation of India's growth story is inclusive, distributed, and rooted in the aspirations of rural communities.



THE ICOR FRAMEWORK

Building Economic Mobility Systems for Rural India

Over the past decade, Head Held High Foundation has evolved from delivering isolated programmes into building integrated systems of economic mobility. This evolution emerged from a simple realization: Poverty is rarely caused by a single constraint.

A young person may possess talent but lack confidence. An entrepreneur may have products but no access to markets. A household may experience rising income but remain vulnerable to disruption. A community may hold aspiration but lack access to knowledge, technology, and opportunity. Economic mobility therefore requires systems that address multiple dimensions simultaneously. This understanding initially shaped the COR framework:

- Capability
- Opportunity
- Resilience

But as the Foundation’s work deepened across districts and communities, another insight became increasingly clear: Capability, opportunity, and resilience are strengthened by intelligence, participation, and collective systems. This led to the evolution of the ICOR framework.

Capability

Capability is the foundation of mobility.

It focuses on helping individuals build:

- Confidence
- Communication
- Digital readiness
- Future skills
- Adaptability
- Agency
- Leadership

The Foundation’s capability systems enable individuals not only to earn, but to lead, adapt, and grow.

Opportunity

Opportunity transforms capability into participation. This dimension focuses on enabling access to:

- Employment
- Entrepreneurship
- Markets
- Digital ecosystems
- Intelligence infrastructure
- Livelihood systems
- Local economic participation

Opportunity ensures that aspiration can translate into sustained economic activity.

Resilience

Economic mobility cannot be sustained without stability. Resilience focuses on helping households withstand:

- Financial shocks
- Livelihood disruptions
- Health emergencies
- Environmental vulnerability
- Economic uncertainty

This dimension strengthens longterm household stability and protects progress over time.

Intelligence Layer

The “I” dimension acts as the force multiplier across the entire framework. It strengthens capability, opportunity and resilience through four interconnected dimensions.

Youth Voices

Bringing the aspirations and lived realities of rural youth into programme design and systems thinking.

Community

Creating place-based systems rooted in local participation and collective ownership.

Intelligence

Democratizing access to technology, knowledge, and AI through JanAI and emerging intelligence ecosystems.

Impact

Building measurable evidence systems that track transformation and economic mobility. Together, these systems enable movement:

- From vulnerability to stability
- From stability to aspiration
- From aspiration to prosperity

BUILDING HUMAN POTENTIAL

Make India Capable

Economic mobility begins long before income rises. It begins when individuals believe their future can be different. Across rural India, young people possess ambition, intelligence, and determination, yet many lack exposure, guidance, confidence, and structured pathways into opportunity.

Make India Capable is Head Held High Foundation's flagship capability programme focused on enabling rural youth, especially first-generation learners to transition into confident participants in the workforce and the future economy. The programme focuses on:

- Life and work capability
- Communication and confidence
- Foundational digital skills
- Workplace readiness
- Career navigation
- Employability pathways
- Entrepreneurship readiness

Capability building extends beyond employment. It creates agency, aspiration and future readiness. The transformation is often deeply personal. Young people who once viewed opportunity as distant begin seeing themselves as active participants in the economy, confidence grows, identity shifts, possibility becomes visible.

"I CANNOT"
"I CAN"
"I WILL"



ANTARPRERNA

Women to Wealth Creators

Antarprerna enables rural women to become entrepreneurs, income generators, and economic decision makers. Within the ICOR framework, Antarprerna represents capability translated into ownership and participation.

The initiative focuses on:

- Entrepreneurial mindset
- Financial literacy
- Enterprise capability
- Incubation support
- Growth readiness
- Leadership development
- Digital market participation

By strengthening entrepreneurial confidence and economic participation, Antarprerna helps women move from aspiration toward enterprise ownership and long-term financial agency.

Beyond enterprise outcomes, the programme strengthens women's leadership within households and communities.

It enables women not only to contribute economically, but to shape decisions, influence aspirations, and participate more actively in local development systems.



BUILDING INTELLIGENCE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR RURAL INDIA

JanAI

Artificial intelligence is rapidly reshaping how people learn, work, communicate, and participate in the economy. Yet for rural India, the greatest challenge is not ambition. It is access. Access to tools. Access to intelligence. Access to knowledge. Access to guidance. Access to future participation.

JanAI was launched to democratize access to artificial intelligence for rural citizens. Within the ICOR framework, JanAI represents the evolution of opportunity ensuring that rural communities are able to participate meaningfully in the emerging intelligence economy.

JanAI recognizes that intelligence infrastructure cannot remain concentrated within urban ecosystems if India's growth story is to become truly inclusive. If previous generations used infrastructure to connect citizens to roads, electricity, and markets, this generation must ensure access to intelligence itself. Because in the emerging economy, intelligence will increasingly determine participation.

The initiative focuses on:

- AI literacy
- Community learning systems
- AI ambassadors
- Localized AI adoption
- AI-enabled entrepreneurship
- AI-enabled livelihoods
- Digital inclusion



UNDERSTANDING THE ASPIRATIONS OF BHARAT'S YOUTH

YouGRAF

Effective development begins with understanding people.

Their aspirations. Their anxieties. Their motivations. Their relationship with opportunity and the future. YouGRAF Youth Growth, Resilience, Aspirations, and Future Readiness is Head Held High Foundation's national youth intelligence framework designed to understand how rural and small-town youth navigate education, livelihoods, technology, and emerging economic systems.

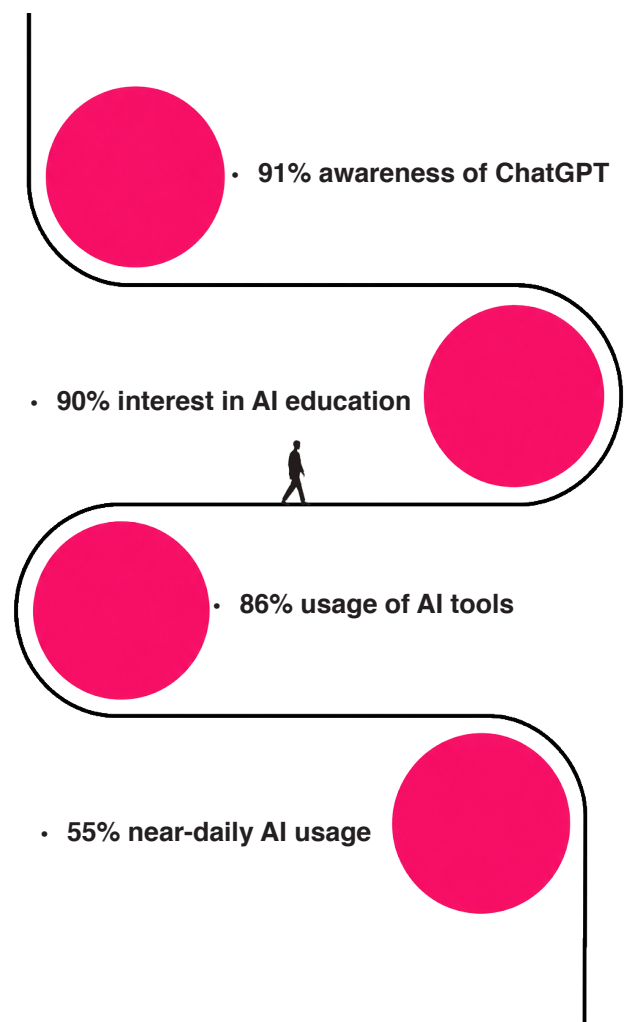
Within the ICOR framework, YouGRAF acts as the intelligence layer informing future opportunity systems. The YouGRAF JanAI AI Study became one of India's first large-scale studies exploring how rural youth engage with artificial intelligence. The study surveyed 3,005 young people between the ages of 18 and 29 across semi-rural and small-town India.

The findings revealed a generation that is:

- Highly aspirational
- Digitally curious
- Eager to participate in the future economy
- Actively experimenting with AI tools

These findings are helping shape the Foundation's AI literacy pathways, future-readiness systems, and youth development strategies.

More importantly, they reveal a critical insight: **Rural youth are not disconnected from the future. They are actively reaching toward it.**



BUILDING STABILITY ACROSS HOUSEHOLDS

MARG

Economic mobility cannot be sustained without stability. Even when income begins to rise, households often remain vulnerable to:

- Illness
- Financial shocks
- Livelihood disruptions
- Climate uncertainty
- Emergencies

Head Held High Foundation addresses this challenge through MARG Mera Aspiration and Response Generation.

Within the ICOR framework, MARG strengthens the resilience dimension by helping households understand vulnerability as a multidimensional reality.

MARG enables households to assess wellbeing across dimensions including:

- Financial stability
- Education
- Healthcare
- Social protection
- Livelihood security

Environmental conditions based on these assessments, families develop structured pathways toward long-term stability. Through:

- Mentoring
- Entitlement access
- Financial inclusion
- Resilience systems
- Community support structures

households are able to build buffers that protect progress over time.

MARG also enables the Foundation to generate household-level intelligence that informs programme design, targeting, and long-term economic planning. Because prosperity is not only about rising income. It is also about reducing vulnerability and ensuring that progress can endure.



RUBANOMICS

The Next Frontier of India's Growth

India stands at the threshold of a new economic era. For decades, rural India has largely been viewed through the lens of scarcity limited infrastructure, low productivity, migration pressures, and constrained opportunity. But across India's districts, a different reality is beginning to emerge.

Young people are building enterprises. Women are participating in digital commerce. Technology is connecting producers to markets. Entrepreneurship is expanding beyond metropolitan centers. District economies are beginning to evolve into engines of growth. What is emerging is a new economic paradigm: **Rubanomics**. Rubanomics recognizes that India's future prosperity will not be shaped only by urban economies.

It will increasingly be shaped by district ecosystems where:

- Human capability
- Entrepreneurship
- Intelligence infrastructure
- Digital connectivity
- Local production
- Resilience systems
- Converge.

This transformation requires more than isolated interventions.

It requires systems that connect:

- People to confidence
- Entrepreneurs to markets
- Communities to intelligence
- Households to stability

From women entrepreneurs participating in digital marketplaces to rural youth engaging with AI literacy systems through JanAI, the foundations of distributed prosperity are already emerging. Rubanomics is ultimately about reimagining where growth comes from. Not from a few concentrated urban centers. But from millions of individuals across districts participating meaningfully in the economy of tomorrow.

IMPACT & ECONOMIC VALUE

Return on Philanthropic Capital FY 2025–26

In FY 2025–26, Head Held High Foundation received INR 27.41 crore in philanthropic capital. This capital was translated into measurable household economic outcomes through two core pathways:

- Income generation
- Household resilience and social protection

During the year, the Foundation enabled 11,180 jobs with a median annual income of INR 1.44 lakh.

This generated an estimated:
INR 160.99 crore in first-year earned income

Alongside this, Head Held High Foundation enabled:
INR 227 crore in net social protection value

Together, these interventions generated:
INR 387.99 crore

This represents:
14.2x Economic Value Multiple
Meaning that every INR 1 contributed in philanthropic capital helped generate or unlock approximately INR 14.2 in direct household economic value.

In addition, the Foundation facilitated access to:
INR 2,710.43 crore.

In gross social protection benefits.
This demonstrates the ability of philanthropic capital to unlock public systems value at scale. The Foundation also witnessed measurable household economic uplift.

Median daily household income increased from:

- INR 394 per day
- To INR 821 per day

Annualized household income increased from approximately INR **1.44 lakh to INR 3 lakh per year.**

When social protection value is included, adjusted household resources increased to approximately INR 3.18 lakh annually.

These outcomes represent more than financial improvement.

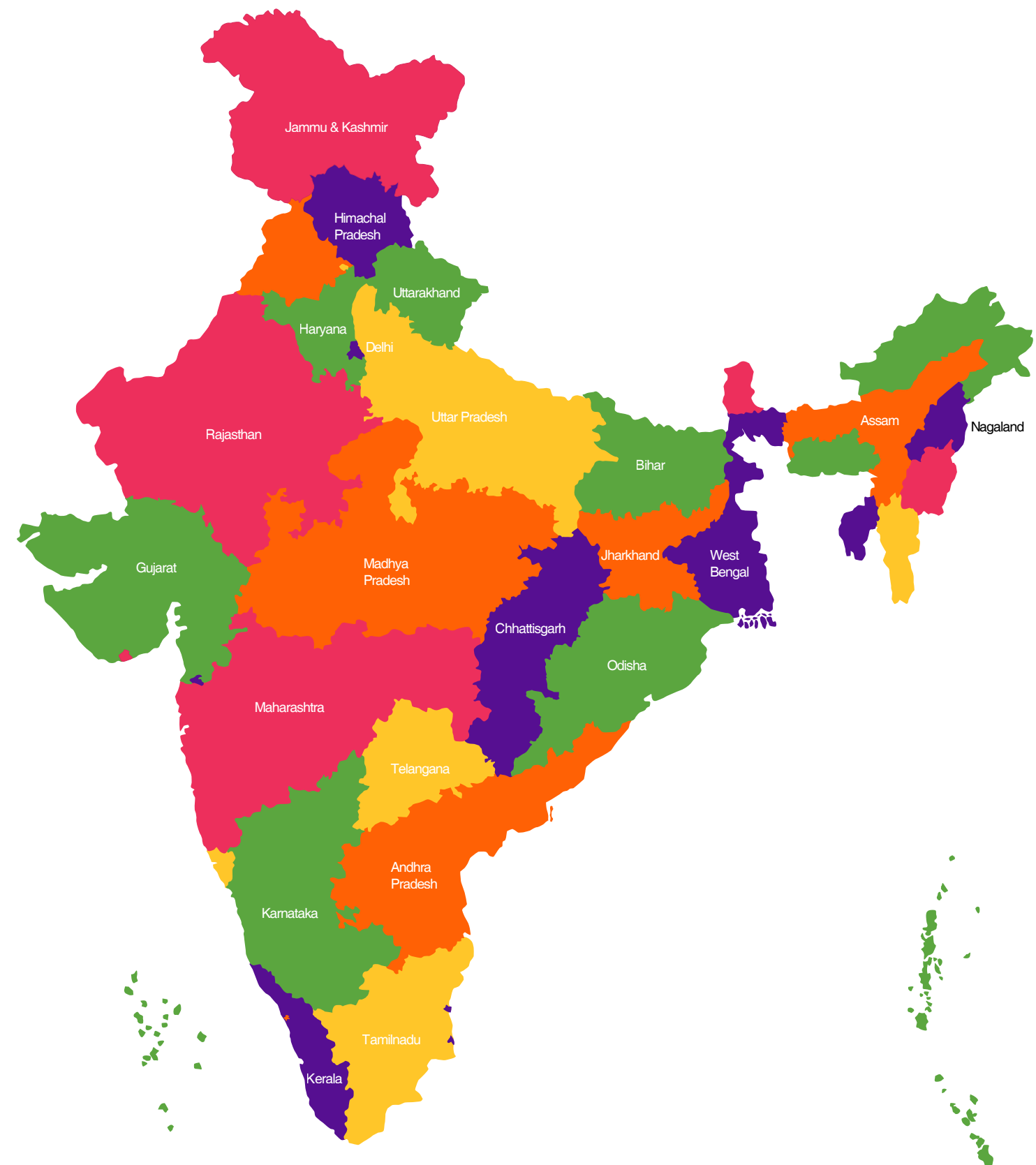
They represent movement:

- From vulnerability toward stability
- From instability toward resilience
- From survival toward possibility

Today, the work of Head Held High Foundation spans:

- 22 states
- 161 districts
- More than 800,000 households

Across these geographies, the Foundation continues building integrated systems of economic mobility that connect capability, opportunity, intelligence, and resilience. The Foundation's work increasingly measures success not only through programme delivery, but through measurable economic value creation for households and communities.



RETURN ON PHILANTHROPIC CAPITAL FY 25-26

Raised 27.41 crores in philanthropic capital

- Enabled 11,180 jobs
- A median annual income of INR 1.4 lakhs
- Created a first year income of INR 160.99 crore

Facilitated access of INR 2710.43 crore in gross social protection benefits

- Median daily household income moved from INR 394 to INR 821
- Baseline household income increased from 1.44 lakh p.a to 3 lakh p.a
- Increase in family household income by an additional to INR 1.56 lakh p.a

Enabled INR 227 crore in net social protection for households

- Estimated INR 87.09 crore in household economic value
- Represents a 14.2x economic value multiple
- Every INR 1 contributed helped generate INR 14.2 in every household

STORIES OF DIGNITY

When Possibility Becomes Personal

Behind every number in this report is a human story. A young person discovering the confidence to pursue a career. A woman building an enterprise that changes the trajectory of her family. A household finding stability after years of uncertainty.

These stories remind us that development is not an abstract concept. It is experienced in the everyday decisions people make when they begin to believe that their future can be different from their past.

Finding Confidence Through Learning

In a small town where opportunities often feel distant, Rakesh once believed that his future would follow the same path as many others around him with limited options and uncertain work.

Through Head Held High Foundation's youth capability programs, he was introduced to new skills, career guidance and mentorship that helped him see possibilities beyond what he had imagined.

Learning to communicate confidently, explore digital tools and think about his career with clarity transformed his outlook. What once felt like a distant dream began to feel achievable.

Today, Rakesh is pursuing employment opportunities that align with his interests and capabilities. More importantly, he carries a renewed sense of confidence. For him, the most important change was not simply acquiring skills. It was discovering that he had the ability to shape his own future.

The Deeper Human Story Behind the Numbers

The report also captures several collective human transformations across communities:

- "A young person who once believed their future lay elsewhere begins building a career within their own district."
- "A woman who started with a small enterprise begins reaching customers across the country."
- "A household that once lived with constant uncertainty begins planning for the future."

The report frames these as small but profound shifts that, when repeated across thousands of lives, begin reshaping local economies and redefining what prosperity can look like in rural India.

A Woman Entrepreneur Finds Her Market

For years, Meena supported her family through small-scale home based work. While she possessed the skills and determination to grow her enterprise, reaching customers beyond her immediate community seemed impossible.

Through HHH's entrepreneurship programs, Meena received training in business management, mentorship from experienced facilitators and support to connect with digital marketplaces.

Gradually, her small enterprise began to expand. Products that were once sold only within her neighbourhood began reaching customers beyond her town.

With each order fulfilled, Meena's confidence grew. Today, her enterprise contributes significantly to her household income and she has begun mentoring other women who are exploring entrepreneurship. Her journey reflects the power of opportunity when markets become accessible.

Discovering the Power of Technology: A JanAI Learner's Story

For many rural youth, technology once seemed distant and complex. Through initiatives such as JanAI, young people are discovering that tools like artificial intelligence can help them learn faster, explore ideas, and solve everyday problems.

One participant described AI as: "A teacher that is always available."

Whether it was preparing for exams, improving language skills, or understanding new concepts, AI became a resource that made learning feel significantly less intimidating. What mattered most was not the technology itself, but the confidence it created.

When young people realise that knowledge is within reach, they begin to see themselves differently — as learners, creators, and innovators. And with that shift, entirely new possibilities begin to open.



ECOSYSTEM & PARTNERSHIPS

Transforming rural economies requires collaboration across institutions that shape opportunity.

Head Held High Foundation works with:

- Governments
- Philanthropic organisations
- Technology ecosystems
- Educational institutions
- Entrepreneurship networks
- Digital commerce platforms
- Innovation partners
- Community systems

Together, these collaborations strengthen the systems required for inclusive economic mobility at scale.

THE ROAD AHEAD

CEO Note

This year marked a quiet but decisive shift in our journey. At the Head Held High Foundation, we have always worked to build economic mobility through capability, opportunity, and resilience. But the world is entering a new era - one where intelligence is becoming the strongest driver of productivity, livelihoods, and inclusion.

In this context, our work is no longer only about delivering programs. It is about expanding the surface area of possibility for rural citizens so their decisions can connect to larger flows of markets, capital, knowledge, and opportunity. That is where true prosperity begins. Not in income alone, but in agency that compounds.

With the launch of JanAI, we took a step toward building intelligence infrastructure from the village upward. We see this as a foundational imperative for the next decade of development because the future will reward those who can learn faster, adapt quicker and participate meaningfully in emerging economic systems. Our focus ahead is to scale this vision through deeper district-level ecosystems, stronger integration with digital public goods and far greater convergence with government platforms so that inclusion is not an afterthought, but the architecture itself.

The next phase will demand a new kind of commitment: morally grounded capital that builds lasting infrastructure, not short-term solutions.

Because when we design systems that place dignity at the center, progress stops being incremental.

Chief Executive Officer
Head Held High
Foundation

Pankaj Singh Thakur

GRATITUDE

The journey of Head Held High Foundation has never been the work of a single institution.

It has been shaped by:

- Rural youth
- Women entrepreneurs
- Communities
- Governments
- Ecosystem partners
- Researchers
- Facilitators
- Field teams
- Supporters and donors

LOOKING FORWARD

As we look ahead, one belief continues to guide the work of Head Held High Foundation: When individuals gain the confidence to act, the opportunity to participate, the intelligence to navigate the future, and the resilience to sustain progress, they unlock possibilities far beyond their own lives. They strengthen households. They energize communities. They contribute to the progress of the nation. The work described in this report represents only one chapter in a much longer journey.

A journey toward a future where prosperity is not limited by geography and where every individual has the opportunity to live with dignity.

“Together, we will keep shaping a future where every individual has the chance to thrive.”



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OUR PATRONS

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Head
Held
High

The meaning behind our logo

The Head Held High Foundation logo represents dignity, collective progress, and human potential. At its center are abstract human forms rising upward together symbolizing aspiration, transformation, and shared progress.

The upward movement reflects the journey:

- From limitation to possibility
- From poverty to prosperity
- From vulnerability to confidence

Each figure represents individuals within a larger community:

- Young people discovering confidence
- Women building enterprises
- Families strengthening resilience
- Communities rising together

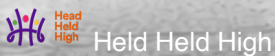
The flowing ribbon-like structure connecting the figures symbolizes interconnected growth, trust, and collective participation.

It reflects the Foundation's belief that sustainable development is never created in isolation, but through ecosystems of opportunity and shared progress.

The multiple colors within the identity represent:

- Diversity
- Optimism
- Creativity
- Abundance
- Inclusion

“Every individual
deserves the
opportunity to live
with their head held
high.”



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