



# Head Held High Impact Report 2020-2021

*Standing Together*





## Our Purpose

We are inspired by the notion of a world of abundance; a world where there is no lack, no poverty.

Our purpose is to eradicate poverty by empowering people and communities to live with dignity, one life at a time.

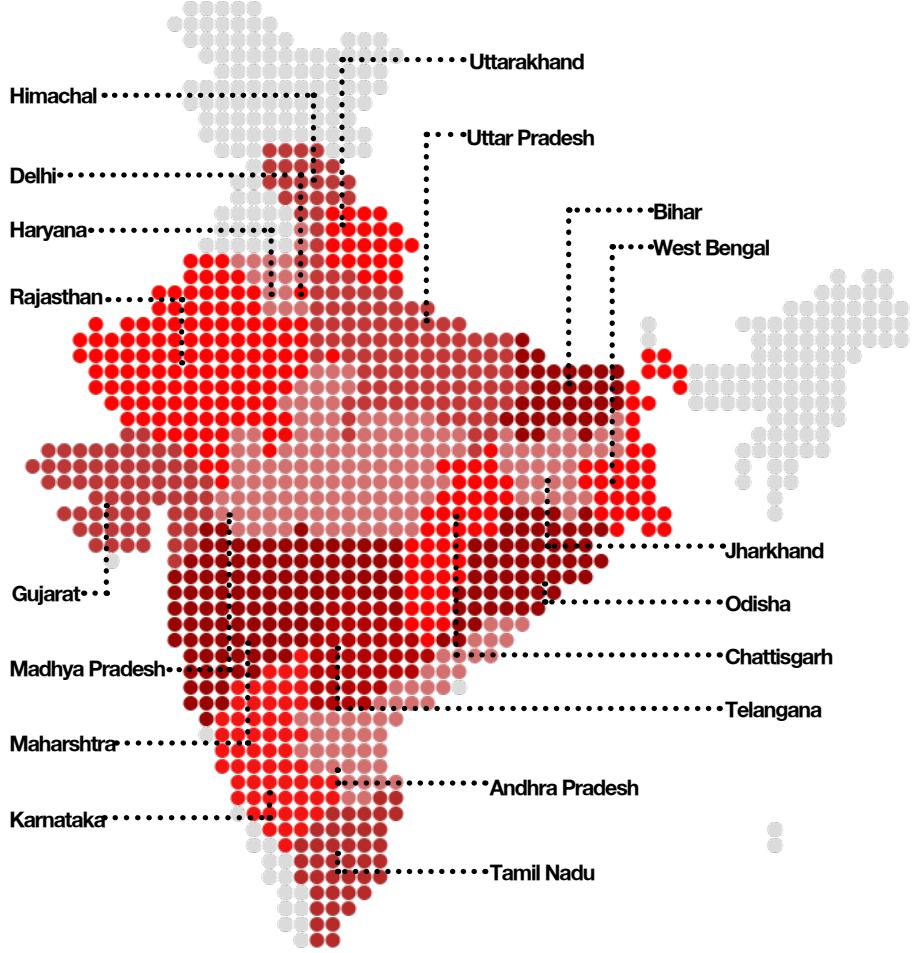
## Our Approach

Through targeted interventions -- focused on transforming rural youth, nurturing rural entrepreneurs among them, securing social benefits for them and their families, empowering women in particular, and more -- we aim to lower the barriers for those with the highest vulnerabilities and place them on pathways that lead them and their families out of poverty, and towards economic and personal growth.

An outdoor activity facilitated by HHH trainer  
Rajshekhar K in Gulbarga

# At a Glance

## Pan-India Impact



## Snapshot



## Impact highlights from last year

### 1 NO POVERTY 2 QUALITY EDUCATION 3 GENDER EQUALITY 4 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH 5 REDUCED INEQUALITIES

### Make India Capable

Youth Transformation  
Building work & life capability

- 60% of youth served came from households earning <1.2 USD per day. We enabled these households to move to a daily income of **USD 4.6**, an increase of **3.7x**.
- 81% of youth in our program achieved their aspiration (for jobs, self-employment, or higher education)
- Youth placed in jobs had an average monthly salary of INR 8000. As a result, annual household income increased by INR **95000** on average

### 1 NO POVERTY 2 REDUCED INEQUALITIES 3 GENDER EQUALITY

### Antarprerana

Making rural entrepreneurship possible

- Achieved net income of **INR 1.1 million** across six women collectives (Wadi, Manvi, Thondebhavi, Chandrapur, Tumkur, Pawagada).
- The collectives comprise 200 women. Over **80%** of them are taking part in an economic activity for the first time.
- 504 youth** were supported in starting their own rural ventures, yielding an average monthly income of **INR 4200**

### 1 NO POVERTY 2 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS

### Social Innovation

Helping Changemakers succeed

- 2000** youth were trained in social innovation, impacting SDGs
- Over **100** of the youth are being supported for incubation.
- More than **750** GAP changemakers connected to resources

# In our model, the primary force for change is the individual.

A transformed individual, when given access to viable economic pathways, can emerge from and lead their family out of poverty.

**Who?** we aim to impact



**Socio-economically disadvantaged youth and their families**

**Who?** we aim to impact



**Women in vulnerable rural communities**

- 1 Family poverty assessment and eradication plan
- 2 Enabling social security access
- 3 Youth transformation
- 4 Access to economic pathways (jobs, education, entrepreneurship)
- 5 Future ready guidance
- 6 Place-based economic opportunities
- 7 Social innovation in youth
- 8 Amplifying the impact of changemakers

**What?** are our interventions

Family level interventions

Enhanced work & life capabilities

Building agency

Access to livelihoods

Creating & enabling changemakers

**How?** our work triggers change

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Youth in our MIC programme  
(Gulbarga)

Back Cover Photo:  
Youth in Ranchi

# A note from the board



**Madan Padaki- Managing Trustee**

## Trustees & Advisors

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## Where it mattered most

At no other time in recent history has the strength of the global community been tested so acutely. By the same token, at no other time has it launched such a unified humanitarian response to a crisis.

I saw that same spirit of solidarity and empathy permeate our organization this last year -- reflected in both the team's tireless efforts on behalf of impacted communities as well as the support extended us by various partners.

Here are just some of the important ways we have stood together in these past thirteen months or more:

**Standing together for youth:** Nurturing the aspirations of youth in our programs is always a priority for us at Head Held High. It was important to us to signal to this group that we were still there for them, despite any disruption to programs on the ground. I believe that our response to the lockdown last year was swift and adaptive, leveraging remote training as well as mentoring by volunteers in partner organizations to keep our trainees focused on and hopeful about their future. In the latter part of the year, we also helped implement a large-scale digital information campaign to arm youth in less connected communities with information about job and career planning. We will continue to build on this effort in the months ahead.

**Standing together for affected communities:** We quickly recognized the degree to which the 2020 Covid shutdown adversely impacted many communities. We stepped in quickly -- using our extensive field presence to support those in dire need. For four months, the team distributed

## ....we stood together

dry ration kits in many remote and locked down districts to enable relief in these areas. And since livelihoods have taken a significant hit in these parts, our goal now is to deploy holistic interventions -- including job information, micro-entrepreneurship support, training, social security support and more -- that will help these communities build back in a stronger and more self-sustaining manner.

**Standing together as a team:** Remote work has come with its share of challenges for most people, across geographies and industries. For a team like ours that depends on being active and present on the ground, it was doubly challenging. We learnt to adapt and to develop new ways of operating through restrictions and other logistical barriers. I am proud of the way the team rose to the occasion with each person jumping in to contribute as and wherever needed. I also want to recognize the committed support and guidance provided by the other trustees during this period.

**Standing together with partners – old and new:** We are deeply grateful for the ongoing support of existing partners, many of whom have continued to stand by their commitments even when some of our activities had to be temporarily halted. Partners such as ACC Trust, Kotak Bank and HDFC who have supported our work in multiple locations need special mention here. But there are also many others who have been with us through the journey last year.

We also are excited to be collaborating with and exploring avenues for intervention with some wonderful new partners. These include UNDP (to deliver future ready guidance to youth), Swasti (to enable social security protection for many more people), UN Women (to empower more women in marginalized regions through skilling and livelihood creation) and others. With all of these partnerships, we have been able to find synergies to design programs that can be scaled to deliver great impact.

**Standing together to advance our mission:** Although the global community's energy and resources are rightfully focused on immediate pandemic needs, we also have to keep our sights trained on the potential long-term impact of this crisis on various population groups. If anything, this has convinced us that the work we are trying to do to reduce inequity and eliminate barriers for rural youth, women and other vulnerable groups is very important. I am personally very energized by the drive, commitment, design thinking and planning that I have seen within the team at Head Held High this past year. This has been a year like no other -- one that upended our plans from the previous one but left us standing on firmer ground than ever before in terms of our mission focus.

**As always, thank you for your support in this mission.**

Madan Padaki  
(on behalf of the HHH Board)

# Time to roll up our sleeves

COVID-19 is threatening to reverse some of the gains made in the war against poverty over the last two decades.

Worldwide, according to the World Bank, [an additional 150 million people may be pushed into poverty this year](#). Much of that adverse impact will be felt in India where it is likely to roll back economic and social progress made by those who already face vulnerabilities.

This places the onus on policy makers and civil society to act proactively and with a sense of urgency so that these reversals are not long-term or permanent.

According to a [UNDP assessment](#), “building long term resilience and sustainable recovery (building back better) will include universal access to services, reduced inequalities and access to opportunities.”

We try to make sure that our work holds up when measured against these yardsticks. We leverage our field presence and interventional expertise to help broaden access to resources and opportunities while simultaneously reducing inequities, particularly for women.

Every story of change is both a validation and a reminder that there is more work ahead.



**The pandemic has impacted lives and livelihoods across India**



Our teams on the ground overcame many logistical challenges while distributing dry ration kits

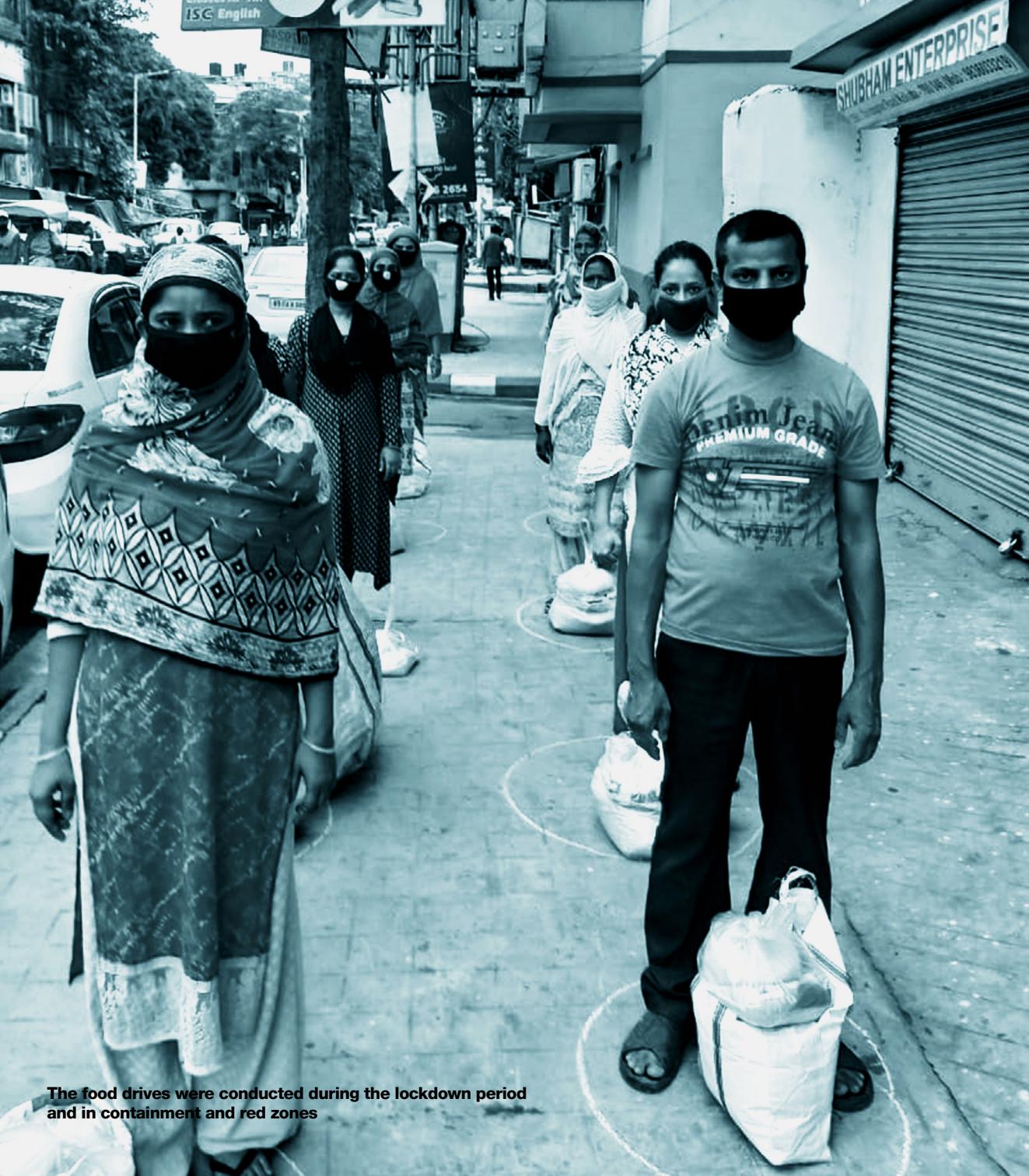
## Covid Response & Build Back

Food security for covid hit communities

The lockdown disrupted livelihoods and left many families without a source of income. Combined with the breakdown of the supply chain in many locations, these families were finding it difficult to even feed themselves on most days.

From early April and through August, our Operations team worked tirelessly to distribute dry ration kits in many affected communities across the country. In all of these locations, we were able to identify families and individuals in real need through team members on the ground and local partner networks. We started out in our active locations and with families of young trainees enrolled in the program but soon expanded the drive to other locations and to cover entire communities.

**1.2 million**  
meals supplied to families in need across the country



The food drives were conducted during the lockdown period and in containment and red zones



## Ration distribution in Mysore:

“ We started the food drive in March -- that period was probably the hardest given that we had to deal with all the lockdown effects, including mobility restrictions and limited hours of operation for provision stores. But the biggest challenge was in identifying beneficiaries. We wanted to make sure that the food kits went to those who had real need. In Mysore, there were auto and taxi drivers and many others in the badly hit sectors of tourism and hospitality. ”

There were also many domestic workers who overnight had no income. We also branched out for 60-70 km beyond Mysore to places like Mandya and Madur. In those rural parts, we had to work to build connections and then draw up a list of needy beneficiaries. We completed 8 to 9 distribution drives in Mysore and surrounding areas, covering more than 10,000 people through them. ”

Raghavendra P Y, Manager - Mobilization



At the information kiosk of the Sedam CRC

## Community Response Centres

An integrated response

**A** Community Response Centre (CRC) is designed to serve as a hub for coordinating our build back efforts. One of the main areas of focus is to help reconstruct livelihoods hit by the pandemic through sustainable and local opportunities.

Through a CRC in the vicinity, members of a given community can access information on jobs and placement options, avail of opportunities for training and skilling, explore self-employment tracks, and apply for relevant social security benefits, among other forms of support.

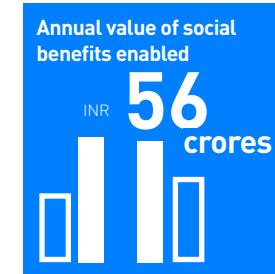
Another CRC-based program involves applying our MARG framework to assess the poverty levels of families we work with. This allows us to develop a poverty elimination plan for each family. CRCs provide physical spaces for our field teams to manage these personalized interventions.

# 15+CRCs

That's how many Community Response Centres we aim to set up in 2021-22. These will cater to 50+ communities, including several in aspirational districts.



Our teams helped those eligible to file for social security benefits through online or paper forms



## Walk-in support for Sedam area residents

Through our first CRC in Sedam, Karnataka, we have been able to reach out to more than 15 village communities in the vicinity.

When it was first set up last year, we had close to 100 people on average walking into the centre every day -- seeking information on job and skill building opportunities, or help with applying for a social security scheme.



Our field teams helped eligible applicants to submit their forms, along with supporting documents

## Connecting Families With Social Benefits

The pandemic revealed that many families in vulnerable communities did not have a contingency fund or anything to cushion them from economic shocks. And while there are several social protection schemes out there (and also special Covid-related ones) most were unaware of them or were otherwise unwilling to go through what they viewed as the cumbersome process of applying for them.

We have now made connecting people with relevant schemes a priority initiative. A big part of this initiative involves awareness building as well as active support in completing and filing applications. Our team further follows up to ensure that the benefits are received.

# 80%

of families linked to our programs were eligible for one or more schemes, according to an initial survey done by our trainers



We also enlisted youth in our programs to help family and community members with the application process

## Recognition for our approach

Our approach for enabling social security access in rural locations across India was shortlisted for special mention by Uplink, a digital platform run by the World Economic Forum to accelerate SDG impact.

Read our write-up on the Uplink platform

<https://uplink.weforum.org/uplink/s/uplink-contribution/a012o00001Xw8tHAAR/building-awareness-citizenship-for-better-social-protection-in-villages>

## The primary schemes we focus on:

- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- [Employment guarantee]
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana [Money Transfer]
- Ayushman Bharat [Health Insurance]
- Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana [Disability Insurance]
- Pradhan Mantri Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana [Life Insurance]

## Problems in access

"....The digital divide can be a barrier [in accessing social benefits]. There is a need to boost digital literacy and familiarity with online information search and application processes in order to improve access to schemes. We have been out in the field in various locations trying to spread awareness and encouraging people to claim benefits that they are entitled to. People sometimes lack faith in the system to deliver outcomes for them. Or they are unwilling to spend Rs 70 for health coverage – which is critical social protection in this environment. .."

- Ravi Kumar, Lead - Community Mobilizing/Social Security Schemes

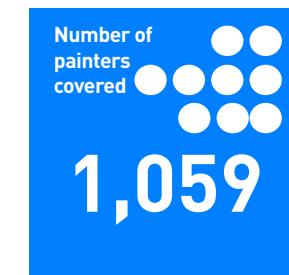


Our trainees in Haridwar conducted an awareness drive on social security schemes for members of their community

### A safety net for painters

"I get many calls from painters, mostly from Delhi and Mumbai, thanking me for helping them get access to schemes. These individuals work on construction sites under hazardous conditions. These schemes – especially life and accident insurance – can help shield them and their families from financial distress."

- Harinath Dinkar D; Manager - Training Excellence



## Enabling financial inclusion for APL's painter community

With support from Asian Paints Limited (APL), we conducted a drive to boost financial literacy and enable access to social security schemes for Asian Paints contract painters across the country. The financial literacy modules on topics such as budgeting, credit, insurance and more were delivered online and in various regional languages. Our trainers helped participants to apply for relevant schemes and followed up to ensure that they received the benefits involved.



Youth in a Make India Capable classroom

Youth living in poverty tend to replicate certain patterns that keep them stuck in the web of their circumstances. They need a scalable means of overcoming barriers in order to become empowered and socially conscious members of society, working towards a financially secure future.

## Make India Capable (MIC)

Transforming India's rural youth

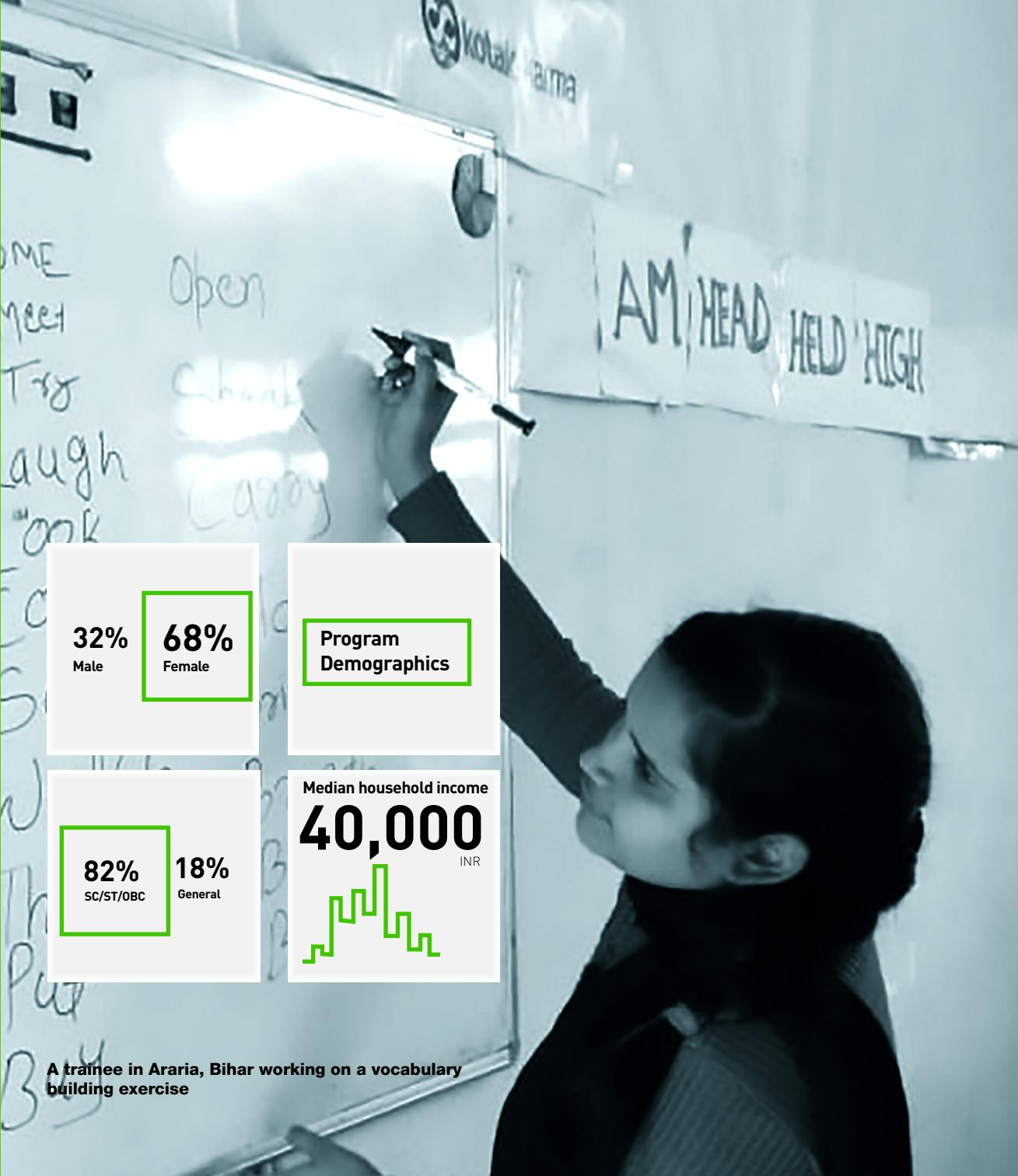
The Make India Capable (MIC) program helps vulnerable youth overcome barriers by drawing on latent capacities of self-worth, awareness, self-confidence and more. It is typically run as a six-month program to equip these youth with valuable life and work skills. Although it can be adapted for different groups and outcomes, the primary focus is on enabling transformation and on creating economic pathways for youth in the program.

What makes MIC effective:

- Solid partnerships
- A scalable model
- Empowered trainers
- A robust curriculum
- Ongoing evaluation

# 100+districts

The MIC program is conducted across India, connecting youth in rural areas and several aspirational districts to opportunities.



A trainee in Araria, Bihar working on a vocabulary building exercise

## Tracking and measuring transformation

Through our Alumni Management interviews, we are able to track the progress made by MIC trainees in their chosen career paths. We survey them at four intervals following the completion of the program in order to gauge whether they found the training useful, the progress they have made towards their career aspirations, the degree to which they feel economically empowered and the kind of support that they still seek. The responses are used as inputs for improving the curriculum or creating relevant post-program interventions.

Another tool that could potentially revolutionize the way we measure impact is the framework we developed in 2019 (with support from London Business School and Project Aasha). This utilizes data from the lives of trainees following the program to assess how they have developed on three main fronts – economic, personal and social.

Read about the impact framework and HIYT,  
<https://head-held-high.org/whitepapers/measuring-impact-through-our-program/>



## Asrina becomes a role model

Last year when we talked to Asrina Khatun, a young trainee from Jharkhand, she had just left a restrictive environment in her village to join a Shell Petrol outlet in Bangalore as an attendant. At the time, she was going through a job orientation at Shell and sounded both hopeful about the future and apprehensive of what might happen if the job didn't work out. Happily for her, it did. She proved to be a quick learner and was recognized for her work ethic and commitment on the job. Shell has recently moved her to Hyderabad. When she found out about other openings at her new outlet, Asrina convinced four other young women from her village in Dhanbad district to move and aim for a fresh start in life, just like she had done a year earlier. This is clearly a story of transformation – of a young woman who has found her footing and voice in the world at large and is leveraging these to help empower other women.



A young trainee at our Ranchi centre going through the mirror practice exercise that is part of the MIC curriculum

### How we re-opened our classrooms

"Restarting field operations for MIC following the lockdown was no easy task. We had to jump through a lot of logistical hoops, starting with getting approvals from local authorities in all the locations. We first opened up classes only for trainees who were close enough to walk to centres so that they wouldn't have to take public transport and put themselves at risk. We drew up a list of guidelines with the help of the HR team and circulated these. It was particularly challenging for our trainers who had to get permits to travel from their locations to the centres. Despite these roadblocks, we managed to ramp up our registration numbers and graduation rates by the latter part of the year."

- Amit Kumar, Head - Delivery & Operations

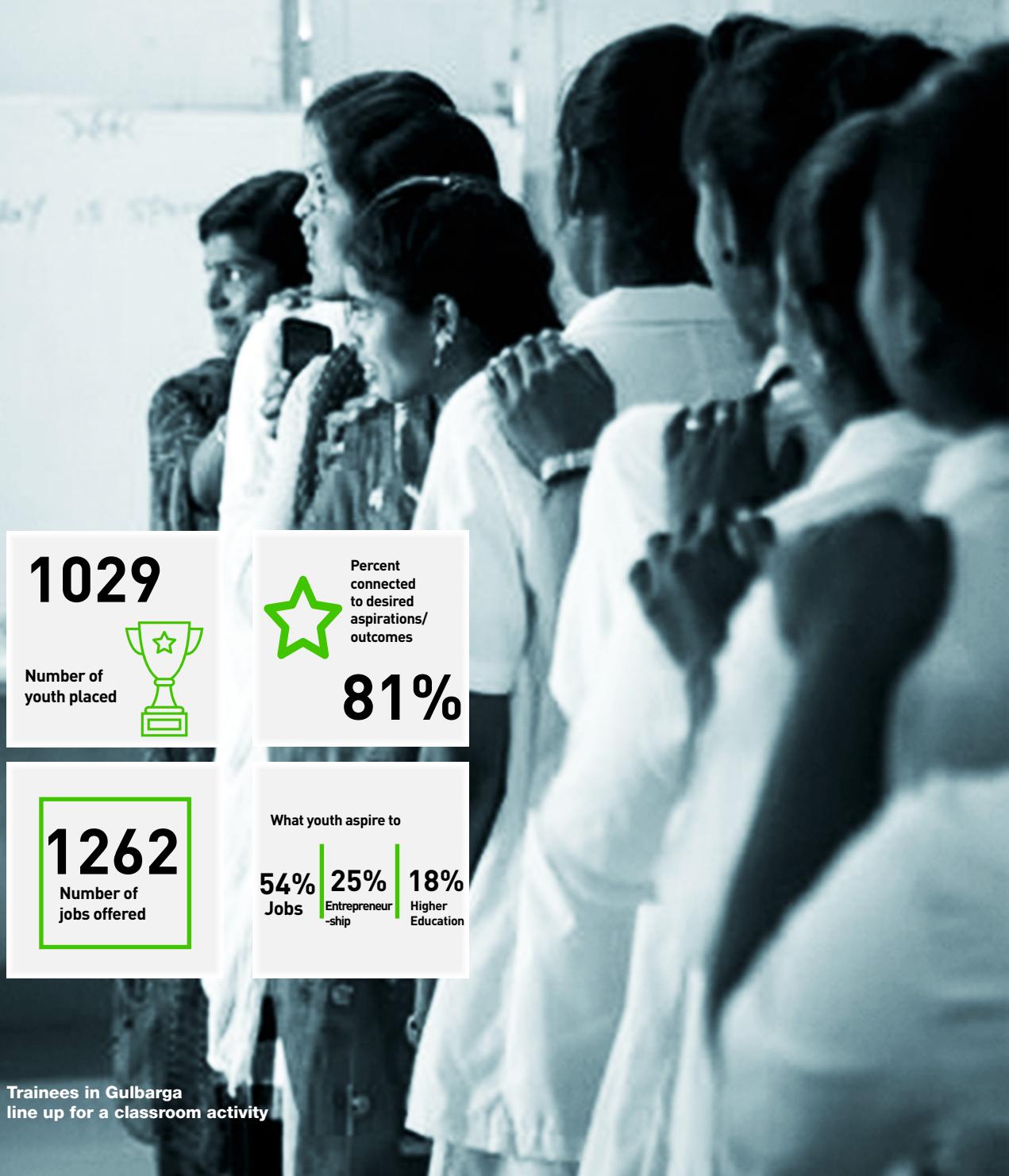
### Keeping hope alive during the lockdown

Our centres had to be closed and field operations suspended during the lockdown. We knew that this could prove to be a real setback for youth in the program. So, we continued to engage with them through phone-based training sessions. On average, this allowed us to reach 70% of trainees across batches. The sessions largely revolved around creative, hands-on and self-learning activities. This was supplemented with instructional videos on grammar, grooming, communication and other topics put together by the trainers. We also had many corporate volunteers (see pp 50-53 on Virtual Volunteering) who connected with trainees during this period in order to discuss topics such as goal setting, work etiquette, building communication skills, and more.

### Online training from the Academy

"For the first time last year, we ran online sessions of our transformative course for aspiring trainers. This has opened the door for us to leverage technology in a bigger way across MIC and our other programs. With the right platform and a digitized curriculum, there is potential to expand our reach exponentially. We have already begun that process now and I believe that it's a move in the right direction and the best way forward for the program and those it aims to impact."

- Murali Rao, Head - The Academy (Transformation/Training)



Trainees in Gulbarga  
line up for a classroom activity

### A preview of a day on the job

"In order to encourage trainees to explore opportunities with our employers who have ongoing and multiple openings, we invite these employers to conduct orientation and career guidance sessions for them. Where possible, we also arrange for visits to industrial facilities of these employers. The orientation sessions give our trainees a better understanding of job roles, salary structure, facilities and the environment they can expect in the new workplace. Our goal is to ensure that expectations of the youth are aligned with reality before they start a new job."

- Ninad Wadkar, National Head - Placement

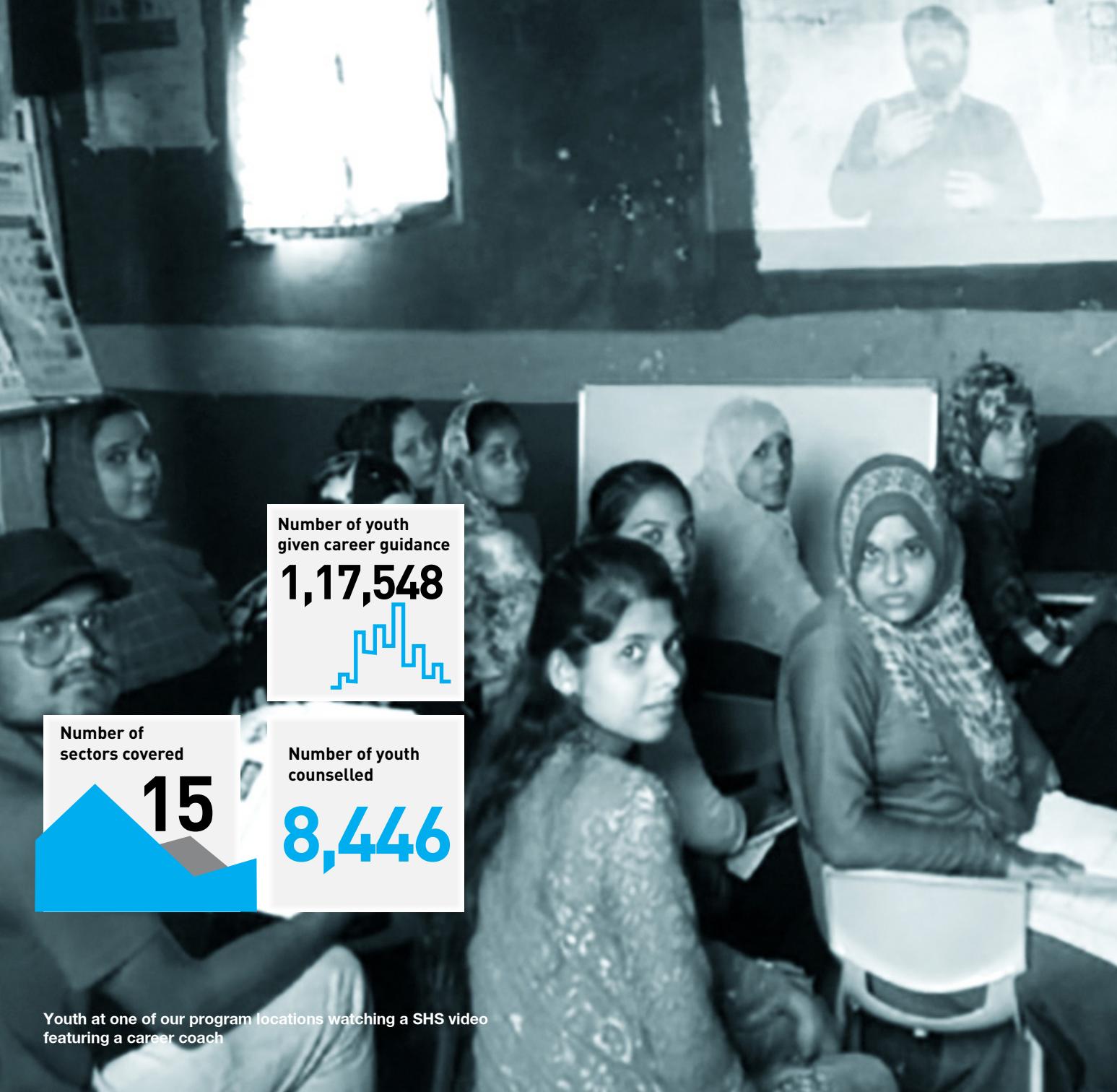
## Improving placement outcomes

Connecting youth to distant employment opportunities is not a straightforward process. Many trainees are unwilling to move too far from home due to family objections. Some are not sure they want to uproot themselves for a new place with a different culture and language. In the current environment, many trainees and their families were also worried about Covid exposure and health risks in cities. Our placement team sought to dispel these concerns through individual counselling and group information sessions.



## Amar's transformation

Amar Mahali is from Ghongabab, a small village in Sindri (Jharkhand). He made Rs 1500 a month delivering cans of water in his village and this was the sole source of income for him and his family, that also included his parents and two younger brothers. His father had health issues that made it difficult for him to work. Amar was spotted by our trainer at Head Held High's MIC centre in Sindri when he was delivering water to that location. He would stand by the classroom, listening intently to the trainer's instructions and taking in the group's activities. Gautam (the trainer) then invited him to join the next MIC batch in Sindri. Amar did well in the program – growing from a shy, diffident young man to one with more confidence to navigate the world beyond his village. When jobs opened up at a Udupi outlet in Tamil Nadu, Amar decided to move. It was not an easy decision and it took some time to convince his family. But more than a year later, Amar has really made a mark as a dependable employee who shows both drive and initiative on the job. Amar's future now looks promising and secure.



Youth at one of our program locations watching a SHS video featuring a career coach

Youth from marginalized areas often lack access to career resources, counselling, job information, and training to boost employability and build 21st century skills. We aim to provide such critical guidance for them through planned and structured initiatives, both digital and offline.

## Career Guidance & Counselling for Youth

‘Sach Honge Sapne’ (SHS) is a UNDP-led program focused on providing information on job readiness as well as sector-based opportunities and skills to youth with vulnerabilities and limited access to career resources. As UNDP’s primary partner in this initiative, our team managed and drove the entire effort of curating this information through career coaches and sector experts as well as facilitating individual counselling sessions with youth. The Labhya Foundation and GAME were key partners in this initiative, providing support with content and expert resources.

In a duration of four months, this large-scale digital campaign proved to be highly impactful in terms of both the information repository created as well as its overall reach.

### Helping youth plan ahead

“Through ‘Sach Honge Sapne’, we were able to enable information related to career and 21st century skills for over 1 lakh youth across 6 states in India. Through the videos, we placed contextual skill and sector-based information in their hands. The one-on-one counseling sessions for 8000+ youth provided local, contextual information on jobs, skills and schemes, while addressing fears that got in the way of career planning.”

- Parul Singh, Program Manager and Head - Impact & Evaluation



A woman sits outside her food stall in Sedam

Farming and small-scale industry alone cannot support livelihoods in rural locations. And with reverse migration and job shrinkage in cities due to the pandemic, there is greater pressure on livelihoods in these parts. Rural entrepreneurship is needed, now more than ever, to create self-sustaining and vibrant rural economies. It is also a route to financial empowerment for women, in particular, who cannot travel too far from their homes in search of work.

## **Antarpreerna**

**Enabling rural entrepreneurship**

**A**ntarpreerna is an initiative aimed at creating viable and sustainable livelihood opportunities in rural districts in order to reduce the impetus for urban migration. Our interventions under this program are designed to “take jobs to people” and ignite rural enterprise in places with limited economic opportunities. The two main channels for achieving these outcomes include:

- Women collectives
- Micro-entrepreneurship

# **100 women**

**earned an income for the first time in their lives**



### Number of centres



### Cumulative income through project



### Product Mix

Masks  
Cloth pouches  
Aprons  
Carpets  
Clothing such as blouses and trousers



A woman works on a stitching project in Wadi, Karnataka

### Becoming true entrepreneurs

"The women in our Antaprerna Centre in Wadi have been making different kinds of products based on orders from our market partners. But now that they have experienced financial independence, we wanted them to go a step further and think about the kinds of ventures they could start on their own and run in their community. It was a big leap for them to think about becoming entrepreneurs in the true sense. They were hesitant initially. But with encouragement from us and some group brainstorming, they grew excited about the possibilities. Now many are exploring individual or jointly run ventures to sell food items, clothing, candles and other products. "

- Chandana TR, Assistant Trainer & Operations Managers

## Women collectives

Our first Women Collective was launched in Wadi, Karnataka in September 2019. The primary goal was to support the women in the project in earning an income and beginning their journey towards financial security and independence.

Based on the experience in Wadi and other locations, we now know that this model can be scaled with the right partnerships, market linkages and product mix in place. We currently have five centres operational and have helped more than 100 women become financially empowered and gain the confidence needed to run small ventures on their own. We plan to launch more collectives in the coming year and enable this journey for many more women.

### Operating through the lockdown

"We adapted to the crisis created by the lockdown by adopting a milk run production model in Wadi under which the women were given fabric to make safety masks at home. These masks were then distributed by our partner, ACC Trust, in nearby communities. As the lockdown restrictions were lifted, production was gradually moved back to the centre."

- Anusha Saxena, Head – Community Engagement



Rural women, in particular, need support in boosting their economic status in the household through training and guidance

## Micro-entrepreneurship support

Although we believe in the importance of sustainable and income-generating rural businesses, we also realize that many people lack the confidence or the mindset needed to start and run a venture. Our Antaprerna Micro-Entrepreneurship program is designed to build that mindset while also providing support through ongoing mentoring, grants and other interventions. General Entrepreneurship Training (or GET) is a key part of this, and includes modules on business planning, accounting, marketing, logistics and more.



## The jewelry makers of Chincholi

We ran a special jewelry making workshop and entrepreneurship training session for a batch of trainees from Chincholi, in Karnataka. Following this, several of them started small home-based ventures making colorful jewelry items, and are drawing an income through this.

One of them is Renuka, a young MIC trainee in Chincholi, who dropped out of school after 8th standard to help support her family with farming. But after completing the MIC program as well as the follow-up workshop and entrepreneurship training, she decided to explore this new and creative opportunity. She currently makes around INR 4500 a month by selling her designs of bangles, ear rings and other items.



A Zoom session from the Youth Co:Lab event

In order to tackle the social and environmental issues of our times, we need the passion, determination and ideas of young people everywhere. Our efforts to enable young social innovators to think like entrepreneurs and design solutions for scale and impact are driven by our core belief in the changemaking power of youth.

## Enabling Social Entrepreneurship

### Partnership with Telangana Academy of Skill & Knowledge (TASK)

In December, we launched a joint initiative with Telangana Academy of Skill and Knowledge (TASK) to catalyse social innovation in that state. It is aimed at youth from Telangana area colleges (both in urban and semi-rural locations). It involves entrepreneurship training (for the larger group), an Ideathon workshop (to help those selected zero in on solutions in one of five thematic areas), and incubation to help nurture some of these solutions.

### Youth Co:Lab 2020

Youth Co:Lab was designed to place youth front and center in finding solutions to the world's most pressing problems. Jointly set up in 2017 by UNDP Asia and the Pacific and Citi Foundation, the initiative aims to accelerate impact on SDGs by developing 21st century skills, and catalyzing youth-led startups and social enterprises across the Asia-Pacific region. In India, Youth Co:Lab is a joint initiative of UNDP India and Atal Innovation Mission, NITI Aayog. The overarching themes of the 2020 annual event were Covid recovery and #BuildingBackBetter. The goal was to surface innovation in five key areas, including education and skilling, access, sustainability, mental health and gender equality. As UNDP's primary partner for the event, we organized and facilitated the workshops, expert sessions, panel discussions and other interactions involved in the event.



There are hundreds of changemakers engaged in the fight against poverty. But due to limited resources and a lack of strategic guidance, they are hampered in this mission.

# Global Action on Poverty

Amplifying the impact of changemakers

Global Action on Poverty (GAP) is a platform that was set up to give changemakers with solutions in different areas – including education, agriculture, health, water & sanitation, financial inclusion and energy – access to diverse skills and expertise that they can leverage for greater impact. Engagements driven through GAP typically involve immediate or one-time requirements (e.g. need for legal help in drafting a contract). However, the GAP Intensive program allows corporate teams to be part of more structured engagements to drive tangible outcomes for changemakers.

# 750+

changemakers supported in ways that help them have greater impact

GAP is an enabling ecosystem that includes both changemakers and change leaders



Many grassroots organizations are financially and operationally stretched in the current environment

## A challenging year for changemaking

In the first six months of the year, funds were largely diverted to COVID response and this placed pressure on the grassroots efforts of many changemakers. However, many of them jumped in to help alleviate the impact of the crisis on the most vulnerable sections of society.

**Namrata K**  
*Anahat for Change Foundation*  
Women empowerment through skill development

**Amitava Roy**  
*Lokmata Rani Rashmoni Mission*  
Socio-economic development of communities in Sunderbans

**Chandrashekaran**  
*MERDS NGO*  
Development of rural poor women, children and educated unemployed youth

**Mithila Malhotra**  
*Underprivileged Advancement by Youth (UPAY)*  
Education & skill development

**Ravi S. Kumar**  
*Freedom for You*  
Education & training, health and wellness, safety and security

**Anubhooti B**  
*Neo Fusion Creative Foundation*  
Education and skill training for youth

A few whose work stood out last year

## Websites for crowdfunding

Crowdera is a crowdfunding platform that helps individuals, non-profits and independent filmmakers to raise money online. We first organized a Zoom workshop to give GAP changemakers a view of strategies that could help them improve their fundraising results. Following this, several changemakers engaged with Crowdera to create new websites to drive better storytelling and fundraising results.



Trainees talk to their corporate mentors during a planned Virtual Volunteering session

Since we had to suspend our on-ground operations and shut down centres last March, it left many of our trainees feeling untethered and without a plan for the future. We also knew that alumni of the program had been affected by job cuts across the board.

## The Power of Volunteers

Given the environment last year, the corporate Virtual Volunteering program proved to be a timely and very effective intervention. Many corporate partners were also seeking viable and online platforms for involving their employees in their CSR drives. Over scheduled phone conversations, the volunteers discussed topics such as personal finance, professionalism, grooming, workplace etiquette and more with trainees. While the content for the session is put together by the Curriculum team at Head Held High, many volunteers supplement this with personal advice and their own insights. This makes for a very personal interaction, one that is hugely motivating for our trainees.

**2200+**  
Virtual Volunteers



Partner companies

**39**



Volunteering Hours

**15,000+** hours



Many youth in the program find the conversations with volunteers both motivating and instructional

**Words of a  
volunteer  
from SAP**

**“ I just wrapped up a session with my trainee Muskan. I feel so blessed to have started on Friday in such an awesome way. We mostly spoke in English- she could communicate in English and I encouraged her to do so, with of course jokes and snippets in between in Kannada. Towards the end I asked Muskan to give me a summary of everything we had covered during our conversation; and she did - without missing a single pointer! ”**

## **Ways in which volunteers pitched in:**

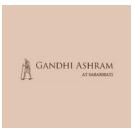
- Guiding trainees on various skills -- communication, work and life readiness, digital and financial literacy, etc.
- Creating content for digital curriculum
- Talking to and guiding program alumni
- Pro-bono strategic consulting
- Incubation and mentoring of micro-entrepreneurs

**Words of a  
volunteer from  
Iron Lady**

**“ Sarita (the trainee) is a friendly, warm and focused student, with clear thinking and values. Our main topic of discussion was 'confidence' and ways to grow it. In her view- 'Learning helps build confidence'. She aims to be a lifelong learner. We also spoke about personal conviction, the importance of research, good vocabulary, and other tools in building confidence. We discussed three hypothetical situations where confidence is required. It was wonderful to see how she spoke about handling each situation. ”**

# With Gratitude to Our Partners

We want to thank our partners for their steady support and responsiveness this past year. Not only is each of them committed to the partnership, but they are always up for a conversation on making it even more impactful. Here's a view of what our partners are enabling through funding and other forms of support:



Youth transformation & economic pathways via Make India Capable

Ecosystem linkages and collaboration

Knowledge sharing, curricular content and research frameworks



Rural entrepreneurship and women collectives via Antarprerna

Community Response Centres for urban slum communities

Youth aspirations through future ready guidance

Social entrepreneurship in youth

Amplified impact for GAP Changemakers

Community outreach; program design and implementation

Livelihood creation and market linkages

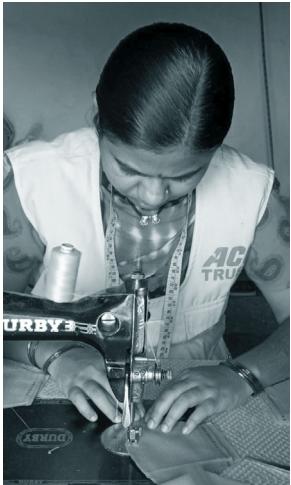


**Deepa Chikarmane,  
Founder Director  
- Pret Interpret  
Clothing Pvt Ltd**

“About a year and a half ago, we started an initiative called 'Stitch in Time' to preserve, protect and promote heritage craft techniques. We worked closely with Head Held High under their Antarprerna initiative and have since skilled more than 70 women in heritage techniques. I have been extremely happy with the outcome of this program in such a short time. I am always inspired by the women's hard work and diligence, and their motivation to learn a new skill in order to earn a livelihood. In the years to come, we hope to empower many more women in various rural parts of the country. ”

**Manish Kumar,  
CSR Manager -  
ACC (Lakheri)**

“We have joined hands with Head Held High Foundation to run a capability building program for youth in several communities where ACC has a presence. Not only does this program help equip these young individuals with core skills but, in the long run, it enables them and their families to move away from the vicious cycle of poverty and to thrive. We are pleased with the impact we have been able to have in places like Lakheri and look forward to continuing our collaboration to transform lives. ”



## Transforming youth; Empowering women

ACC Trust has been a key enabler of our impact since 2016. Given their focus on empowering and energizing communities through skilling and livelihood support, they found a mission fit in our core programs of Make India Capable (youth transformation) and Antarprerna women collectives. As a result of the partnership, we have implemented more than 40 youth transformation batches across 18 locations, impacting the lives of more than 1,000 youth in the process. The four women collectives supported by ACC Trust have enabled more than 100 women to become financially empowered.

**Shrikant Sinha,  
CEO - Telangana  
Academy of Skills &  
Knowledge (TASK)**

“We have had a great experience working along with the HHH team on the i4TS initiative in the past few months. Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the team ensured smooth flow of all activities as per the timelines. All the content developed was highly relevant and customized to match the requirements of our participants. Having HHH as a program partner made it possible for us to successfully run i4TS, a one of a kind program, at such a large scale impacting over 7000 youth in the first phase. We wish HHH team all the best and look forward to partnering with them for more such engagements in future also. ”

**Note for global  
partners/donors**

Head Held High Foundation is now registered and authorized to receive funds under the Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA).



**Pankaj Singh Thakur  
CEO**

# A Few Thoughts...

This past year has been about Covid-19. It has changed everything about life and work as we know it. More importantly, the communities we work with faced an unprecedented reality.

Words cannot capture the immense pride and gratitude I feel for the commitment demonstrated by our employees and partners towards ensuring that these marginalised communities and their youth are best protected in the face of the unfolding crisis.

This commitment was displayed in so many ways, both big and small. Through real work on the ground, conversations, ideas, collaboration, a simple assurance of ongoing support...

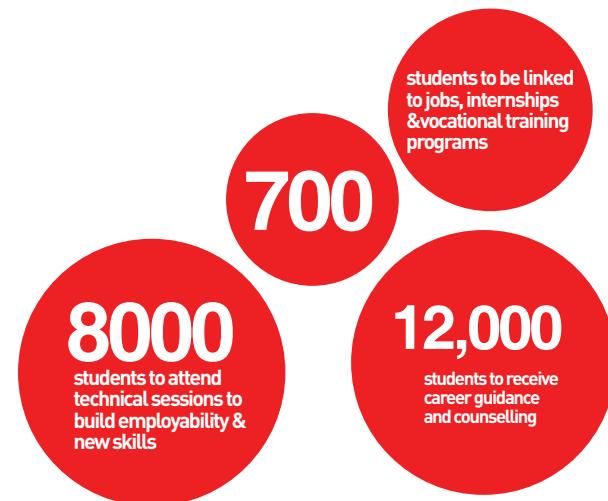
The work is only half done though. We need to gear up to ensure that adaptation remains a core focus across all areas that we work in and we continue to provide pathways to the underprivileged to reconstruct livelihoods and boost well-being.

This troubling time has brought out the best in many and it's been humbling to see humanity coming to the fore. I thank all who have been part of this journey for their support and acts of kindness.

**I know there is much that still needs to be accomplished in the global quest to tackle poverty. But based on the response last year, I feel optimistic about the road ahead.**

**-Pankaj**

A glimpse of some initiatives and areas that we will be focused on as we forge ahead into the new financial year:



Target impact for Code Unnati

## The year ahead...

### 1 New projects and partnerships

SEWA

We are collaborating with an old partner, SEWA – this time with support from One for One, an initiative to drive transformation through individual donors. Under this partnership, we will deliver a transformative program for women farmers aimed at making them comfortable with spoken English and equipping them with business skills and agricultural acumen. The end goal is to make them self-reliant individuals capable of holding their own in a rapidly evolving and demanding world.

CODE  
UNNATI

Code Unnati is our second Future Readiness initiative (the first one was 'Sach Honge Sapne', a digital campaign to deliver job and career information to youth) in partnership with UNDP. This one will involve engaging with 50 government higher education and vocational institutions in Karnataka (across the areas of Bangalore rural, Raichur, and Dakshin Kannada) to ensure that students in these institutions, and specifically girls, are in a position to make informed decisions about their future. The intervention will include career guidance, counselling, training to boost digital skills and employability, entrepreneurship development programs, and access to incubation, internships and various industry opportunities.

### 2 Scaling programs to nurture rural entrepreneurship

We will focus on further strengthening and scaling interventions that are designed to boost and support rural entrepreneurship. Many of these, such as the women collectives that we have run for more than a year, are now tried and tested. Coupled with training, mentoring and other, mentoring and other enabling interventions to help people start up at the village level, we hope to address the livelihood challenges that many communities are now faced with.

### 3 Addressing barriers for families and communities

This year has shown us that vulnerable communities need support in many different ways – spanning food security, job and livelihood information, social security protection and more. In addition, our research has shown that many young people are unable to pursue various economic opportunities due to family circumstances and constraints. We plan to step in to address these issues through interventions delivered through the Community Response Centres in our active locations. We also plan to roll out our MARG methodology in these areas to tackle family level barriers in moving out of poverty.

Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high  
Where knowledge is free  
Where the world has not been broken up into fragments  
By narrow domestic walls  
Where words come out from the depth of truth  
Where tireless striving stretches its arms towards perfection  
Where the clear stream of reason has not lost its way  
Into the dreary desert sand of dead habit  
Where the mind is led forward by thee  
Into ever-widening thought and action  
Into that heaven of freedom, my Father, let my country awake.  
- Rabindranath Tagore



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