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STRONGER TOGETHER

K Dinesh, the low-profile co-founder of Infosys, on money and motivation that shape his family's philanthropic giving

(From left) K Dinesh and his wife Asha channelise their philanthropy through the Ashraya Hastha Trust, which also involves their daughters

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Kris Gopalakrishnan, co-founder, Infosys, gives money towards brain research



CKM Dhananjai, managing partner, FC Madras (left), and Girish Mathrubootham, founder, Freshworks

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Madan Padaki, founder and CEO, 1Bridge



Takemitsu Takizaki, founder and honorary chairman, Keyence, Japan

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Doing Good, Feeling Good, Making Good

By skilling youth for the internet age, Madan Padaki is raising income levels and aspirations of thousands of young women and men

By HARICHANDAN ARAKALI

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Madan Padaki is deeply inspired by Nobel laureate Amartya Sen's view that poverty is about deprivation of capability and opportunity. And his entrepreneurial journey brought him to a point where he found a way to bridge solutions to both.

He followed "the usual route" of studying to become an engineer, followed by picking up an MBA degree, Padaki recalls in an interview with *Forbes India*. After working at Wipro, and for a year at Infosys, he found himself selling software to Japanese customers in Tokyo at the turn of the millennium.

During a visit back to Bengaluru, he saw that everyone he knew was "either writing a business plan, talking to VCs (venture capitalists) or thinking of some idea". Padaki made his own plan, which led to the founding of MeritTrac, one of India's first skills assessment provider. The business did well enough to assess tens of millions of youngsters, and it was eventually acquired by Manipal

Group in 2011. The company has today cumulatively assessed more than 50 million people, he says.

MeritTrac's success gave Padaki the chance to think about what he would really work at from that point on, "if money was taken out of the equation". And that was the genesis of Head Held High Foundation (HHH), a non-profit, of which Padaki is co-founder and managing trustee.

HHH has focussed on training rural youth and over the last 15 years or so, it has touched about 30,000 youth. An important characteristic of Padaki's approach to philanthropy is that he sees it as one face of a coin—entrepreneurship being the other.

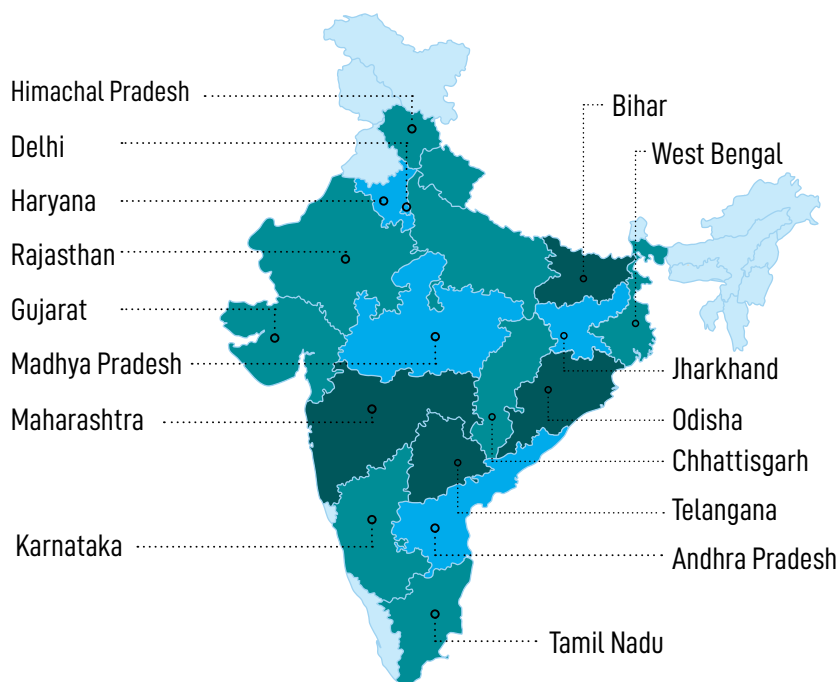
"How do you work at the policy level, grassroots level, and with partners to help build a mass entrepreneurship movement?"

MADAN PADAKI,
CEO AND MD,
HEAD HELD HIGH FOUNDATION





Impact So Far



SOURCE | Head Held High Foundation Annual Report 2022-23

100+ Districts	19 States
35% Aspirational Districts	15,000+ Households moved out of poverty
2 Lakh+ Youth provided employability training	3 Lakh+ Training hours completed
300+ Trainers certified	75,000+ Women empowered
10,000+ Youth provided wage employment	2,500+ Entrepreneurs created
80% Business survival rate	₹9,300 Monthly average income for youth provided wage employment
₹6,000+ Monthly average business income	

And that's how 1Bridge, a for-profit entrepreneurial venture, was born about seven years ago. It taps the ecommerce opportunity, putting rural youth on a path on which they can start as delivery agents but move forward towards becoming micro-entrepreneurs. HHH is all about tackling the capability deprivation. 1Bridge—today also a partner of ONDC—tackles the opportunity deprivation aspect of the problem. The former is a non-profit foundation and the latter is a social enterprise and while they're not connected in a legal sense, "I am the common glue," Padaki says.

Along the way, Padaki also partnered like-minded and influential people, including Ravi Venkatesan, the former chairman

of Microsoft India, and Mekin Maheshwari, former chief people officer and head of engineering at Flipkart. They are also all angel investors in 1Bridge, and in their own right are active philanthropists.

Together they've created a network they call Global Alliance for Mass Entrepreneurship (GAME) to create "democratised distributed models of entrepreneurship and not centralised monolithic models", Padaki says. "How do you really work at the policy level, at the grassroot level and with partners to help build a mass entrepreneurship movement?"

Padaki is also one of the partners at YuWaah, a Unicef programme. YuWaah (Generation Unlimited/GenU), is "a Unicef-initiated multi-

stakeholder global platform, that aims to prepare young people to transition from education and learning to productive work and active citizenship", according to the UN organisation's website. It has drawn support from large corporate organisations such as Capgemini, and, in India, aims to create employment opportunities for 100 million youth by 2030.

Over the years, philanthropy for Padaki has moved from "handset to a headset to a heart-set," meaning it started out with being able to write cheques and graduated to getting more involved with problem solving and eventually "getting involved with my heart".

"That's the challenge we see today. We need to meld these worlds of doing good, feeling good and the world of making good money. The challenge is really to find that intersection where you can do good, feel good and make good money." ¹

"We need to meld these worlds of doing good, feeling good and making good money... the challenge is to find that intersection."