

POVERTY REDUCTION



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Disha: Creating Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Women in India

Background

Women face significant social and economic barriers that inhibit their participation in India's workforce. Between 2005 and 2010, the number of women in the Indian workforce has declined by 10 percentage points. Indian women continue to face significant disparities in wages across industrial sectors, and women-owned businesses account for only 20 percent of the total registered businesses in the country. The International Labour Organization's Global Employment Trends 2013 Report ranks India 120 out of 131 countries surveyed on female labour force participation.

The International Monetary Fund estimates that India's gross domestic product (GDP) could expand by 27 percent if the number of female workers increases to the same level as that of male workers. The importance of women's participation in economic growth is also reaffirmed by a study by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, which estimates that if India's female labour force participation reached parity with that of the United States (86 percent), its GDP could gain US\$19 billion annually.

A four-year partnership, Disha is founded on the conviction that women are key stakeholders in the development process and can be the most important agents of change in the lives of their children and their communities. Increasing the number of skilled women in the workforce will empower individual women, make them economically self-sufficient, and lead to improvements in the socio-economic status of their families and even the nation as a whole.

PROJECT INFORMATION

Area: Poverty Reduction

Budget: US\$ 12,559,235

Duration: 1 January 2015 - 31 December 2018

Government Counterpart: Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Government of India

Partners: IKEA Foundation, India Development Foundation

Implementing Partner(s): State governments, State Skills Missions, NGOs, corporates and private sector entities

Geographic Coverage: NCR and Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka and Telangana

Disha uses a composite approach to bridge the demand and supply gaps that limit women's workforce participation. On the supply side, the project works closely with businesses to identify suitable employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for women, and develop their skills while also looking at public-private cost-sharing models that can ensure sustainability. On the demand side, the project is working towards building appropriate models that facilitate information dissemination, skill development and enterprise support for women.

About the project

The Disha project is a four-year (2015-2018) partnership between the India Development Foundation and UNDP, supported by the IKEA Foundation. This partnership has three overarching objectives:

1. To improve the lives and livelihoods of 1 million women through education, training, employment and entrepreneurial skill development.
2. To test innovative and scalable public-private partnership models that respond to both the aspirations and needs of women as well as the demand-side of markets and the private sector.
3. To establish a continuum that connects education to skills, jobs and growth by fostering a skills ecosystem among stakeholders.

Developments so far

- Nearly 40 pilots from across sectors, industries and geographies are underway within the three project verticals: Bridging the Information Gap (BIG), Skills to Jobs (STJ) and Entrepreneurship Development.
- Under the BIG vertical, over 100,000 girls and women were provided information through innovative outreach models such as career guidance and counselling centres, job fairs and career yatras, preparing them for skill growth, jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities.
- Under the jobs vertical, young girls and women were able to enter traditionally male-dominated industries such as steel (Jindal Stainless) and plastics engineering (Central Institute of Plastics Engineering & Technology) for the first time.
- The 'Skill Sakhi' model that uses local women volunteers for mobilization and dissemination, developed in Maharashtra, has been recognized by NITI Aayog as a best practice and recommended for potential scale-up across India.
- Entrepreneurship Development Cells (EDCs) were modelled and launched in four tribal districts in Telangana to drive awareness and education of local women entrepreneurs, as well as incubate their startups.
- Provided policy and programme support on skill development and apprenticeship to state governments, especially in Karnataka and Maharashtra.
- The India Skills Report 2017 was released, focusing on women and skilling, to provide insights that can help bridge the gender divide and future-proof India's growth.

Looking to the future

- 18 career guidance and counselling centres to be operationalized in education institutions.
- Scale-up and roll-out tested models boosting women's entrepreneurship in agro value-chains, creative manufacturing, waste value-chains, retail and transport.
- Strengthen partnerships with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and state governments to promote a holistic value-chain approach towards skilling, entrepreneurship and apprenticeship.
- Release of knowledge products including the India Skills Report 2018, Gender Diversity Report, Gender Diversity and Firm Performance, CSR in Skills and Livelihood Development, and Harnessing 21st Century Skills.

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