

Beyond Convention:
Sambhav's Innovative
Frontiers
2025



SCAN ME



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Leadership's Voice

Gayathri Vasudevan, Chief Impact Officer, Sambhav Foundation

This year at Sambhav, we moved from asking what works to asking what holds.

We have seen over time that conventional approaches to skilling often deliver short-term success but fail to build long-term mobility or resilience. That's why our focus in 2024–25 was not just on expanding reach, but on embedding livelihoods within systems, systems that recognise the role of care, digital access, environmental transitions, and market linkages in shaping economic opportunity.

We trained over 19,000 individuals this year and facilitated employment and enterprise pathways for thousands more. But these numbers matter most when they are backed by continuity. Our programs were structured to deliver not just skills, but support, wraparound services, mentorship, structured peer networks, and sustained digital engagement.

The expansion of our Cluster Model allowed us to build integrated interventions across education, skilling, and placement. In regions like Odisha, Noida, and Bengaluru, we demonstrated how a single intervention, be it solar infrastructure or digital skilling, can trigger multi-directional mobility when embedded in the right ecosystem.

We also continued to invest in sectors that are future-aligned but currently underinclusive, from green jobs and AI to digital sales and manufacturing. Our efforts focused on correcting entry barriers, enabling retention, and ensuring that inclusion is designed into the system, not treated as a separate track.



As we move into 2025–26, we will continue to prioritise interoperability over expansion, coherence over scale, and lived impact over symbolic metrics. Our goal remains clear: to make livelihoods accessible, adaptable, and anchored in systems that can hold the complexity of people's lives.

Sambhav will continue to evolve, but our commitment remains constant. We will stay close to the ground, responsive in design, and accountable in delivery.

This report is not just a review of outcomes. It is a reflection of how we've restructured our approach, what we tried, what we adapted, and what we still need to build. For funders, it offers a window into what systems-thinking looks like in practice. For peers, it offers field-tested insights. For communities, we hope it signals that dignity, equity, and livelihood are not competing goals, but mutually reinforcing ones.



IMPACT AT A GLANCE (2024-2025)

Reach and Scale

80,000+
Individuals trained

28,000+
Placed across formal and informal sectors

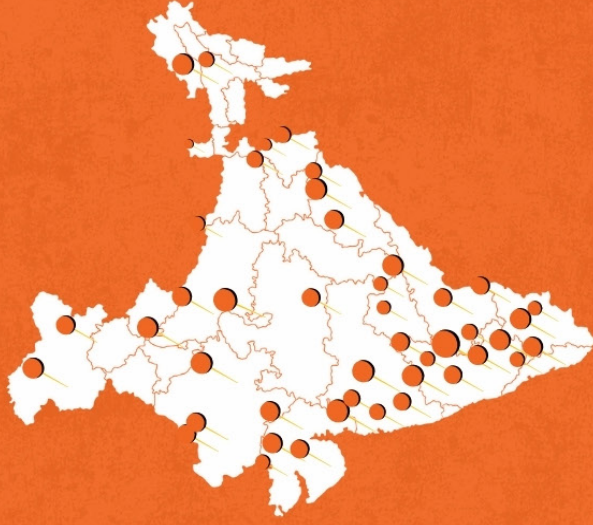
12,000+
pincodes

20
states

46,000+
Certified micro-entrepreneurs supported

10,000+
active urban-rural cluster regions

12



Sectoral Impact



Green Jobs
3200+
trained in EV repair, solar, waste management

1000+
placed in green economy roles



Digital & AI Skilling
19,430+
trained across 18 states

4,700+
students trained in AI & coding (60% girls)



Manufacturing & Non-traditional Trades
800+
women placed in factory roles



Retail & Services
11,800+
women trained and placed in beauty, tailoring, and sales roles

Institutional & Community Engagement

- **70+** schools reached through WASH and solar infrastructure
- **24,000+** students benefited from health, hygiene, and energy literacy programs
- **16** corporate partnerships co-created and co-delivered
- **3** flagship gender-integrated skilling programs scaled nationally

Beyond Conventional: Sambhav's Innovative Frontiers

The theme “**Beyond Conventional: Sambhav's Innovative Frontiers**” is both a lens and a learning. It reflects our response to a persistent problem in development: the fragmentation of effort. Too often, interventions are built around transactions, training for the sake of it, access without infrastructure, and entrepreneurship without markets.

At Sambhav, we no longer view skilling as a standalone sector. We treat it as a system, embedded in ecological transitions, digital shifts, and gendered labour dynamics. This year, we advanced a strategic redesign of how livelihoods are enabled: not as isolated opportunities, but as outcomes of interconnected, long-term support systems.

Rethinking Traditional Models

We moved away from short-cycle training and toward skilling that is embedded in economic transitions. Our green livelihoods strategy is not just about responding to climate goals, it's about ensuring the communities we work with are positioned to participate in the future economy.

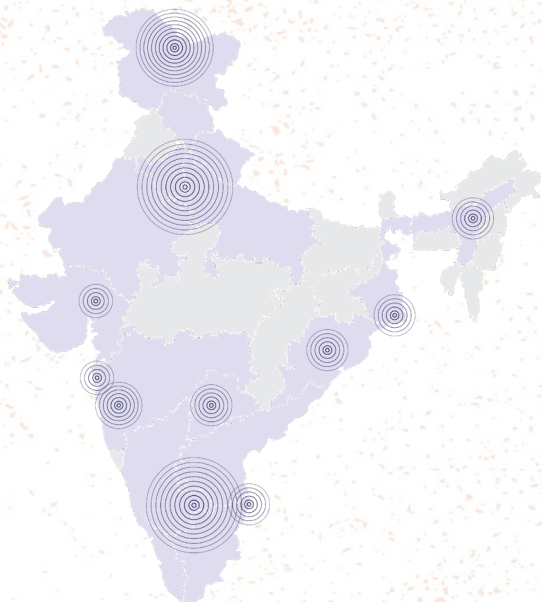
Through our partnerships with **Lowe's and Angel One**, youth were trained in EV servicing and solar installation across Karnataka, Jaipur, and Kolkata. As pilot batches, they were functional pathways, mapped to sector needs. In Odisha, the **HDFC Bank Parivartan-Sambhav** Solar Schools Project embedded renewable energy exposure into school systems, linking awareness to aspiration and enabling a progression into technical training in Bhubaneswar. We applied the same logic in Kanpur, where solid waste became the entry point for community-driven change. With **HDFC Bank Parivartan's** support, Sambhav facilitated school awareness, strengthened waste infrastructure, and layered in resource recovery systems across 40 villages, making environmental improvement a basis for livelihood.

Leveraging Technology as Infrastructure

Digital enablement was not treated as a tool, it became foundational infrastructure. Whether through learning platforms, gamified modules, or real-time dashboards, we designed tech not to replace human systems but to support them.

In Noida, 410 schoolgirls underwent structured coding training through the **Synopsys CodeHER** programme, moving from basic exposure to measurable competence. The **Microsoft-Accenture AI for College** initiative went further, training over 3,000 commerce students across four states in AI concepts and workplace readiness. Both programmes used digital tools not just for delivery, but for tracking growth and closing gaps.

At scale, the **Accenture-Sambhav** Digital Skilling Initiative trained over 19,000 people across 79 centres in 18 states. But more importantly, it tested and validated an interoperable model: combining technical skilling, entrepreneurship support, and gendered mentorship into a coherent, digitally supported journey.



Operationalising Systems Thinking: The Cluster Model

Our Cluster Model matured this year, not as a geographic convenience, but as a strategy for building multi-entry, multi-exit systems of support.

In Odisha, school solarisation was linked to advanced skilling in green sectors. In Noida, the **SLMTT** programme integrated mobilisation, technical training, and placement across eight trades. In Bengaluru, clusters enabled lateral mobility, women moved from classroom-based beauty training to kiosk-based income generation to mentorship roles within the same geography. These were not linear pathways, they were ecosystems where growth could happen in multiple directions.

From Interventions to Interoperability

A key shift this year was our movement from individual programme success to systems-level coherence. The **Standard Chartered Bank** programme, for example, didn't just deliver training in BFSI and IT-ITeS, it plugged into a wider value chain of CRM systems, employer linkages, and post-placement support, resulting in stable employment for 1,689 youth across seven cities.

Our digital and enterprise initiatives weren't tracked in isolation either. The **Accenture**-backed entrepreneurship stream showed that when digital skilling is paired with local mentorship and early enterprise exposure, outcomes are not just stronger, they're more equitable. Over 95% of launched enterprises were women-led.



Partnerships That Share Design, Not Just Funding

We moved away from donor-recipient dynamics and towards co-creation. In Karnataka, **Oracle's** WASH programme combined infrastructure with volunteer-led learning, improving sanitation across 49 schools while directly involving 200+ employees in student engagement.

These partnerships allowed us to deepen ownership, localise delivery, and distribute accountability. They also reminded us that systemic change is not something one organisation can deliver alone.

Inclusion by Design, Not Exception

Our programmes didn't "target" marginalised groups. They were built to hold them from the start. In Bengaluru, the **Saamuhika Shakti** programme enabled women from waste-picker families to move into retail, tailoring, and digital livelihoods, with over 2,000 trained and 306 placed. In manufacturing, the **Kantar India Foundation** ELTP programme placed 616 women into fitter-fabricator roles, pushing against structural gender barriers in industrial employment.

Inclusion wasn't the output. It was a principle of programme architecture, reflected in location choices, trainer composition, and wraparound services like financial counselling and digital access.

"Beyond Conventional" is not just a thematic anchor. It's our operational reality. We are building systems where economic growth and environmental sustainability work together, where skilling connects to livelihoods, and where inclusion is not peripheral, but central.

As we reflect on 2024-25, we invite our partners, donors, and communities to walk with us. Not towards charity, but towards shared prosperity, co-created value, and an economy that recognises everyone.



Strategic Pillars and Innovations

Sambhav Foundation's work in 2024–25 was anchored in four strategic pillars that defined how we approached systemic change: **Green Skilling and Environmental Sustainability, Digital and Tech-Enabled Livelihoods, Inclusive and Gender-Transformative Skilling, and the Cluster Model for Interconnected Development.** These pillars served not only as guiding frameworks but also as operational commitments, ensuring that our programs remained responsive, relevant, and resilient.

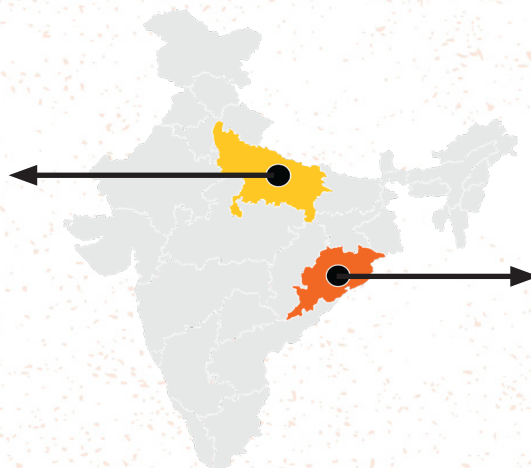
Green Skilling and Environmental Sustainability

Sambhav's investments in green skilling reflect both a strategic direction and an ethical imperative. In a year where climate commitments globally took center stage, we embedded environmental sustainability directly into our livelihood strategies.



Our collaboration with **Lowe's** in Karnataka and **Angel One** in Jaipur and Kolkata trained over 1,000 youth in Electric Vehicle (EV) servicing and solar panel installation. These programs did more than deliver technical skills; they created employment pipelines into high-demand, low-entry sectors within the green economy. Candidates underwent rigorous, practice-driven training, supported by live garage units and e-bike servicing camps, leading to over 650 certifications and 420 placements.

The Kanpur Solid Waste Management Project, supported by **HDFC Bank Parivartan**, added another dimension to our green work, linking waste collection, segregation, and school-based education with community-led change. With 40 villages covered, the project strengthened Resource Recovery Centres and promoted environmental stewardship alongside livelihood generation.



The **HDFC Bank Parivartan-Sambhav Solar Schools Project** in Angul, Odisha, further demonstrated how sustainability can be integrated into education. With solar systems installed across 20 schools, over 10,000 students gained exposure to renewable energy through interactive events like Surya Utsav and home energy audits, creating community-level awareness alongside infrastructure creation.

Digital and Tech-Enabled Livelihoods

Technology has been a force multiplier for Sambhav's reach and relevance. From coding to CRM, AI to e-learning, we embedded tech across the training and livelihood value chain.

The **Accenture-Sambhav** Digital Skilling Initiative trained 19,430 individuals across 18 states in workplace readiness, digital marketing, and EV servicing. With a 95% entrepreneurship launch rate among women, the program demonstrated how digital skilling can be designed to serve both jobseekers and micro-entrepreneurs.

In urban clusters like Pune, the **Bajaj FinServ** hybrid model combined gamified learning, mobile engagement, and centre-based instruction to deliver skilling in CRM, retail, and data entry. The model demonstrated scalability and user engagement, especially for women balancing domestic responsibilities with career aspirations.

For younger learners, the **Synopsys** CodeHER initiative and the **Microsoft-Accenture** AI for College Program brought digital literacy and coding to classrooms in Noida, Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. These programs improved proficiency by over 40 percentage points on average, introduced structured coding curricula, and provided real-time learning dashboards through the SAHI LMS, positioning underserved students for digital futures.



Inclusive and Gender-Transformative Skilling

Inclusion cannot be assumed, it must be designed. Sambhav's skilling programs in 2024-25 explicitly centred the realities of women and marginalised communities, ensuring that access translated into actual agency.

In Bengaluru, our partnership with **Saamuhika Shakti** targeted waste-picker families through skill development in tailoring, beauty therapy, data entry, and retail. With over 2,000 women trained and 306 placed, the program offered not just skills, but legitimacy, enabling a shift from informal labour to formal workspaces.

Programs with **Nykaa**, **Kantar India Foundation**, and **L'Oréal-Accenture** provided targeted, multi-city support for women in the beauty and wellness sector. Across cities like Mumbai, Bangalore, and Hyderabad, over 3,000 women were trained in technical, digital, and entrepreneurial skills. Interventions included kiosks for on-the-job exposure, structured mentorship, and financial literacy, all contributing to the creation of over 1,800 women-led micro-enterprises.

The **Kantar India Foundation** ELTP project broke new ground by placing 616 women in manufacturing roles across partner firms like Ather Energy and IM Gears. This initiative directly addressed gendered labour segmentation, enabling women to enter traditionally male-dominated skilled trades such as fitter-fabricator roles with 100% placement.

Cluster Model and Interconnected Development

Sambhav's Cluster Model is not a static geographic strategy, it is a method for systemic thinking. By interlinking skilling, placement, infrastructure, and enterprise support within defined geographies, we built ecosystems that can sustain themselves.

In Odisha, the solar installations in Angul fed directly into green skilling pipelines in Bhubaneswar. In Noida, the **SLMTT** initiative combined mobilisation, vocational training, and employer partnerships across eight technical trades, creating clear pathways from schools and communities into industry.

Urban clusters, especially in Bengaluru, served as live laboratories. With beauty kiosks, tailoring pilots, and data entry programs layered within the same geographies, participants moved not just through training but across roles. The model proved particularly effective in enabling women to move from classroom instruction to service delivery in public-facing spaces, enhancing both confidence and income generation.

What sets the Cluster Model apart is its ability to reduce duplication, localise implementation, and build social infrastructure around economic interventions. It turns training centres into anchors, and communities into collaborators.

Corporate Engagement and CSR Partnerships

Sambhav's engagement with corporate partners in 2024–25 reflected a deliberate shift: from transactional CSR to co-owned program architecture. Our aim was not just to mobilise resources, but to align intent, execution, and long-term value creation. This meant inviting our partners into the process, not as donors, but as co-designers, mentors, and ecosystem actors.

Our CSR engagements this year were anchored in three strategic principles:

Proximity to delivery: In several partnerships, corporate employees worked alongside learners, as mentors, trainers, and workshop facilitators. This blurred the lines between volunteering and knowledge transfer, and embedded companies more deeply in the communities they sought to impact.



Problem-led design: Each engagement began not with pre-approved solutions, but with diagnostics. Whether in sanitation, green skilling, or digital education, partners were encouraged to co-invest in solutions that responded to field realities.

Scalability through shared infrastructure: Many partnerships leveraged Sambhav's existing digital, community, or training infrastructure, reducing duplication and increasing programme stickiness.

Key partnerships that exemplified this approach include:



Oracle, whose WASH initiative improved sanitation infrastructure across 49 government schools in Karnataka. More than 200 Oracle employees co-led activities such as menstrual hygiene workshops, student-led exhibitions, and "Make-a-Wish" day events, building trust and co-ownership at the school level.



Accenture, whose multi-state skilling program spanned 79 centres and integrated digital literacy, workplace readiness, and enterprise development. Accenture's backing enabled us to pilot cross-role curriculum design and track placement pathways across urban and peri-urban clusters.



Nykaa, Kantar, and L'Oréal, who partnered with us to operationalise the Cluster Model for women's livelihoods, supporting beauty kiosks, training hubs, and enterprise progression in cities like Bengaluru, Kolkata, and Mumbai. These weren't standalone training centres. They were part of larger urban ecosystems, designed to be sustained through client engagement, repeat income, and peer mentorship.

Across 20 states and 12,000 pincodes, these partnerships have helped shift how we think about scale. It's not just a question of how many programs run, but of how coherently they connect, how locally they embed, and how long their effects last after funding ends.

Education and Youth Empowerment

At Sambhav, we see youth not just as a target group, but as a threshold demographic, poised between systemic gaps and generational change. Our education and youth initiatives in 2024–25 focused on this transitional moment: where exposure becomes aspiration, and where early investment can shape long-term agency.

While many of our flagship programs are geared toward employability, our education and youth interventions sit upstream, anchoring skilling in foundational confidence, digital fluency, and career readiness.

Three principles guided our approach:

Build early exposure to future-facing skills

Rather than waiting for post-secondary dropouts to enrol in skilling programs, we reached younger cohorts, especially adolescent girls, with structured, scaffolded exposure to coding, AI, and workplace simulation.



Embed learning in existing systems

Our programs didn't create parallel infrastructures. We worked within government schools, public colleges, and low-resource communities, bringing in support where the system had left gaps.

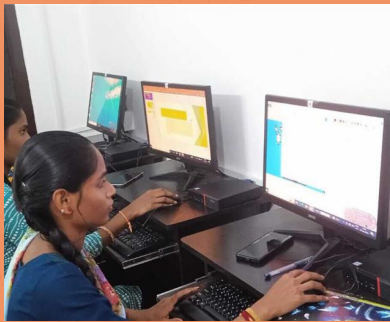
Pair technical knowledge with psychosocial scaffolding

Every curriculum included confidence-building, peer learning, and real-time feedback. For many students, this was their first time interacting with structured digital content or industry mentors.

Highlights from the year:



The **Synopsys CodeHER** program introduced 410 government school girls in Noida to foundational coding through 60 hours of hands-on learning. Their average proficiency jumped from 27.7% to 69.3%. Grade 8 students showed the highest gains, supported by a gender-sensitive learning environment and female facilitators.



The **Microsoft–Accenture AI for College** initiative reached over 4,300 commerce students across Delhi, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Gujarat. Of the 2,113 certified, 60% were women, many entering digital workspaces for the first time. Bilingual instruction and the SAHI LMS enabled both accessibility and precision in tracking progress.



In multiple cities, youth-focused skilling programs like those supported by **Standard Chartered Bank, SLMTT, and Bajaj FinServ** created structured transitions from education to employment. These weren't limited to job-readiness; they helped first-generation learners build confidence, navigate city systems, and make informed career choices.

By investing in education as a continuum, not a silo, we ensured that young people didn't have to stumble into the workforce unprepared. They arrived with experience, with exposure, and with the beginnings of confidence that change is possible, and within reach.

What We're Learning

Not all answers come from the data. Some come from the floor of a factory. From a focus group held under a banyan tree. This year, we pushed ourselves not just to deliver, but to listen. To interrogate our own assumptions. And to document the frictions that emerge when real lives meet program design.

What makes women stay in green and industrial jobs?

From our FGDs with women placed in EV manufacturing through the Kantar–Ather partnership, we learned that placement is not the finish line, it's the pressure point.

Women stay when:

They are placed together: Co-location with peers from the same batch increased retention. It built collective confidence in male-dominated workspaces and reduced isolation.



Transport and housing support are available: Sambhav facilitated transport and accommodation for several outstation candidates. These wraparound services played a critical role in reducing dropout during the first three months of employment.



Their skills are recognised, not sidelined: One respondent noted that she was only given routine tasks despite being trained in diagnostics. Her confidence dropped. Recognition matters.



Shift timing aligns with domestic responsibilities: Most women cited the early morning shift as manageable because it allowed them to return before evening household duties.



On-site support exists, even informally: A female supervisor, a sympathetic HR staffer, or just a group chat where women checked in with each other became essential support systems.



There is clarity on grievance redressal: Fear of losing the job meant many didn't report workplace discomfort. Where Sambhav had established post-placement check-ins, this fear reduced. Structured escalation pathways made a difference.



These insights are already shaping how we design our next phase of manufacturing programs, particularly through peer-based placements, hybrid apprenticeships, employer orientation on role parity, and strengthened wraparound services.



Looking Ahead: Priorities for 2025–26

As we close a year defined by systemic integration, our focus for 2025–26 is not expansion for its own sake, but consolidation, coherence, and depth.

We've learned that impact scales sustainably only when systems hold. And that requires us to make choices, not just about where we work, but how, with whom, and to what end.

Our strategic priorities for the year ahead include:



Deepen Retention Architecture Across Livelihood Pathways

We will invest in post-placement support, alumni networks, and lightweight check-ins to ensure that candidates not only find jobs, but also stay, grow, or pivot meaningfully. In sectors with high attrition, we will test bundled interventions: peer mentorship, digital nudges, access to grievance redressal, and employer sensitisation.



Scale Cluster Model with Emphasis on Economic Density

We will expand only where three conditions are met: (a) local market demand, (b) community readiness, and (c) infrastructure for mobility. Rather than spreading thin, we will go deeper within select urban and peri-urban zones, creating economic “thickness” through layered interventions and shared platforms for training, enterprise, and service delivery.



Codify and Test Interoperable Livelihood Platforms

We aim to strengthen our digital backbone, not by adding new tools, but by integrating the ones we have. Our focus will be on smoother data flows between mobilisation, skilling, and placement; digitised learning journeys; and dashboards that serve both field teams and learners. We will also explore shared APIs with partners for cross-referrals and verification.



Invest in Adolescent and Youth Transitions

We will continue supporting school-based programs, but now with clearer linkages to career navigation and post-school pathways. In addition to coding and AI, we will pilot early exposure modules in healthcare, green trades, and financial services, especially for girls and first-generation learners. Partnerships with government schools and state missions will be key.



Strengthen Inclusion at the Design Level

We will develop inclusion audits and feedback loops that catch who is left out, not just at intake, but during retention, placement, and advancement. Specific emphasis will be placed on tailoring approaches for young mothers, migrants, transgender persons, and candidates without digital access.



Build Organisational Resilience

Internally, we will focus on learning systems, second-line leadership, and program review protocols that allow for course correction without losing momentum. Our goal is to become not just an implementer of innovation, but an organisation that can hold complexity, adapt quickly, and lead responsibly.






Problem

Skilling ecosystems in India often treat employment as a product, not a process. They operate in silos, isolated from care work, community realities, and the green economy. The result: short-term job placements, poor retention, and unequal access.



Our Response

We design livelihoods as interconnected systems, not endpoints, anchored in a multi-donor, cluster-based approach that links skilling with social protection, market access, and long-term economic resilience.

 Inputs	 Interventions	 Outcomes
Ground partnerships with employers, schools, and local governments Digital and green skilling curriculum Community-based mobilisation and mentorship CSR and philanthropic partnerships Data tools for tracking and course correction	Cluster-based program design for convergence and scale Gender-transformative program structures Wraparound services: counselling, placement, digital access, peer networks Entrepreneur support, asset distribution, and on-ground handholding Integration of sustainability (solar, EV, waste recovery)	Women and youth enter dignified livelihoods in non-traditional and future-ready sectors Learners build confidence, savings, and peer agency Frontline programs become replicable through embedded tech and data systems Regions shift from fragmented training to cohesive livelihood ecosystems



Impact:

- Income growth that sustains
- Work that is safer, greener, and respected
- Communities that retain talent, especially women
- A redefined skilling landscape, measured by mobility, not just metrics



Monitoring and Evaluation: Learning What Matters

At Sambhav, we see monitoring and evaluation not as an audit function, but as a learning engine. Our M&E systems are designed to track not only reach and delivery, but also relevance, equity, and transformation.

What We Measure

Domain	Sample Indicators
Access and Participation	# individuals enrolled, attendance rates, completion rates, first-generation learners
Learning and Readiness	Pre-post assessments, skill proficiency, digital fluency, confidence scores
Placement and Retention	% placed, % retained at 3 and 6 months, median income, job-role alignment
Empowerment and Inclusion	Decision-making ability, self-reported mobility, client negotiation, peer support

We track indicators across four key domains:

We disaggregate data by gender, location, age, and sector to understand who is being reached, and who is being left out.



How We Collect Data

- **Real-time Dashboards:** All training centres are connected to a centralised monitoring system for real-time tracking.
- **Field Validation:** Regular site visits, attendance audits, and trainer reviews ensure data accuracy.
- **Post-Placement Check-ins:** Structured phone-based interviews and WhatsApp-based surveys at 1, 3, and 6 months.
- **Tracer Studies:** For select programs, we conduct tracer studies to understand long-term impact on income and autonomy.
- **FGDs and Case Narratives:** We complement quantitative data with qualitative insights to understand lived experience and systemic constraints.



What We Do With It

- **Course-Correct:** If placement rates dip or dropout rises in a centre, we conduct root-cause analysis and adjust operations quickly.
- **Design for Equity:** We use M&E data to identify gender or location-based disparities, and refine interventions accordingly.
- **Report with Integrity:** We share both successes and shortcomings with partners and funders, building a culture of transparency.
- **Feed Forward:** Insights from the field feed directly into program redesign, like tailoring peer placements or shifting assessment formats.

For us, M&E is not about checking boxes. It's about staying honest, staying responsive, and staying aligned with the realities of the people we serve.

