Impact Assessment: Mission Sunehra Kal (2022-23)

Background

The corporate social responsibility (CSR) program of ITC promotes Mission Sunehra Kal for sustainable and inclusive growth. The mission aims to transform the lives of the marginalized through partnering with relevant stakeholders such as the government and not for profit organizations. The program intends to leverage the government schemes and the technical know-how of partners to bring about change. It also ensures accountability of beneficiaries within its program through participatory planning, ownership, and long-term sustainability of interventions. The approach used by ITC for empowering communities from the ground up involves knowledge and technology transfer and aims to address both present and future livelihood challenges through a comprehensive approach that fosters healthy, educated, skilled, and engaged communities. This approach instills confidence and determination in community members, allowing them to look towards the future with hope and dignity.

The Two-Horizon approach for holistic development

After conducting a community needs assessment survey and priority mapping, it became evident that ITC's stakeholders are faced with various interrelated issues. These issues are primarily centered around the twin challenges of ensuring sustainable livelihoods both now and in the future. As an answer to these critical issues, the Two-Horizon approach was put in place to effectively look at the existing concerns.

The Horizon-I focuses on improving the current livelihoods of communities, particularly in agriculture and allied sectors. Horizon-II, on the other hand, concentrates on building capabilities and capacities to empower these communities for a brighter future.

The current report intends to evaluate the impact of the certain programs within Horizon-I and Horizon-II, with details of projects given in Annexure I.

Horizon I

Water Stewardship: Within this program, water harvesting structures are constructed or renovated to provide water sources to the farmers for sustainable agriculture. In addition to this, the structures also assist in recharging the ground water levels. The program is designed for sustainability as it mobilizes farmers into water user groups for maintenance of these structures.

Climate Smart Agriculture: Under this initiative, the farmers participate in farmer field schools, wherein they are guided to adopt the best practices for sustainable farming to get better yields and higher incomes. The farmers are guided on strategies to optimize water, manure and fertilizer usage. They are also guided on technological support required.

Social Forestry: Under this initiative, the farmers are encouraged and supported to turn part of their farms into income generating pulpwood plantations. The saplings and seeds are provided by leveraging government schemes under Ministry of Forest and Ministry of Agriculture. In certain cases, they are also accessed from local nurseries. The trees are later expected to provide the farmers fuel and additional income through wood sale.

Horizon II

Sanitation: ITC partners with NGOs specialized in WASH and provides relevant WASH infrastructure and services in school. They also spread awareness on key WASH behaviors in the community to be adopted for well-being and good health.

Solid Waste Management: Under this program, ITC promotes segregation of waste at source and composting practices, either at home or community level.

Primary Education: The program partners with an NGO having expertise in providing supplementary education to primary children for improvement in their learning. It also intends to increase the student attendance and enrollment. School WASH is part of primary education.

Vocational training: ITC's program on vocational training aims at providing market relevant skills to make employment seekers job ready. They also focus on placement and tracking of candidates for higher program impact and sustainability.

Women's Economic Empowerment: The program identifies ultra-poor women with no support and no asset in their household— and provides them with knowledge, monetary and mentoring support to build their own businesses.

Objectives and scope of work

Impact Assessment is undertaken to provide a systematic and objective evaluation of the social projects. It determines the extent to which an intervention has affected the desired change or achieved he intended outcomes. Within the current study, the key objectives are to:

1) Assess the positive and negative impacts of a project or program on social and economic aspects
2) Identify the key stakeholders who have been impacted by the program
3) Evaluate the effectiveness of program in achieving its intended outcomes and identify its unintended outcomes
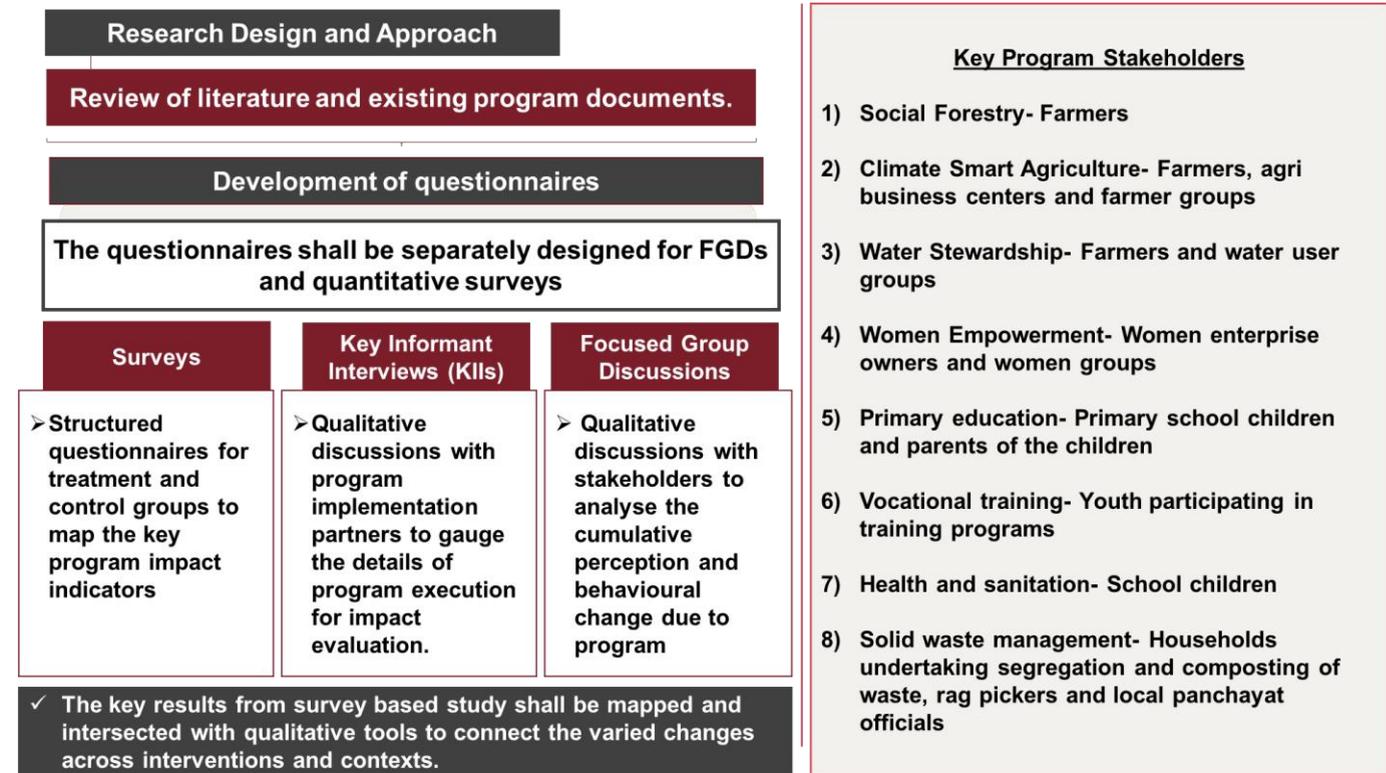4) Provide recommendations to improve the program for enhancing impact

For achieving the objectives of the project, the following steps have been undertaken:

- Review of relevant literature and reports to understand the context of the programs
- Development of questionnaires for data collection with the relevant stakeholders based on program design
- Development of data collection plan
- Fieldwork to collect data from the relevant stakeholders
- Analysis of data to identify the key program impact areas
- Reporting of findings along with relevant recommendations

Research Methodology

The research study adopts a mixed methodology by adopting both quantitative and qualitative tools for data collection. The quantitative tools consist of structured beneficiary questionnaire and control questionnaire, while the qualitative tool consists of key informant interviews and focused group discussions.

Research Design and Approach

Review of literature and existing program documents.

Development of questionnaires

The questionnaires shall be separately designed for FGDs and quantitative surveys

Surveys	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	Focused Group Discussions
➤ Structured questionnaires for treatment and control groups to map the key program impact indicators	➤ Qualitative discussions with program implementation partners to gauge the details of program execution for impact evaluation.	➤ Qualitative discussions with stakeholders to analyse the cumulative perception and behavioural change due to program

✓ The key results from survey based study shall be mapped and intersected with qualitative tools to connect the varied changes across interventions and contexts.

Key Program Stakeholders

1) Social Forestry- Farmers
2) Climate Smart Agriculture- Farmers, agri business centers and farmer groups
3) Water Stewardship- Farmers and water user groups
4) Women Empowerment- Women enterprise owners and women groups
5) Primary education- Primary school children and parents of the children
6) Vocational training- Youth participating in training programs
7) Health and sanitation- School children
8) Solid waste management- Households undertaking segregation and composting of waste, rag pickers and local panchayat officials

The beneficiary questionnaire is asked to the key program beneficiaries to gauge the impact of program on key program objectives, while the control questionnaire is asked to those, who are demographically similar to the beneficiary population, but have not received any program-based assistance. The key impact parameters are then gauged on two parameters,

1) Program impact parameter will be compared to the baseline indicator
2) Program impact parameter will be compared to the control indicator

The study adopts a research design that shares some similarities with a randomized controlled trial but lacks one key element - random assignment to treatment and control groups. The participants are rather assigned to the treatment or control group based on some characteristic other than random assignment, such as geographic location, age, socio-economic conditions etc. The methodology allows researchers to draw causal inferences about the effects of an intervention.

Program Sampling

The sampling for the beneficiary and control population under each program is done using the following rationale

The entire population is divided into 2 segments,
➢ More than 1,000
➢ Less than 1,000

The sample size calculation for more than 1,000 population line items has been done basis the following: Confidence Interval: 95%, Margin of error: 10%, Population portion: 50%

The sample size calculation for less than 1,000 population line items has been done basis 10% selection of the population.

It is to be noted that a good maximum sample size is usually 10% as long as it does not exceed 10001 (Tools4dev).

Going a step further, in case of projects with sample size less than 35, the total number of sample size has been increased to 40 to ensure effective representation.
The control group calculation has been undertaken basis 35% selection of the sample size, in case of respective projects. In projects, where the sample for control group is less than or equal to 29 (or less than 30), we have ensured selection of a minimum of 30 as the sample for the control group.

The controls allow the study to cognize for extraneous variables that influences the outcome variables. It also enhances the precision of the study and increases the likelihood of detecting true effect within a program.

They are also useful in building causal inferences, i.e., attribution of any impact to a particular program or intervention.

The Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) are dependent on the spread of the program across locations and its scope. Based on above methodology, the study sample across themes are as follows.

#	District Name	Total beneficiaries	Beneficiary Sample	Control Sample	KII	FGD
1	Social Forestry	2219	126	0	2	2
2	Climate Smart Agriculture	23632	287	100	6	6
3	Water Stewardship	17703	514	223	14	13
4	Women Empowerment	605	89	60	4	2
5	Primary Education	3290	509	0	12	9
6	Vocational Training	1767	208	150	10	7
7	Health and Sanitation	137	40	30	2	1
8	Solid Waste Management	17437	187	65	4	5
	Total Sample	66790	1534	628	54	45

The detailed location wise sampling was done through random stratification methodology, wherein, the district is sampled into blocks and further into either villages or schools.

It is to be noted that for social forestry and primary education program, the control survey has not been undertaken. In case of social forestry, the indicators for annual assessment do not require control variables. It is also to be highlighted that given the program scope, finding a control will be challenging. In case of primary education program, the uniqueness of the program makes it difficult to identify the true controls

Findings and Discussions

In this section, the individual programs will be assessed separately, and the analysis will follow the following components,

- Stakeholder identification, location, and sampling

- Key Findings

Horizon - I: Improving the current livelihoods of communities in agriculture and allied sectors

Water Stewardship Program

The Water Stewardship program is an initiative targeted towards drought proofing agriculture and unit positive status through supply and demand management initiatives. The program promotes water security through community-based participation in planning and execution. The program is also aligned with the government's micro irrigation program (Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana).

Key Findings

The study sample consisted of 514 treatment group (TG) beneficiaries and 223 control group (CG) respondents from 7 districts across 5 states viz. Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Rajasthan, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu.

In demography terms, TG and CG were similar on age, caste, family size, education levels, sources of income and type of house distribution making them comparable.

Awareness: approximately 86% of the respondents in the beneficiary group mentioned receiving comprehensive information on the significance of water harvesting structures, methods to utilize water efficiently in crops, soil conservation to reduce erosion and sedimentation, the importance of biodiversity, and the economic benefits of such structures.

Water harvesting structures: The TG reported constructing more trench cum bunding structures (by 24%), check dam structures (by 33%), mini percolation tanks (by 18%), loose boulder structures (by 7%), rock fill dams (by 8%) compared to the CG. As per 75% of TG respondents, these structures led to a significant increase in water availability with another 23% mentioning slight increase, and 64% reported a significant improvement in water quality with another 29% mentioning slightly better. Other areas of impacts TG members felt were reduction in use of chemical fertilizers (53%), improvement in soil fertility due to silt application (62%) and reduction of soil erosion (65%).

Land and Irrigation: Due to the intervention, there has been a decrease in the dependency on rainfed agriculture, as the access to water from rivers/canals and farm ponds/reservoirs increased. Example – dependency on river /canals amongst TG was higher by 10% compared to CG and correspondingly lesser dependency on rains. Similarly, there was an increase in usage of micro irrigation systems such as sprinklers and drip irrigation in TG from baseline, at 70% and 44% respectively. No such increase was found in the CG.

Water User Groups (WUGs): About 76% of TGs were part of WUGs, compared to only 18% in the CG. In the case of TG, the fund collection varied across different locations between Rs.50/- to Rs.200/- per member. However, in terms of perceived benefits of WUGs, it was found that TG respondents received greater support for flexible water allocation for irrigation (by 28%), maintenance of water structures (by 43%), and lowering irrigation costs (by 31%) compared to the CG.

Crops: More than 42% of TG respondents agreed that year-round cultivation was possible due to water availability as compared to only 9% of the CG respondents. The TG stated that they can grow vegetables also due to wide spacing and water availability. The TG also ensured crop rotation for efficient water usage, better soil health, and market demand.

Agriculture yields: The TG farmers observed a 21% increase in the productivity of their main crops (wheat and maize), from 12.4 quintals per acre to 15 quintals per acre. Moreover, the productivity was 20% higher than that of the CG, which was at 12.5 quintals per acre.

Overall Impact: Approximately 80% of TG respondents reported a decline in migration within their community since the intervention.

The program has also improved their quality of life by increasing the quantity of food (63%), the quality of food (61%), home appliances and ambience (43%), education for siblings (31%), and more. Around 79% of respondents also began saving after the program, with approximately 77% saving up to Rs.2,329/- per month. Moreover, TG farmers have also purchased assets such as cattle (36%) which can be useful for developing additional sources of income. Overall, the majority of TG respondents positively agree on being satisfied with the program (91% highly agree, 9% agree). 99% respondents stated that the program had resulted not only in reduction in water consumption, but also improvement in income because of timely availability of water. This positive indication suggests that the program has met the participants' expectations and has been well-received.

Climate Smart Agriculture Program

Climate Smart Agriculture is defined as "an integrated approach to managing landscapes —cropland, livestock, forests and fisheries —that addresses the interlinked challenges of food security and accelerating climate change." The aim is to create a holistic impact by achieving the following three outcomes:

1. **Increased productivity** - To improve nutrition security and boost incomes, produce better and more food.

2. **Enhanced resilience** - Improve capacity to adapt and grow in the face of longer-term stresses like shortened seasons and erratic weather patterns. Reduce vulnerability to climate-related risks and shocks.

3. **Reduced emissions** - Pursue lower emissions for each calorie or kilo of food produced, avoid deforestation from agriculture and identify ways to absorb carbon out of the atmosphere.

As a result, it is essential to promote it in India considering the challenges of food security, and climate change. In addition, it also helps to achieve the Government of India's goal of doubling the farm income. Considering these benefits, ITC through its partner organizations is taking up CSA program under Mission Sunehra Kal. The Impact Assessment findings are as follows,

Key Findings

The study sample consisted of 289 farmers from TG and 109 from CG respondents from 1 district each of Maharashtra and Punjab. The crops in focus for Maharashtra were sugarcane and onion, while the crops in focus for Punjab were wheat and paddy.

Demography: The TG and CG were similar on demographic parameters with similar age, caste, education, and family size distribution to some extent. However, the type of house and amenities available were better for TG than CG, revealing better quality of life among TG. The mean monthly income for TG was also higher at Rs 20,365/- in comparison to mean monthly income of CG at Rs.13,009/-. This suggests that the program might have had a positive impact on the income of the individuals in the TG.

Irrigation: The usage of drip irrigation in TG increased from 34% at baseline to 63% post intervention. The usage was also significantly **higher** than CG (14%).

CSA techniques adopted: TG adopted more CSA techniques in both Punjab and Maharashtra than CG. In Punjab, the use of Direct Seeding of Rice was 55% in TG compared to 16% in CG. They were also doing better in CSA practices in other crops such as wide spacing (67% in TG against 5% in CG), raised bed plantation (49% in TG against 3% in CG) and crop rotation (36% in TG against none in CG). In Maharashtra, the TG farmers in major crops (sugarcane and onion) have adopted substantially more intercropping (60% in TG against 6% in CG), wide spacing (64% in TG against 6% in CG), micro irrigation (85% in TG against 27% in CG), crop planning (79% in TG against 24% in CG) and irrigation planning (72% in TG against 25% in CG).

Farmer groups

- Around 91% of TG were members of WhatsApp groups which shared good practices, and around 84% suggested it to be helpful to a large extent.

- Around 84% of TG were part of Farmer Field Schools and 21% of CG were part of other farmer groups. The TG received higher support in terms of seed procurement (99% in TG against 61% in CG), agriculture extension (85% in TG against 13% in CG), demonstrations and trainings (97% in TG against 4% in CG), among other support compared to control group.

- Around 52% of TG and 6.4% of CG were part of agri business centres. The TG received higher support than CG in all aspects.

Climate Smart Agriculture Program

Agriculture Economics Overall increase in production for all major crops due to adoption of Climate Smart Agricultural practices was 52% for TG farmers post the intervention. The TG farmers observed a 32% increase in the productivity of main crops (onion, sugarcane, paddy, wheat) compared to the baseline, and a 66% increase compared to the control.

Post intervention, reduction in average cost of cultivation was 5% and increase in gross income was 76% for all crops combined aided also by changes in Minimum Support Price as applicable, with maximum of 103% in sugarcane.

For all farmers, the average gross income increased by 76% post program from Rs.504,652/- per annum to Rs.889,981/-. However, in comparison with CG, the average gross income of TG was 137% higher. This trend is highest for small farmers, wherein the annual average gross income of small farmers in the TG was higher by 204% when compared to a small farmer in the CG. The comparison to CG neutralizes impact of higher procurement price, since it would be applicable for both TG and CG.

Other benefits: Around 88% of TG were registered with Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) in comparison to only 13% of CG. The usage of mobile applications for agriculture was higher among TG.

Overall Impact: Approximately 78% of TG respondents in the states of Punjab and Maharashtra where the study was conducted reported a decline in migration within their community since the intervention. The program has also improved their quality of life by increasing their income (99%), the quantity of food (86%), the quality of food (81%), home appliances and ambiance (71%), education for siblings (42%), and more. Around 42% of respondents also began saving after the program. Moreover, TG farmers have purchased assets such as cattle (54%) which can be useful for developing additional sources of income. Overall, the majority of TG respondents highly agree or agree that they are satisfied with the program (92% highly agree, 8% agree). This positive indication suggests that the program has met the participants' expectations and has been well-received.

Social Forestry Program

Social forestry is done primarily to improve the environmental conditions for protecting agriculture from extreme climate factors and increase supply of fuel wood, small timber for rural housing, fodder for livestock, and minor forest produce for local industries, thus reducing the burden on natural forests. Another benefit of social forestry is economic benefits to the local communities by providing jobs for unskilled workers, improving living standard and quality of life of the rural farmers.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change hence encourages social forestry and planation via various schemes such as Nagar Van Yojana, School Nursery Yojana, Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA), National Afforestation Program (NAP), National Mission for a Green India (GIM), etc. There is also scope for civil societies, NGOs, and other stakeholders to enter and promote social forestry among farmers.

Considering this, ITC through its partner organization is taking up Social Forestry program under Mission Sunehra Kal.

Key Findings

The study sample consisted of 126 farmers from Karnataka. The majority of these farmers (71%) were in the age group of 35-54 years. They primarily belonged to ST caste and other marginalized groups (OBC, SC, Minority) (83%). Their primary source of income was farming, and majority of them earned between Rs.10,000/- to Rs 14,000/- monthly.

Plantations: In our sample, plantation of tree is a recent activity, with 92% respondents being associated with it only since the past 5 years or lesser. The major trees grown are Silver Oak (98%), Teak (75%), Melia Dubia (32%), Neem (19%), among few others such as bamboo, and sandal. The plantation is undertaken with intercropping, with 95% of respondent reporting practice of the same.

The farmers planted on an average 713 trees, of which the majority (average of 533 trees) were planted in 2020-21 only, representing 74.7% of the total. The plantations were spread across 2.1 acres on an average.

Wood sale: Only 8.7% of the sample harvested and sold wood through older plantations. Most of them sold to local factories (90%), and also to local markets (20%) and wholesalers (20%). The rest of the 91.2% farmers did not engage in sale primarily because they are currently in the initial stage of plantation, and it will take some time for their trees to mature and become commercially viable for selling. Half of the selected respondents have tree plantations that are 2-3 years old, while the other half have plantations that are 3-5 years old.

Wood sale economics: The major wood sold by the farmers is from Silver Oak and Melia Dubia species. An additional income of more than Rs.45,000/- per household was observed through sale of Silver Oak trees and Rs 60,000/- per household from Melia Dubia.

In this section, the individual programs will be assessed separately, and the analysis will follow the following components,

- Stakeholder identification, location, and sampling

- Key Findings

Horizon - II: Building Capabilities and Capacities to Empower Communities for Brighter Future

Solid Waste Management Program

Solid waste management is a complex issue that poses technical, administrative, economic, and social challenges. Inappropriate disposal of municipal solid waste causes environmental pollution, spreads vector-borne diseases, clogs drains, and harms animals. Burning waste releases airborne particles, leading to respiratory problems, while the improper management of solid waste affects economic development. To mitigate the negative impact of waste on our environment and society, we need to adopt sustainable waste management practices, including reducing waste at the source, promoting recycling, and reusing, and ensuring proper disposal. Governments, organizations, and individuals must work together to develop effective solutions.

Considering this, ITC has collaborated with NGOs in Telangana, Khammam and in Tamil Nadu for its Solid Waste Management program. Under this program, decentralized waste management was promoted in villages. It was implemented in collaboration with panchayat committees to raise awareness among the villagers about the importance of decentralized waste management. Green workers were engaged through the Panchayat to collect waste and provide more information to the people. Additionally, the social animators from the Block Development Office were also engaged to monitor the green workers' activities and ensure awareness.

Key Findings:

The study sample consisted of 193 respondents from TG and 96 from CG from 1 district each of Tamil Nadu and Telangana.

Demography: The TG and CG sample had higher proportion of respondents in the 19-38 age group. The caste dynamics were similar in both groups from the perspective of marginalization, i.e., both had significant proportion of SC, ST, Minority and OBC groups in totality. The house type for both the groups were also similar.

Segregation of waste: Around 100% of TG segregated waste at home, while only 17% of CG segregated waste at home. The TG adopted segregation practice primarily due to sense of social responsibility (69%), regular checks by green workers (51%) and environment awareness (49%).

Composting of waste: Around 53% of the TG composted wet waste at home and remaining 47% sent it out with green workers for cluster level composting, and thus 100% of biodegradable waste was managed through composting. In the case of CG, composting was just 1%.

The usage of compost is varied and for multiple purposes among the TG, with 98% using it as a manure, 27% giving it to green workers and 43% giving it to farmers.

The major reason why respondents from CG did not segregate waste was not having 2 dustbins (54%) and forgetting to segregate (54%). Additionally, a significant portion of respondents (48%) in the control group indicated that they do not understand the importance of waste segregation, indicating a need for education and awareness-raising on the benefits of waste segregation.

Kitchen gardens: Large number of the respondents within TG had kitchen garden. Around 51% of them stated that composting gave a further boost to kitchen gardening with improvement in soil quality and reduction in waste.

Mohalla Committees: Around 95% of TG were aware of Mohalla Committees for SWM. The TG found awareness creation on waste management practices to be the major role of the committees. This was followed by waste collection and waste segregation. The response was lowest for service fee collection. The committees charged a nominal fee from respondents, which was primarily used to pay the green workers and maintain infrastructure.

Other Impacts: The average annual expenses on medical is Rs. 4,451/- for TG in comparison to Rs. 11,968/- for CG. The difference in medical expense may be due to better waste management, which leads to decrease in spread of infectious diseases.

Health and Sanitation: School WASH

WASH – Swachh Vidyalaya program is targeting to bring changes in the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) scenario in various government educational institutions like primary/ upper primary/ high schools. The program undertakes infrastructural development and hygiene promotion activities in selected schools.

The survey was done to identify the impact of the WASH – Swachh Vidyalaya program. The study analyzed the response from 40 target group beneficiaries across 7 schools (5 primary schools and 2 upper primary schools) and 30 respondents across 5 schools (4 primary schools and 1 upper primary school) from the control group.

Key Findings:

The study sample consisted of 41 TG students across 7 schools (5 primary schools and 2 upper primary schools) and 31 CG students across 5 schools (4 primary school and 1 upper primary school). The participants of the study were primarily from Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh.

Demography: The TG and CG sample covered all castes and religions. Both TG and CG respondents attended government schools.

Toilet facilities: Post-renovation, the number of toilets in TG schools increased, resulting in improved student toilet ratios. The beneficiary group now has a ratio of 1:33 (one toilet for 33 students), compared to the control group's ratio of 1:92. For girls, the ratio is 1:28, and for boys, it is 1:40 in the beneficiary group. School teachers confirmed the improvement in WASH infrastructure during focused group discussions. These improvements led to a 30% increase in TG enrollment and a 50% reduction in girls' drop-out rates. As a result, the girls-boys ratio improved to 54:46, compared to the control group's 48:52 ratio. The provision of separate toilets for girls allowed them to attend school during menstruation, which was confirmed by all girl respondents in the upper primary section.

The TG schools also had more amenities in toilets in comparison to CG schools such as washbasins (more by 92%) and water taps (more by 24%). All the TG schools also had sanitary napkin dispensers and incinerators, which were completely missing from the CG schools. The cleanliness of the toilets has also increased post-renovation, with 68% of students stating it is 'always clean', in contrast to 32% who stated the same level of cleanliness before renovation also.

Toilet Cleaning and Maintenance: 98% of the beneficiary group felt cleanliness of the toilet has improved. In their view, this has happened because of the increase in dependency on sweeping staff (83% as against earlier dependency of 24%) and reduced dependency on village volunteers from 61% to 7%.

The increase in the number of toilets has however led to increase in maintenance cost of toilets in TG schools. The major expense goes towards sweeping staff salary (75% in TG and 65% in CG), followed by purchase of soaps (12% in TG and 87% in CG). The TG schools post program ask parents to donate soaps to schools on special occasions, such as children's birthdays.

Health and Sanitation: School WASH

Water stations: The number of drinking water stations in TG schools increased significantly after the program intervention. Earlier, majority of the treatment schools only had 1-2 drinking water outlets, but after intervention, around 37% have 3-6 water outlets in their school. However, in CG schools, all students reported having only 1-2 drinking water outlets. Moreover, 54% of the beneficiary group reported having water stations with filtration systems, compared to only 39% in the control group.

School Management Committees (SMCs): Respondents have mentioned that 100% of the SMCs are active – 66% to a great extent, and 34% to some extent, All SMCs have bank accounts, and their annual average funds have increased by 70% from Rs.8,600/- to Rs14,600/- as a result of the program.

Child Cabinet Committees: All TG schools have Child Cabinet Committees with regular meetings and recordings, in contrast to 87% of CG schools that mentioned having regular meetings, but only 3% recorded these meetings. The TG school respondents stated that they were supported by program NGOs on the roles and responsibilities of the committee, which included maintenance of toilets, cleanliness of schools, hygiene monitoring, and so on.

Awareness: According to the respondents, the school's main emphasis was on maintaining cleanliness through the provision of dustbins, hygiene education classes, and a hygiene monitoring board, among other activities. The respondents believe that these efforts have had a predominantly positive effect, resulting in 95% of them washing their hands regularly, followed by taking regular baths (22%) and gaining awareness about diseases (20%). Approximately 80% of the respondents reported that they always use soap and water to wash their hands, while 17% use soap and water occasionally.

Overall Impact: Availability of separate toilets for boys and girls, hand wash stations and drinking water, sanitary napkin dispensers and incinerators increased in intervention schools compared to baseline and control. The majority of participants highly agree or agree that the program has positively impacted various aspects of education and community development, such as improving attendance, increasing enrolment, improving performance specially on sports, reducing dropouts (especially among girls), and raising awareness about health and hygiene.

Primary Education

The current segment evaluates the Read India Program of ITC Mission Sunehra Kal. The program provides intensive remedial education in reading and mathematics to primary school children, who are behind in basic skills, through supplementary learning programs and learning camps in schools. They also use pedagogy techniques such as "Teaching at the Right Level" (TaRL), and "Combined Activities for Maximized Learning" (CAMaL). However, during 2020-21, i.e., the assessment year, the program adapted to pandemic restrictions, shifting its medium to WhatsApp or SMS. The parents were sent messages, videos, and pictures, with various activities and asked to perform it with their children. In addition, the NGO also undertook Mohalla classes and online classes wherever possible, with a particular focus on developing reading and math skills.

Key Findings

The study aimed to examine the impact of Read India Program during the 2020-21 academic year, when the program was also modified to address the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic. A sample of 531 beneficiaries from diverse demographic backgrounds, spanning across Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Karnataka, and Andhra Pradesh, were surveyed to gather relevant data.

Demography: The sample ensured equal representation of boys and girls, with majority (71%) of students being in the age group of 9- 11 years, followed by 21% in the age group of 12-14 years. As a result, most of the respondents were in 5th or 6th standard. The sample included children from various castes and religions, providing a representative sample. The parents of the students were primarily engaged in daily wage work (46%), with others involved in occupations such as private jobs, farming, and small businesses. Overall, most parents had attained education only up to the school level.

Types of interventions: During the Covid-19 pandemic, the program adopted alternative methods of teaching to keep children interested and engaged. These methods included Mohalla classes, WhatsApp/SMS learning, and online classes. When the students were enquired on the modes through which they preferred learning during pandemic, around 73% stated online learning as their most used mode of education during the pandemic. Following this, 62% of students selected WhatsApp/SMS learning, while 51% of students also attended Mohalla classes.

Online learning: The students in the sample used various online learning methods, with video-based learning being the most popular (80%), followed by Zoom classes (50%) and specialized webinars (3%). Most students (96%) felt engaged in online learning and reported regular attendance in classes (97%).

WhatsApp/SMS based learning: The study found that most of the educational materials received by students through WhatsApp were educational video links (91%), maths questions (65%), and activity suggestions (57%). A majority of students (85%) reported regularly studying the content provided on WhatsApp, indicating the potential of these platforms to promote continued learning in remote settings. Additionally, parental support was found to be important in facilitating effective online learning with the support of volunteers.

Primary Education

Mohalla classes: In our study, 273 students participated in Mohalla classes with 96% of them attending the same regularly. These classes were mostly held at community centres (91%), but also at students' and neighbours' homes (41% and 38%, respectively) and other locations (7%). Most classes were held five days a week (53%), followed by once (18%), twice (16%), four times (10%), and thrice a week (2%). These findings suggest that Mohalla classes were a useful alternative to traditional schooling during the pandemic, particularly in areas with limited technology and internet access. The major challenge in respect to this approach was fear of Covid-19 as suggested by 81% of students.

Overall Impact: The program was an effective initiative to ensure education continuity for students during pandemic. Improvement in learning levels was reported by majority of the students in reading ability and maths facilitated by all three platforms of learning – online, WhatsApp/SMS based and Mohalla classes. 98% and 96% students stated improvement in learning levels in reading ability and 99% and 94% reported improvement in math skills as an outcome of Online Learning and Mohalla Classes under Read India Programme. It was able to address some of the challenges faced by students, such as school closures, and was helpful in engaging students and supporting their mental health. Nonetheless, online and distance learning cannot be deemed a comprehensive substitute for traditional education, as they come with limitations that may adversely affect students hailing from underprivileged backgrounds. It is necessary to continue to improve traditional education while integrating technology to enhance the learning experience.

Vocational Training

Vocational education provides relevant skills for the current job market, aiding underprivileged youth and women in supporting their families after secondary education. Marginalized groups face limited education access, resulting in fewer job opportunities and lower wages. To tackle this, the Indian government offers training programs like Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) through the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship and the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC).

Even with such push, the vocational education stream in India is quite small, enrolling less than 3 percent of students at the upper secondary level. As a result, several stakeholders are required to leverage the opportunity and support the government's efforts in creating space for quality skill-based learning opportunities.

ITC initiated a vocational training program aimed at economically disadvantaged youth aged 18-25. The program equips them with employable skills and access to job opportunities. Training duration varies from 2-3 months, with a blend of online and offline education at training centers. The program covers construction, hospitality, automotive, healthcare, and beauty & wellness courses, adhering to NSDC's standards and norms.

Key Findings:

The study sample consisted of 210 respondents from TG and 154 respondents from CG from Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, and Punjab. The CG sample consisted of those students who dropped out of the program, immediately within few days of joining.

Demography: The sample had nearly equal representation of boys and girls, with the majority aged between 18-25, comprising 78% in TG and 84% in CG respectively. The proportion of marginalized groups in terms of caste was higher, with at least 80%. Parental education showed that around 50% of TG parents and approximately 35% of CG parents had no formal education, thus relying on daily wage work or farming occupation. Around 75% youth were unemployed or underemployed from TG before the program.

Training experience**:** The study found that the TG had a positive perception of their trainers.

Around 96% rated them "good" or "very good" in terms of communication skills, curriculum knowledge, timely completion of the course, engagement with trainees, and teaching through activities. Similarly, in terms of quality of curriculum, majority of respondents from the TG rated the courses to be easy to learn (95%), aligned with market needs (94%), interesting (94%) to some extent or to a great extent.

Placements: The program placed 78% of trainees out of the ones that sat for placements despite lockdowns due to Covid. Around 65% of these, got the job within a month of training completion, 25% got the job within 2-3 months and 3% got the job after more than 3 months. Majority of respondents got the job in home city, followed by 34% got the job in another city but in same state and remaining 5% in another state.

52% of those placed were continuing with the same organization. Around 76% of these stated that they also witnessed an increase in income from their first placement salary. Similar trend has been noticed amongst those who have changed jobs also.

Overall impact: The trainees experienced an increase in average monthly household income by 69% from around Rs.13,000/- to Rs.22,000/-. The TG respondents stated that the program had positively affected their life by boosting their confidence (77%) and ensuring respect in the society and among friends (32% and 24%).

Women Empowerment

ITC Mission Sunehra Kal has partnered with a NGO for its "Targeting the Hardcore Poor (THP)" program. The program provides holistic assistance to the poorest of the poor for their self-reliance and socio-economic mainstreaming. These women are selected for the program through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercise based on their socio-economic status. They are then provided with grants in the form of free assets, not cash to set up businesses. Prior to extending the grant, the women are trained to manage the asset and generate income from it, which helps them sustain their livelihoods. The program follows a 360-degree approach, providing consistent counselling and mentoring support, a weekly consumption stipend, financial literacy training, education on socially relevant issues, and overall confidence building. The intervention intends to move the beneficiaries from a state of extreme poverty to a position wherein they earn a reasonable monthly income, have a healthy life and are able to support their families.

Key Findings:

The study undertaken to assess the Targeting Hard-core Poor women program covered a sample of 89 women from the TG and 60 women from CG in Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

Demography: In our sample, the TG and CG have similar demographics, with the majority of women being in the 36-45 age group. However, there is a slight difference in the distribution of caste between the two groups, although they are similar in terms of marginalization. All women within TG had their own businesses, while most of the CG women were daily wage workers. The TG women had better living standards and socio-economic status, as reflected in their having toilets in their homes, and better amenities.

Support by program: The TG selected enterprises based on their interest and knowledge provided by the program on enterprise development, confidence building, etc. The sampled beneficiaries received monetary support to the tune of Rs.11,500/- to purchase assets for their business e.g. raw materials (66%), stalls for sale (42%) and assets like sewing machine (11%). They were then mentored to build a business. The women stated that the support was essential in dealing with the major challenges of the business such as limited access to market, lack of information, lack of social systems and networks etc. Around 98% of the women stated that their challenges were duly addressed by the NGO team to a large extent. 91% of the women stated that they were mentored by the NGO representatives once every week.

Financial and government linkages: Within our study, 100% of TG women had bank accounts, of which 26% had opened it only after joining the program. However, in CG, only 63% had bank accounts. Similarly, in case of savings and investment, 80% of TG saved, but only 22% of CG saved. The program was also instrumental in connecting the women to government schemes.

Women Empowerment

Membership in SHGs: 100% of TG women were part of a SHG and only 8% of CG women were part of a SHG. This also highlights the efforts of the program with respect to SHG related engagements. As per 97% of TG women, they were connected to a SHG through the NGO, while 25% also had friends who were part of it. Around 89% of the women stated that being a SHG member has positively impacted their business and household income to a large extent.

Program impact on income: The average monthly income of TG increased from Rs.2,312/- to Rs.14,443/- after the program. This is effectively 5 times of their earlier income. It is also 3 times the current earning of CG women, (Rs.4,333/-). The maximum income post intervention goes up to Rs. 30,000/-. Furthermore, even the lowest income (Rs.9,000/-) among the treatment group post intervention is higher than the average income of both the treatment group before intervention and that of the control group. This highlights the definite positive economic benefit derived by the TG post intervention. The mean asset value for TG is at Rs. 66,484/- post the intervention, from a situation where they hardly had any assets prior to the intervention.

Program impact on living standard: Targeting the Hardcore poor' program has been a resounding success in improving the lives of women beneficiaries. The study found that majority of women from TG were confident of earning more than before, ate at least two complete meals every day, lived in pucca houses, and felt confident about their decisions due to the program.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The programs assessed under Mission Sunehra Kal had well-defined goals aligned with the organization's values. They effectively engaged stakeholders, including employees, NGOs, and local communities for implementation. Stakeholders played a key role in ensuring program sustainability. These stakeholders were also successful in making the programs sustainable. For example, Water User Groups in water stewardship programs, School Management Committees in school wash programs, etc. Recommendations can further enhance these strengths.

- **Encourage women farmers to participate in Horizon I programs:** The program can further encourage the participation of women farmers in the watershed, climate smart agriculture and social forestry programs through collaboration with women led groups and other awareness initiatives.

- **Forward linkage support within value chain**: The Horizon I program can enhance its impact on farmers by providing them with forward linkage support within the value chain. This support can include providing guidance on how to add value to their commodities through processing and packaging and connecting them to potential buyers or markets for their products.

- **Separate toilets for Students with Special Needs (SWSN):** To ensure inclusivity and accessibility, it is recommended that the program includes construction of toilets for children with special needs, in addition to boys' and girls' toilets. These toilets should be equipped with ramps and designated spaces for children with special needs. This will help promote a safe and supportive learning environment for all children in the program.

- **Systems for sale of compost:** To further support the community composting efforts, the program can provide training to the green workers on identifying potential markets for the sale of compost. This would not only help in generating revenue for the program, but also provide opportunities for the workers to improve their livelihoods.

- **Developing alumni network in vocational training programs:** It is understood that tracking students post course post placement could be challenging due to their lack of availability and change in contact numbers for follow up surveys. However, improving and maintaining strong alumni and peer network can help alleviate the issue. In addition, the program could also consider leveraging technology to improve tracking and communication with the participants. For example, a mobile application or a web-based portal could be developed to allow participants to update their employment status and income levels, and to receive notifications about job opportunities and other relevant information. This would not only make tracking easier, but also provide a platform for participants to access ongoing support and resources.

- **Refresher training programs for women empowerment beneficiaries:** To ensure continued success and growth for women empowerment beneficiaries, we recommend implementing refresher training programs every year for next 3 years. This will help ensure that the women are in the direction of growth in a sustainable manner.

Annexure

Annexure I - List of Projects under Impact Assessment

S. No.	Project Code	NGO	Theme	State	District	Study conducted by
1	14	SEARCH	Water Stewardship	Andhra Pradesh	Prakasam	CRISIL
2	15	MYKAPS	Social Forestry	Karnataka	Mysore	CRISIL
3	37	MYRADA	Water Stewardship	Andhra Pradesh	Guntur	CRISIL
4	67	MYRADA	Water Stewardship	Andhra Pradesh	Guntur	CRISIL
5	91	Pratham	Primary Education	Andhra Pradesh	Prakasam	CRISIL
				Karnataka	Bangalore	CRISIL
				Maharashtra	Pune	CRISIL
				Tamil Nadu	Coimbatore	CRISIL
				Telangana	Khammam	CRISIL
				Uttar Pradesh	Saharanpur	CRISIL
6	94	Pratham	Vocational Training	Andhra Pradesh	Guntur	CRISIL
				Maharashtra	Pune	CRISIL
				Punjab	Kapurthala	CRISIL
7	143	AFARM	Climate Smart Agriculture	Maharashtra	Pune	CRISIL
8	154	MVS	Climate Smart Agriculture	Punjab	Kapurthala	CRISIL
9	188	Dhan	Water Stewardship	Telangana	Khammam	CRISIL
10	202	DSC	Climate Smart Agriculture	Maharashtra	Pune	CRISIL
11	210	WASH	Solid Waste Management	Telangana	Khammam	CRISIL
12	238	IIRD	Water Stewardship	Rajasthan	Jhalawar	CRISIL
13	251	MYRADA	Water Stewardship	Karnataka	Kolar	CRISIL
14	256	WASH	Health & Sanitation	Uttar Pradesh	Saharanpur	CRISIL
15	273	SMGVS	Water Stewardship	Rajasthan	Bundi	CRISIL
16	283	BLS	Vocational Training	Tamil Nadu	Pudukottai	CRISIL
					Thiruvallur	CRISIL
17	289	Dhan	Water Stewardship	Tamil Nadu	Pudukottai	CRISIL
18	294	Bandhan	Women Empowerment	Telangana	Khammam	CRISIL
				Uttar Pradesh	Saharanpur	CRISIL
19	304	RDO	Solid Waste Management	Tamil Nadu	Coimbatore	CRISIL

"If we stop thinking of the poor as victims or as a burden and start recognizing them as resilient and creative entrepreneurs and value-conscious consumers, a whole new world of opportunity can open up"

-C.K.Prahlad, The Fortune at the Bottom of the Pyramid