UNDERSTANDING GIVING BEHAVIORS OF PROFESSIONALS IN INDIA

2025

SVP INDIA

GivingPi
India Family Philanthropy Network

dasra

CONTENTS

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*GivingPi is India's first and exclusive invite-only family philanthropy network anchored under the aegis of Dasra, globally recognized as one of India's most trusted strategic philanthropy organizations with a deep understanding of the Indian social sector.

* Social Venture Partners India is a pan-India collaborative philanthropy organization whose vision is to provide individuals with a platform to engage with philanthropy, enabling them to amplify their social impact through meaningful contributions to non-profit organizations through financial resources, their expertise and their valuable time.

FOREWORD

India's economic growth is increasingly powered by a rising class of professionals. These first-generation wealth creators—many at the helm of sectors such as technology, finance, law, consulting, and medicine are not only driving wealth creation but are also key players in shaping the nation's private sector growth. Their influence on consumption patterns, investment strategies, and innovation is particularly evident in the services sector, which now contributes more than half of India's GDP. Through their entrepreneurial risk-taking, forward-thinking investments, and appetite for disruption, they are propelling private sector expansion and sustaining economic momentum. Yet, their impact extends beyond economics. This cohort is uniquely positioned to drive social progress and, through strategic, targeted philanthropy, holds the potential to shape a more equitable and sustainable future for India. Philanthropy in India is at a crucial juncture. As wealth creation accelerates, there is a growing consciousness about the need for greater social responsibility. Today, more professionals than ever are stepping forward, contributing their wealth, time, and expertise to address some of the country's most pressing developmental challenges.

At Dasra, we witnessed this shift first-hand through initiatives like the Dasra Giving Circles (DGCs), which operated between 2010 and 2020. DGCs emerged as a pioneering platform engaging high-earning professionals—many of them first-generation wealth creators—by providing a structured, collaborative approach to philanthropy. Through resource pooling, shared expertise, and collective decision-making, DGCs enabled professionals to support high-impact organizations while deepening their understanding of India's social sector landscape. During this period, philanthropy began to shift from a space traditionally dominated by legacy families and large corporations to one where mid-level donors and professionals played an increasingly prominent role.

Today, this cohort continues to shape India's philanthropic future, demonstrating the immense potential of collective action in driving sustainable change. These industry leaders are bringing the same strategic mindset that fuels their business success to their philanthropic efforts, combining financial resources with a genuine desire to create lasting impact. Yet, despite their growing importance, this group remains under-researched in terms of their philanthropic engagement. There continue to be significant gaps in understanding how best to support and amplify their giving. Challenges such as limited access to reliable data, underdeveloped peer networks, and the complexities of engaging effectively with nonprofits must be addressed to realize the potential of this cohort. Encouragingly, this group is not satisfied with passive philanthropy. They are actively seeking ways to deepen their involvement, whether through volunteering, contributing their expertise, or participating in collective giving initiatives. Collaborative efforts, such as pooled funds and strategic partnerships, offer an exciting path forward, allowing these professionals to amplify their impact by working together.

This study serves as a call to action. If we are to harness the full power of this rising class of givers, we must create an ecosystem that supports them to contribute in ways that are both impactful and aligned with their values. By providing the right tools, data, and platforms for engagement, we can unlock the catalytic potential that India's professionals hold—not just for economic growth, but for creating an India that realizes its highest aspirations.

I extend my gratitude to Stanford PACS, whose work inspired us to explore this cohort's philanthropy in the Indian context, for their guidance through this process. I would also like to thank SVP India for their partnership and outreach support in this research. I am grateful to all professionals who generously shared their stories, experiences, and insights. Your commitment to driving meaningful social change is both inspiring and essential to shaping India's future.

Neera Nundy
Co-founder and Partner, Dasra

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A growing number of high-earning professionals are playing an increasingly significant role in driving the country's economic growth. In 2023, India sustained a robust GDP growth rate of 8.2%, with over 60% of this driven by private consumption, largely led by the expanding affluent class, projected to reach 100 million people by 2027. Professionals from key sectors such as technology, finance, and entrepreneurship are uniquely positioned to shape India's future through both economic investments and philanthropic efforts.

While traditionally led by legacy business families, India's philanthropic landscape is now witnessing the rise of professionals who are engaging in social causes early on in their careers. These mid- to senior-level executives are bringing a structured, strategic approach to philanthropy, motivated by personal values, societal responsibility, and the desire to create meaningful impact. Supporting their philanthropic aspirations can significantly bolster funding for civil society.

This study explores the philanthropic motivations and behaviors of 36 professionals in India, inspired by similar research conducted by Stanford PACS. The sample was further stratified into two categories. The first category, service professionals, comprised diverse professionals such as lawyers, consultants, and finance professionals, who typically operated on fixed, salaried incomes. The second category, sovereign professionals, comprised technologists and entrepreneurs and was characterized by more autonomous career paths, such as business ownership. The study addresses two key questions: What influences the giving patterns of professionals? How do they engage in philanthropy? By answering these questions, the study provides insights into the factors that influence motivations, giving approaches, challenges, and opportunities that shape this group's philanthropy.

Socio-cultural contexts and value systems:

Deep-rooted family traditions, cultural expectations, and societal norms influence philanthropic behaviors. Family values, generational generosity, the influence of spouses and children, and the impact of career stages affect the timing and approach to giving. Early exposure to giving within families instills values of generosity that professionals carry forward. Service professionals often engage further in philanthropy post-retirement, while sovereign professionals start earlier, using business channels like CSR. Philanthropy also helps teach future generations about social responsibility. A disconnect between work and social impact drives service professionals toward philanthropy, while sovereign professionals integrate social responsibility into their business practices.

Economic rationale and relationship with wealth:

These factors focus on how financial circumstances, reflections on privilege, and personal engagement affect motivations for giving. Experiences of economic mobility and an awareness of societal disparities fuel a strong desire to give back for professionals. Emerging evidence suggests that they begin their philanthropic journeys earlier in life, spurred by detachment from wealth and the desire to create meaningful impact during their lifetimes. The COVID-19 pandemic has been an inflection point for many, reinforcing the need for timely and impactful giving.

Barriers in the philanthropy ecosystem and infrastructure:

These factors refer to challenges that professionals encounter, which, when addressed, can enhance their engagement and unlock greater capital from this cohort. Barriers to giving often stem from the overwhelming nature of early-stage philanthropy, challenges in deciding how much to give, and a lack of reliable data for decision-making. Professionals face difficulties in identifying core focus areas and the amount of time and resources they can dedicate. Additionally, there are challenges in building relationships with nonprofit leaders, with differences in pace and risk appetite, creating friction in collaborative efforts.

Opportunities in the philanthropy ecosystem and infrastructure:

The philanthropic ecosystem can be optimized to support professionals' giving behaviors. Flexible giving models, such as combining direct transfers with pooled funds, offer professionals the opportunity to balance personal involvement with collective efforts. Non-financial contributions, through time, expertise, and networks, serving as mentors, advisors, and board members, deepen engagement with nonprofits. Collaborative forms of giving, such as participating in peer networks and pooled funds, are gaining traction. Many professionals adopt a geography-agnostic approach to their giving, focusing not only on urban areas but also underfunded regions such as rural and tribal communities, recognizing the importance of distributing resources more equitably.

Common giving behaviors among Indian professionals:

The study found more similarities than differences in the philanthropic behaviors of service and sovereign professionals, challenging initial expectations. This convergence can likely be attributed to several shared factors. Both groups were deeply influenced by Indian cultural values and family traditions of giving, which fostered a commitment to social responsibility from an early age. Their similar educational backgrounds instilled values of ethical leadership and community service, further shaping their philanthropic outlook. Exposure to global issues likely influenced their focus on pressing challenges like climate change and social justice. Additionally, participation in philanthropy networks such as GivingPi and SVP India created opportunities for shared learning and reinforced common approaches to giving.

Unlocking the philanthropic potential of India's professionals:

India's economic growth is increasingly being shaped by high-earning professionals who, with their expanding wealth, have the potential to make a substantial impact on both economic and social development. However, unlocking their full potential requires engaging more deeply with the underlying motivations and values that drive their philanthropic behaviors. Intermediaries and wealth managers are uniquely positioned to support the growing philanthropic momentum of this group. They can offer personalized advisory services, facilitate access to credible data for informed decision-making, expand corporate volunteering programs, enhance donor engagement, foster peer networks for knowledge sharing and collaboration, and leverage technology to streamline giving and measure impact.

PARTICIPANT PROFILE

A total of 36 professionals participated in the study. Recruitment primarily took place through the GivingPi and SVP India philanthropic networks, with 35 of the 36 professionals being members of at least one of these networks. Participants were shortlisted if they were first-generation wealth creators and held academic degrees in fields such as medicine, law, management, or other professional disciplines.

Categories of Participants

The participants in the study were stratified into two categories. The sample had almost an equal mix of professionals from both the categories – service (47%) as well as sovereign professionals (53%) (figure 1).

Figure 1: Categories of study participants (in %)

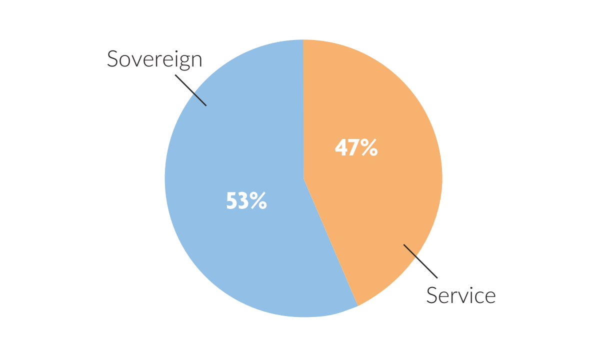
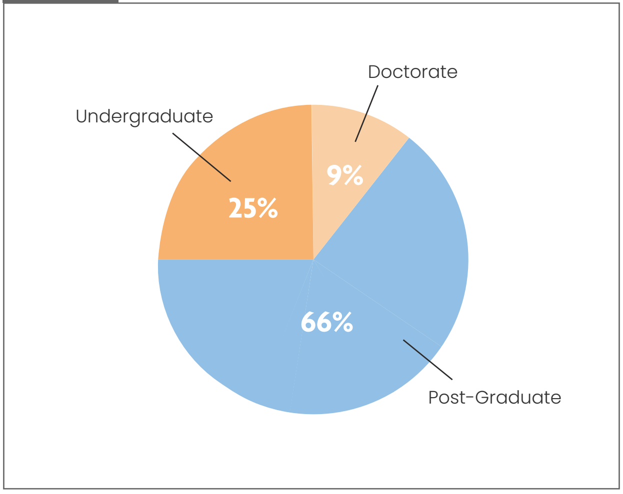


Figure 2: Educational backgrounds of study participants

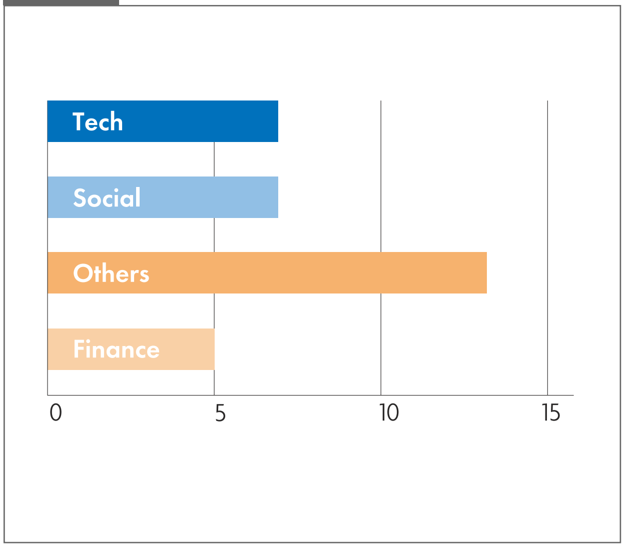


Education & Professional Backgrounds

Two-thirds (66%) of the professionals had completed their postgraduate education, with many holding degrees in fields such as engineering, finance, and marketing (figure 2). Additionally, 25% of the professionals had undergraduate degrees, and 9% had completed a doctorate.

Although most study participants were members of the GivingPi and SVP India philanthropic networks, they represented heterogeneous backgrounds and professions. The majority came from fields such as technology, finance, and the social sector (figure 3), with law and medicine also being common among those outside these primary categories. Additionally, a significant proportion of professionals were also entrepreneurs and business-owners in their fields.

Figure 3: Professional backgrounds of study participants



Gender

Researchers made efforts to ensure diversity in the sample; however, they were constrained by the available pool of participants. Consequently, the study's findings are limited in representing the experiences of women in high-earning professions. With men making up 87% of the sample (28 participants) and only 4 women included (figure 4), the study offers limited insight into how gender influences philanthropic attitudes and behaviors among professionals.

Figure 4: Gender of study participants

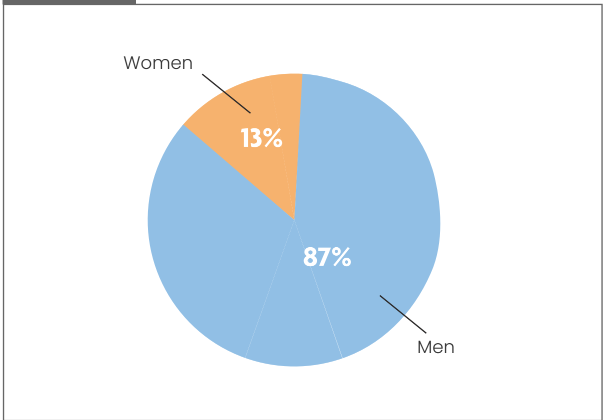
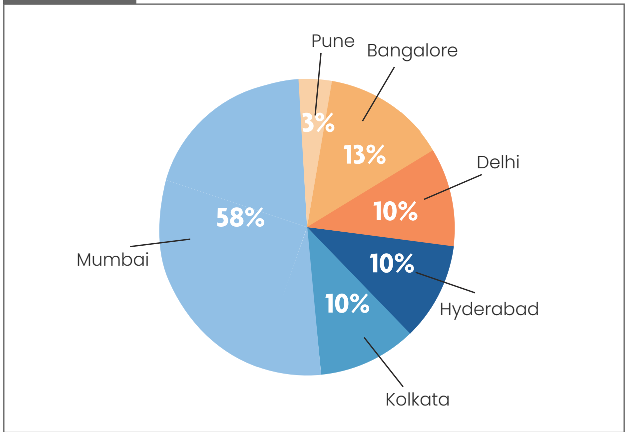


Figure 5: Georgraphical spread of study participants



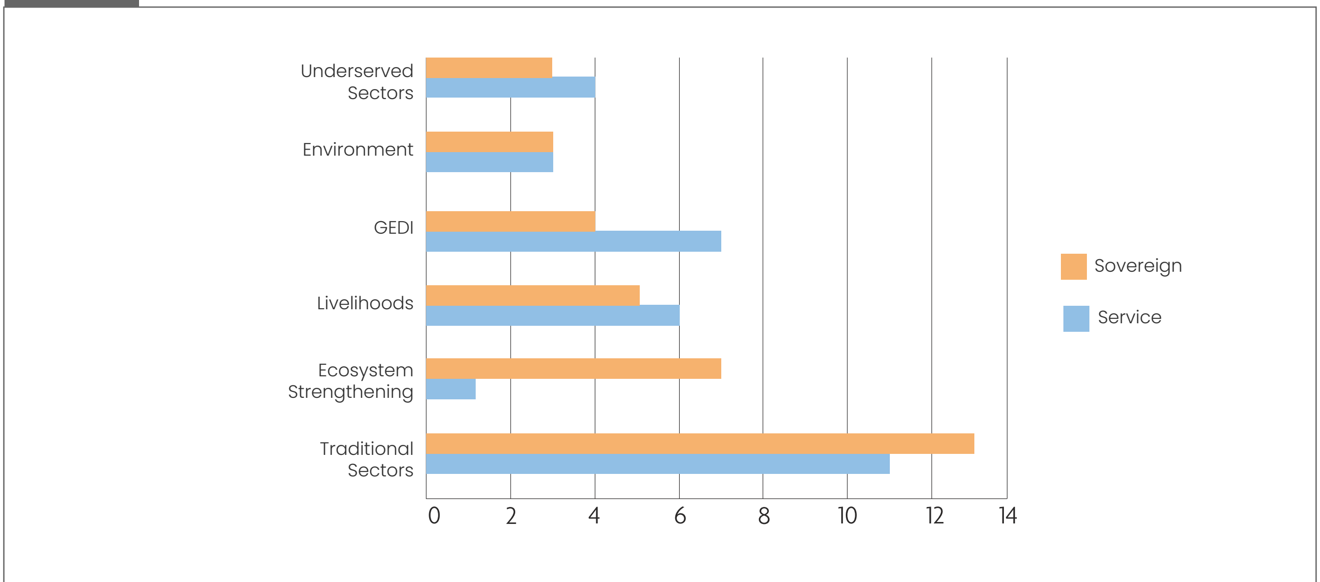
Primary Residence of Participants

Participants were primarily based in Tier-1 cities with more than half residing in Mumbai, and others located in Delhi, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Bengaluru, and Pune (figure 5). This distribution highlights the urban-centric nature of the participant pool, which reflects the concentration of professionals in major metropolitan areas.

Sector of Funding Interest

Both service and sovereign professionals show a strong preference for traditional sectors* like healthcare, education, and senior care, with 34% of service professionals and 37% of sovereign professionals interested in these sectors. Sovereign professionals, often with larger giving capacities, are also more

Figure 6: Sector of funding interest



inclined to support ecosystem strengthening** (20%) compared to service professionals (3%). This is likely due to their ability to sustain larger, long-term investments in areas like capacity-building and environmental resilience. Both cohorts are increasingly open to emerging causes such as "Livelihoods," "Environment," and "GEDI*," reflecting a growing alignment towards addressing systemic challenges like social equity and sustainability alongside more traditional priorities (figure 6).and sustainability alongside more traditional priorities (figure 6).

**Traditional sectors: Education, Healthcare, EdTech, Senior care, and Hunger relief; GEDI: Gender equality, Social justice, Disability, and Mental health;*

***Ecosystem strengthening: Capacity-building, Research, and Public policy;*

****Underserved sectors: Underserved geographies, Underfunded sectors, Vulnerable communities, and Heritage*

Annual Giving

Insights into the annual giving behaviors of service and sovereign professionals revealed notable differences in their approach. Sovereign professionals often hesitated to disclose specific amounts, but those who reported shared absolute numbers (figure 8). Service professionals preferred disclosing giving as % of their income and typically contributed <1% or 10-15% of their income, with a few outliers giving as much as 15-20% (figure 7). Service professionals contribute smaller amounts as compared to sovereign professionals owing to fixed monthly salaries. However, both groups demonstrated a strong commitment to philanthropy, shaped by their distinct financial circumstances and sense of responsibility.

In absolute terms, the giving across both categories ranged from INR 3 lakhs – INR 20 crores. This broad range underscores the wide financial capacity within these cohorts. While smaller contributions reflect early-stage philanthropic exploration, larger donations signal more strategic, established engagement, highlighting the need for tailored guidance to help maximize impact across this spectrum.

Figure 7: **Range of giving (as a % of income) among service professionals**

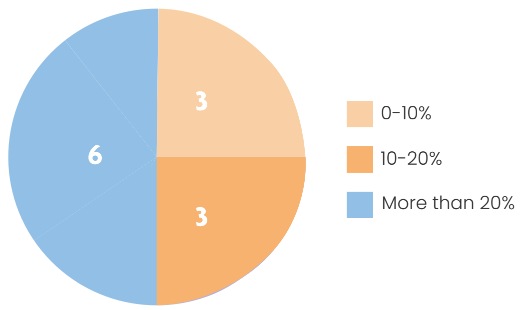
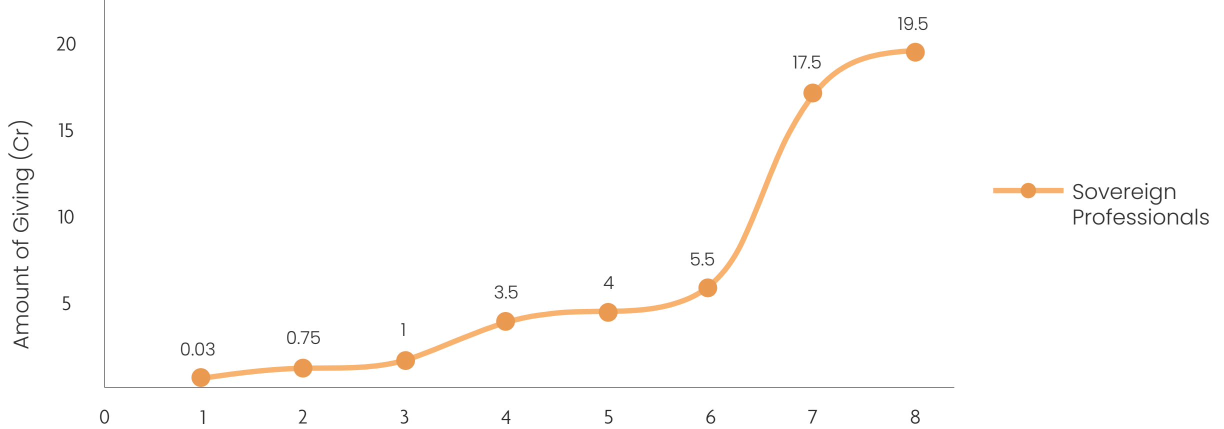


Figure 8: **Range of giving (in absolute numbers) among sovereign professionals**



CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

India's rapidly growing affluent population is at the forefront of wealth creation, and is reshaping the country's economic landscape. This group holds a significant share of the nation's assets, positioning them as key influencers in setting trends across spending, consumption, and investment. India's services sector, which employs much of this new generation of wealth-creators, has emerged as a significant contributor to the country's economic growth. In 2024, services accounted for 55% of the total size of the economy, solidifying the sector's role as the emerging backbone of the economy.[1]

Entrepreneurs and professionals working in fields such as technology, finance, and law are at the forefront of this shift in wealth creation. Their leadership in these high-growth industries underscores their potential to shape not only economic outcomes but broader societal trends, presenting unique opportunities for philanthropy.

Economic Impact and Potential for Development

This cohort's contributions to economic growth emphasize its potential to play a key role in driving development. Despite global challenges, the Indian economy maintained a strong GDP growth rate of 8.2% in 2023.[2] Notably, private consumption accounted for more than 60% of this growth, highlighting the expanding role of India's affluent population in steering the nation's economic momentum.[3] Since 2020, the number of working age Indians with a per capita income over USD 10,000 (approximately INR 8.3 lakhs) has grown nearly 12 times faster than the country's population.[4] Although this group currently constitutes only the top 4% of the country's working population, it is projected to expand to nearly 100 million.[5] This high-earning professional segment, with its access to capital, high propensity for discretionary spending, and influential status, is well-positioned to play a catalytic role in India's economic advancement and in driving societal development through strategic investments and philanthropy.

Rising Philanthropic Engagement Among Professional Indians

A growing body of evidence highlights that affluent Indians are increasingly demonstrating a strong propensity for giving back to society through philanthropy, with professionals engaging in giving much earlier in their careers. The India Philanthropy Report 2024 estimates that contributions from High-Net-Worth Individuals (HNIs) and affluent givers to private philanthropy could rise to over 35% by FY 2028, up from 22% in FY 2023. Motivated by personal reasons and a desire to strengthen the nonprofit ecosystem, the report notes 57% of professionals show a greater interest in supporting ecosystem-building initiatives compared to 35% of business-owners.[6]

This cohort is not only contributing financially but also investing their time, expertise and networks towards strengthening the nonprofit ecosystem in India. Professionals in the 40 to 50 age group, particularly in sectors like technology, manufacturing, and financial services, are becoming more structured and strategic in their philanthropic approach. Unlike billionaire donors, these professionals display greater openness to innovation and flexibility, often supporting non-traditional sectors such as organizational development.[7]

Initiatives like LivingMyPromise, which invites professionals to pledge at least 50% of their wealth to philanthropy, and the Young India Philanthropic Pledge, where young change-makers commit 25% of their wealth to global impact, reflect this growing commitment. These efforts foster collaboration, impactful giving, and a broader shift towards strategic, long-term philanthropy. The rise of mid-level donors complements the contributions of legacy philanthropists, creating a more diverse and engaged philanthropic ecosystem.

As this cohort gains prominence in India's philanthropic landscape, gaining a deeper understanding of their motivations, behaviors, and challenges becomes essential. The research on this cohort of donors is limited. Despite their potential for stable contributions due to liquid wealth and predictable cash flows, they face limitations from insufficient support platforms, which hinder sustained, strategic giving. As a result, their contributions often remain more campaign-based rather than long-term. This study aims to address these gaps by investigating the key factors that shape the giving patterns of professionals and their engagement in philanthropy.

CHAPTER 2:
METHODOLOGY AND LIMITATIONS

Research Questions

This study set out to understand the philanthropic behaviors of professionals using a qualitative research approach, which was inspired by a similar study conducted by Stanford PACS in the US.[8] The primary research questions guiding this inquiry were:

I. What factors influence the giving patterns of professionals?
II. How do professionals engage in philanthropy?

Sampling Strategy

Researchers identified 'professionals' as mid- to senior-level executives and C-suite professionals who are engaged in philanthropy. Despite varied career trajectories and wealth levels, givers in this group typically had net worth ranging from INR 7 crores to INR 200 crores (approximately USD 850,000 to USD 25 million).[9]

This study recruited 36 professionals through purposive sampling, ensuring they fit the cohort profile. To identify suitable participants, researchers considered whether individuals were first-generation wealth creators and held academic degrees in fields such as medicine, law, management, or other professional disciplines. Participants were primarily recruited through the GivingPi and Social Venture Partners (SVP) India philanthropic networks, with 35 out of the 36 professionals being members of at least one of these networks.

Sample Stratification

To gain a nuanced understanding, the sample was further stratified into two categories based on the study by Stanford PACS. The first category, service professionals, comprised diverse professionals such as lawyers, consultants, and finance professionals, who typically operated on fixed, salaried incomes. The second category, sovereign professionals, comprised technologists and entrepreneurs and was characterized by more autonomous career paths, such as business ownership. This stratification enabled researchers to examine commonalities and differences in how these two groups approach philanthropy in the Indian context. A total of 15 service professionals and 17 sovereign professionals were interviewed for the study. An approximate number of 16 interviews were conducted — which is considered an appropriate number to achieve data saturation in qualitative research.[10]

Interview Protocol

Interviews were conducted virtually, via video conferencing, which lasted between 60 to 90 minutes. A semi-structured format was used for the interviews, to account for new themes that could emerge from participants' responses. Interview questions were designed to explore different aspects of professionals' philanthropic motivations, their journeys as givers, factors influencing their giving decisions, and how

Validation of Findings

Findings from the interviews with professionals were validated through additional conversations with sector experts, including intermediaries, private wealth managers, and philanthropy advisors to gain a broader understanding of trends in the philanthropy of Indian professionals. Triangulating respondent insights using these perspectives helped researchers glean and articulate a macroscopic view of their findings, with a focus on envisioning how this cohort's engagement can grow. This was particularly crucial given the unavailability of robust secondary data specific to the philanthropy of professionals in India.

Limitations:

- Validating self-reported data from professionals presented a challenge, particularly due to cultural sensitivities around discussions of wealth in India. As a result, questions about annual income and funds allocated to philanthropy were approached with utmost sensitivity.

- While some professionals were forthcoming in answering questions about their giving, others were less inclined to do so. This challenge was compounded by the absence of readily available secondary data on this cohort's wealth and philanthropy that could be used to lend more context to their responses.

- Research on philanthropy in India is still emerging, and largely led by intermediaries or academic think tanks. Different entities in this space have chosen to cover this subject from their own vantage points, which makes it difficult to examine a holistic picture.

- To mitigate potential conflicts of interest arising from Dasra's role as an intermediary in India's philanthropy ecosystem, researchers actively engaged with external networks and sector experts to validate their findings.

- The respondents were recruited through philanthropy networks. This suggests a pre-existing level of exposure to philanthropy education, concepts, and practices. We acknowledge that this could have influenced their responses and findings.

- While researchers aimed for the sample selection to be representative of diverse sectors and reached a credible threshold for data saturation, the small sample size means this study does not provide population-level findings about this cohort's philanthropy. Instead, it focuses on identifying and articulating philanthropic behaviors that can serve as a reference framework for designing effective strategies tailored to this cohort.

CHAPTER 3:
DRIVERS OF GIVING AND ENGAGEMENT IN PHILANTHROPY

This chapter presents the findings of the study, focusing on the key drivers of philanthropy and how professionals engage in giving. It examines various interconnected factors that influence giving patterns, including socio-cultural contexts and value systems, economic rationale and the relationship with wealth, and the barriers and opportunities within the philanthropy ecosystem and infrastructure.

SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEXTS AND VALUE SYSTEMS

Factors correlated to socio-cultural contexts and value systems refer to the deep-rooted influences, such as family traditions, cultural expectations, and societal norms, that drive motivations for giving and shape the philanthropic behaviors of professionals.

A. Family values and traditions nurture and sustain a culture of giving

> *"Giving is a family affair; It's not just about writing cheques; it's about instilling values, fostering togetherness, and creating a shared sense of empathy for us all."*

Most professionals, both in the service and sovereign sectors, reflected on how family values and early exposure to their family's philanthropy, despite financial constraints, influenced their mindset as children. Many noted that generosity had been a value passed down through generations, instilling an appreciation for the act of giving. As one professional shared, "My parents always emphasized the importance of helping others. Their actions taught me that wealth is not just for personal gain but for the benefit of the community."

Another philanthropist elaborated, "My grandparents were very community-oriented, and their legacy of giving back influenced my parents. Now, we encourage it in our children." This tradition of generosity not only strengthened the value of giving across generations but also embedded philanthropy into the family's identity and cultural practice.

In some cases, professionals highlighted the role played by their spouses and children in nudging them towards philanthropy. One professional noted, "My spouse has always been my partner in our charitable endeavors. Their passion for certain causes has broadened my commitment." Similarly, observing their children's involvement in volunteer work and community service was cited as a factor that reinforced the importance of giving back, as professionals found it "incredibly rewarding to watch their children develop a sense of responsibility towards society".

B. Age and stage of giving may vary across professions

> *"What if we don't live long enough to retire and then do these things?"*

Professionals for this study were a heterogeneous group when it came to age, career milestones, and stages of giving. While most were new to philanthropy, a handful had been giving for some years.

Service and sovereign professionals diverged in how life stages influenced their engagement with giving. Service professionals, who operated within a fixed income, reported that balancing their monetary and time contributions to philanthropy with familial responsibilities was important. Some viewed retirement from full-time employment as an inflection point, enabling them to do more philanthropy, both in terms of money and time. One finance professional shared that once their kids had grown up, they found "an ideal time in [their] life to engage more intensively with giving."

On the other hand, not being bound by a fixed income allowed sovereign professionals to explore different channels of giving earlier in their lives, even though it also posed a slight risk of inconsistent philanthropy due to business reinvestment needs. Sovereign professionals described how setting up a corpus fund for philanthropy or engaging in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives through their businesses helped them get involved in giving. Passing business ownership to their children and liquidity events also played a role in enabling them to increase their engagement with philanthropy. One business owner in the medical field described how a partial liquidity event significantly increased their disposable income, which led them to view philanthropy as a more essential part of their life. Another giver shared that since their children now take care of the business, they can "fully focus on philanthropy."

C. Philanthropy is a means to inculcate generosity in the next generation

> *"I believe my kids are more mindful about what they buy and how they spend their money. They've learned to prioritize sustainability and social responsibility over convenience and luxury a little more."*

Professionals reflected on the impact their giving practices had on their family. Most felt their philanthropy had a positive impact, while some remained neutral. This influence manifested in significant shifts in daily consumption choices, career and financial decisions among young adults, and as smaller acts of kindness among younger children. Observing these changes further motivated professionals to continue their giving journey. One individual explained, "Seeing the impact of our work has inspired my children to not just look for jobs for a paycheck, but to seek opportunities to contribute to society through their work." This sentiment was echoed by another professional, whose daughter donated part of her first paycheck to a local charity, while another professional mentioned their son doing the same.

When asked whether they were intentional about shaping their children's mindsets, we received mixed responses. While some were deliberate in their efforts, involving their children in volunteering activities and having active dinner table conversations around philanthropy, others noted behavioral changes in their children and attributed these shifts to organic influences rather than intentional efforts. One professional shared how field visits with their children helped them understand societal inequalities, “When my children join me on field visits and see different parts of the world, they understand that not everyone has equal access to wealth and opportunities. It’s an eye-opening experience that teaches them the importance of giving back.” Another giver observed subtler impact, stating, “I don’t see examples of big giving, but I see them being thoughtful and inclusive, always considering how to help at home and ensure others have access. That’s the difference I have observed.” One professional shared a story of their 11-year-old buying a balloon from a vendor after a movie, not because they wanted the balloon, but to help the seller who had a baby who looked weak.

These narratives illustrate how philanthropy can create a ripple effect, embedding values of generosity and social responsibility across generations.

D. Seeking interlinkages between professional lives and social good

> *“I did not find my work meaningful, that is why I quit my job. It was pretty much a means to an end for me. Once I had financial security, I couldn’t see the point in continuing down the same path.”*

Service professionals often found it challenging to directly associate the outcomes of their jobs with social good, which in turn motivated their philanthropic efforts. One professional described how the “commercial overload” that dictated the interests of a company they worked at for several years did not “gel with their value system” beyond a point. A finance professional noted their industry’s “myopic focus on its own needs, despite it being one of the highest-paid industries by a margin anywhere in the world.” Another in the same field observed that “there is no special inclination or a giving culture in this industry.” This sense of disconnect between their work and the desire to contribute positively to society frequently drove service professionals to seek greater purpose through philanthropy.

Sovereign professionals, on the other hand, often viewed their businesses as extensions of their philanthropic efforts, emphasizing that their enterprises directly supported the livelihoods of their employees. One entrepreneur shared, “Scaling an organization creates social good—you create jobs and education by upskilling people. The most satisfying part of running my business was seeing people grow.” They showed a strong inclination to understand organizations’ business models and sought to offer support through their generalist business skills. Another entrepreneur noted that being a business owner had taught them to “look for multiples”, reflecting their preference for giving to nonprofits that aimed to scale.

Embodying an Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) orientation in their business decisions also influenced this perspective. For instance, a real estate entrepreneur mentioned that all the buildings constructed by their business over the last 20 years were “green buildings.” Another entrepreneur in the banking sector emphasized that improving the country’s quality of infrastructure was central to the vision behind their ventures. Sovereign professionals also aspired to build a culture of giving among different stakeholders through their businesses. They encouraged volunteering and pro-bono services among their employees and advocated for the importance of charitable giving to their customers.

ECONOMIC RATIONALE AND RELATIONSHIP WITH WEALTH

Factors correlated to the economic rationale and relationship with wealth refer to how financial circumstances, reflections on privilege, and personal engagement drive motivations for giving and shape the philanthropic behaviors of professionals.

A. Firsthand experiences of economic mobility foster a sense of responsibility

> *"Wealth should be used to create impact. A small portion can be for personal needs, but the majority can and must be dedicated to leaving the world a better place, at least for a few people."*

Most professionals in this study identified as first-generation wealth creators from lower to middle-income households. They reflected that their upbringing in financially constrained environments had led them to develop an appreciation for money, understand the importance of prudent financial management early on, and commit to using wealth meaningfully while avoiding flashy lifestyles. This sense of responsibility was echoed by one professional who remarked, "We should be responsible for the society around us. We cannot call ourselves fortunate unless we care for those who are less fortunate,", while another noted, "Accumulating wealth is absolutely useless beyond a point."

The concept of wealth as custodianship emerged as a central theme. One professional shared, "You are a custodian for others. It's not just your wealth. Wealth comes to you for a reason." This perspective framed wealth as a responsibility rather than an entitlement, emphasizing its role in serving a larger purpose. Many professionals echoed this sentiment, conveying a mix of emotions, feeling both gratitude for their wealth and discomfort over their privilege. They articulated a strong belief that with great wealth comes an obligation to give back, arguing that while some of their resources were dedicated to personal and family enjoyment, a significant portion should be allocated towards the betterment of society.

B. Detachment from one's wealth provides an impetus to start giving earlier in life

> *"Real wealth is measured by the impact we create, not by the assets we hoard. Our legacy is defined by the lives we touch, the communities we uplift, and the changes we inspire. We can't take anything to our deathbed."*

One of our initial assumptions was that first-generation wealth creators would prioritize keeping their wealth within the family. Contrary to this assumption, most professionals exhibited a notably detached relationship with their wealth, opting to engage in philanthropy much earlier in their careers. The COVID-19 pandemic could be considered as an inflection point where trust barriers were lowered, and supporting those in need became a larger common objective. One professional shared, "The pandemic reminded us that time is precious, and so is the opportunity to make a difference." Another echoed a similar sentiment, "The crisis showed us how interconnected we are. Our resources can be pivotal in supporting communities and driving change today, not just in some distant future."

The perspective that the greatest gift parents could give their children was the opportunity to build their own legacy, rather than merely inheriting wealth, was a common sentiment. Givers in this cohort preferred that their children build their own paths. One professional emphasized that it was important for their children to be "self-made," noting that leaving behind too much wealth for them could hinder their growth and resilience. This reflected a broader ethos of using wealth proactively, rather than merely preserving it for future generations. As another professional noted, "Wealth is not just for personal comfort; it's for creating opportunities and uplifting others."

C. Reflecting on privilege and social disparities fuels the desire to give back

> *"I believe it's essential for everyone in a country like India, with its deep historical and contemporary inequalities, to recognize that what we take for granted is a daily struggle for many. In this context, it doesn't make sense to hold on to more than what you need. This deeply embedded belief drives my impulse to give."*

Professionals across both service and sovereign cohorts consistently emphasized self-awareness and recognition of their privileges as motivators for their philanthropy. As one individual shared, "I've been fortunate in many ways, and it's crucial to recognize that. This awareness fuels my commitment to help those who haven't had the same opportunities." Awareness often translated into a self-imposed goal to give back.

Their responses also suggested a strong desire to focus on impact and to see tangible results from their philanthropy. "It's not just about giving money," one individual remarked, "it's about understanding where you can make the most difference and committing to that cause."

They felt a strong obligation to help those who lacked opportunities, recognizing the societal disparities that exist. One professional described it as "almost a responsibility for people who are able and have resources to help those who have been unlucky through no fault of their own," emphasizing that "it's not that they are less capable; they could be better than you." This awareness often compelled professionals to use their resources to bridge existing gaps. Another professional explained, "Once you become aware of the inequality around you, it's hard to ignore it."

Professionals further shared that philanthropy also offered them an opportunity for personal development, thereby, benefiting both the giver and the receiver. One individual observed, "Giving back is as much about personal growth as it is about helping others. It's a journey of understanding your place in the world and realizing the potential that you have to make it better."

D. On-ground engagement deepens one's commitment to social good

> *"Volunteering changed my perspective entirely. The people I met and the stories I heard moved me in ways I never imagined, driving my commitment to make a difference."*

Professionals consistently noted that time spent on the ground, interacting with communities, and witnessing the realities faced by those they aim to support, deepened their understanding of the impact they could make. As one professional shared, "Volunteering in underserved areas opened my eyes to the immediate needs and challenges people face daily. It's one thing to read about issues, it's another to see them up close."

Professionals indicated that these firsthand experiences often acted as powerful motivators, fostering a stronger emotional connection and a deeper sense of responsibility while also providing practical knowledge that informed their perspective. "Being in the field, you learn what works and what doesn't," one individual explained, "it informs our approach and helps us tailor our support to meet real needs, rather than perceived ones." For most professionals who volunteered, this experience cultivated a lasting commitment to service, and embedded philanthropy into their core values.

E. Giving is led by the mind as well as the heart

> *"My entire life has been driven by data, intellect, and logic. In giving, I've realized you also need a lot more heart. I tend to be much more involved in causes that resonate emotionally. While I use data to ensure the effective utilization of my contributions, the decision to give is guided by the heart."*

When asked about whether they use data in their philanthropic decision-making, we received mixed responses, where professionals used a mix of both heart and mind. Many indicated that their giving was driven more by instinct and an emotional connection to the cause, with "no decision trees or strategies" involved. However, understanding the founders' commitment, passion, and approaches were noted as important factors in building a connection. One professional noted, "Ultimately, organizations are human beings." A few professionals also shared the importance of field visits, which allowed them to see the ground realities first-hand and meet those involved.

Some professionals stressed the importance of "grounding their decisions in solid evidence" whenever possible. While the giving process was often unstructured and driven by requests or outreach from others, they mentioned leveraging data and reports when available. Many funders, part of networks like

GivingPi, SVP India, or Rotary, felt fortunate to have access to reports and data through these connections. Gathering information helped them ask the right questions and address gaps, particularly since they were new to philanthropy and the social sector. This included "quantitative and qualitative data around the sector, annual reports of nonprofits, and talking to people associated with the NGOs." Overall, professionals had mixed responses on how they use data while giving. For some, data helped them understand the need for funding certain initiatives, while for others, the decision to give was purely driven by the heart. However, data was crucial in assessing the impact of their contributions, ensuring their donations made a tangible difference.

A common method for finding reliable nonprofits to support, as cited by most donors, was turning to references from their peers or extended family members. One professional mentioned they relied heavily on "people that they knew," emphasizing, "we didn't do anything unless we knew the people very well." This sentiment was echoed by another, who noted that "peer networks were a big supporting factor while making giving decisions." Trust was crucial, with professionals explaining that their decisions were influenced "because of recommendations from people they trusted" and by friends who vouched that "those were great institutions, especially when giving in a new geography."

BARRIERS IN THE PHILANTHROPY ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Factors correlated to barriers in the philanthropy ecosystem and infrastructure refer to challenges expressed by professionals that hinder their giving. These include limitations in resources, access to information, and support systems that make philanthropic decision-making and engagement more difficult.

A. Navigating early stages of philanthropy can be overwhelming

> *"Before 2016-17, for about 35 years, I only wrote cheques. Initially, it was daunting. I supported various causes but struggled to see where my contributions made the most impact. It was a challenging and often frustrating journey."*

Professionals represent an emerging cohort within the Indian philanthropy landscape, with most professionals in the early stages of their giving journeys. One of the most reported challenges was identifying their core focus areas. This exploratory phase often involved experimentation — many chose to give learning grants to multiple nonprofits, to understand which causes resonated with them. One professional shared, "It's not always clear where to start or which causes to support; there's a lot of trial and error involved in figuring out where you can make the most impact." Another professional who funded a wide range of causes explained, "I've funded everything from education programs to environmental initiatives, each experience teaches me something new, but it can be overwhelming trying to find the right fit."

The question of whether to give time, money, or both, and whether to support established organizations or grassroots movements, adds to the complexity. "It's a learning process," explained another professional, "each step, each experiment brings you closer to understanding where you can truly make a difference."

B. Deciding how much and where to give is not easy

> *"I should be able to give easily. I should be able to understand where my giving is going. So, the platforms to support giving should be much better."*

At a personal level, professionals frequently noted the difficulty of having limited resources to support numerous causes, leading to challenges in prioritization. One individual candidly remarked, "I guess that we don't have a lot of money." Another mentioned, "No external factors [drive my giving] except how much money I have to provide. I typically give generously if there is money." Some also acknowledged personal barriers such as time and health constraints, which, whether due to financial limitations or other responsibilities made giving decisions more complicated. One professional shared, "I feel I can do more but I'm not able to. I am my own barrier. Maybe with time but I just need to advance my giving journey."

At the sector level, professionals highlighted the need for reliable and credible data on diverse causes and nonprofits, particularly those that have undergone due diligence to make informed giving decisions. One professional shared, "We want to make a difference, but without clear data on which initiatives are effective, such as comparative studies on similar programs or impact assessments showing long-term benefits, it's challenging to allocate funds wisely." Another echoed this sentiment, noting, "I do feel like there is an absence of good quality data and research on both what are impactful solutions and what are underfunded impactful solutions."

They also highlighted the need for stronger support systems to aid in decision-making. "Having access to knowledgeable advisors who understood both the philanthropic sector and the local context would be invaluable," noted one individual. One professional expressed surprise at the limited availability of meaningful Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) data, highlighting a need for more robust impact assessments. Others echoed this sentiment, noting that detailed impact data is increasingly sought to justify contributions.

Another important insight that emerged from the professionals' reflections was the need to balance the power dynamics inherent in philanthropy, noting that contributing substantial amounts of money created a hierarchical relationship between the donor and the grantee. One professional described this power imbalance as "toxic," while another noted that it can sometimes be "a little condescending and paternalistic from the donor to the NGO. This defeats the purpose of philanthropy, as it can result in NGOs feeling disrespected and unable to fully pursue their own goals." To address this, professionals emphasized the need for philanthropists to approach their "giving with humility and a willingness to learn from those on the ground"

A sector expert highlighted challenges for those beginning their philanthropic journey in smaller cities like Pune, as compared to Delhi. These challenges included geographical location, cultural mindset, and personal savings, particularly for those aiming to join philanthropy networks that require a minimum contribution.

C. Lack of opportunities to engage with peers limits the cohort's ability to learn

> *"Wherever you try to have a conversation within your personal network, there's zero receptiveness. We've figured out that there's no point in being an evangelist because people need to be at the right stage in their lives to actually hear what we're saying."*

Professionals also highlighted challenges in discussing their philanthropy both within their personal networks and publicly. They reflected that discussing personal philanthropy within their immediate networks often proved difficult due to a lack of like-minded individuals. Initiating these conversations felt awkward and unproductive. As one professional noted, “Role modeling and showcasing more stories of philanthropists would help, but this is hard because we, as a culture, are shy about talking about our giving; we prefer to do it silently.”

While professionals expressed their openness to learning and engaging, they acknowledged a notable scarcity of platforms, convenings, and opportunities for knowledge sharing targeted at this segment of givers. One individual remarked, “There’s a real need for platforms where we can exchange ideas and learn from each other. Without these interactions, it’s difficult to refine our approaches and maximize our impact.”

D. Building strong relationships with nonprofits demands time and effort

> *“It’s about finding common ground and aligning our efforts – we want the same things.”*

Sovereign professionals with an entrepreneurial mindset reported that it sometimes took longer to establish relationships with nonprofit leaders, noting a disconnect in how both sides approached problems and opportunities. Sovereign professionals found it initially challenging to match the pace of nonprofit founders who may be more risk-averse or less inclined to innovate too early, whereas these funders were “fast-moving and used to taking calculated risks.”

However, they saw potential for collaboration in bridging these differences. One individual noted that applying profit-driven strategies from business to philanthropy challenged their perspective, pushing them to “find innovative ways to align with the NGO’s goals and maximize social impact.”

OPPORTUNITIES IN THE PHILANTHROPY ECOSYSTEM AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Factors correlated to opportunities in the philanthropy ecosystem and infrastructure refer to pathways that professionals are interested in, and when leveraged, can enhance their engagement and unlock greater capital from this cohort, providing a basis for designing effective strategies tailored to their philanthropic interests.

A. Combining giving modalities like direct transfers and pooled funds offers flexibility

> *“I want to see where I'm going very clearly. I’m not giving just to tick a box. When I give money, I'll give it to people or organizations where I can see the value myself.”*

Most professionals gave directly to the bank accounts of NGOs they supported, while nearly half had also experienced giving through a pooled fund model. This dual approach allowed them to leverage the benefits of both methods. Many professionals preferred direct transfers to NGOs, as this method enabled more hands-on engagement and fostered stronger relationships with their NGO partners. An engineer-turned-social-sector-professional shared that direct fund transfers facilitated "interesting and inspiring" interactions akin to those experienced with entrepreneurs during startup investments.

For some professionals, direct transfers allowed for deeper involvement in shaping the initiatives they wanted to support, avoiding the feeling of being "small fish in a big pond." "We like to see the impact ourselves. "We want to see where we're going very clearly and give to organizations where we can see the value," an entrepreneur explained. Since most participants were early in their philanthropic journeys, pilot grants were common. While identifying organizations to give to was a challenge, they appreciated the flexibility that came with giving directly. This approach allowed them to start with smaller amounts, experiment, and tailor their giving strategies. One professional gave directly to projects where their capital could "act as a catalyst," while another preferred supporting nascent social entrepreneurs who "don't have the ability to attract large funding yet."

Finding value in pooled funds was also commonly reported. Given that many professionals were part of the SVP India network, they had experience with a pooled fund model. Participants appreciated the structure and collaborative nature of pooled funds, describing them as "an easier entry point into philanthropy." One entrepreneur noted that pooled funds could be "powerful early-stage models" where individuals started their giving journey by contributing smaller amounts to a larger pool, learnt through the process, and eventually "branch off and begin to do more of their own individual giving." This sentiment was echoed by other professionals, who expressed that participating in pooled funds helped them develop a habit of giving earlier in their lives and careers. A lawyer highlighted how processes such as research, NGO due diligence, and reporting could be conveniently outsourced while giving through this model.

B. Non-financial contributions deepen engagement and are key motivators

> *"I don't see myself spending half my time evaluating nonprofits and deciding where to cut a cheque. I'm the kind of person who will invest more time and effort, focusing on deploying funds strategically to maximize impact and align with my mission."*

Professionals across sectors and backgrounds expressed that philanthropy was not just about giving money, but also contributing to social good in non-monetary forms. This was consistent with the cohort's preference for deeper engagement and allowed them to cross-leverage their business and professional skills in their philanthropy. Professionals actively invested their time offering advice and mentorship to nonprofits and social entrepreneurs, serving as trustees and sitting on nonprofit boards. One entrepreneur emphasized that professionals could deepen their engagement with their grantee partners by serving as a "sounding board" for social sector leaders.

A finance professional shared how they were leveraging their skills to mentor small nonprofits in standard practices linked to budgeting and fundraising. Others drew on their corporate sector experience to support NGOs by driving strategic thinking, fundraising and financial planning, marketing capabilities, and supporting organizational management. Some even integrated their professional work with their giving; for instance, an executive coach considered his pro-bono coaching services to a nonprofit leader as part of his giving, stating, "If I unlock his potential, he will unlock the potential of thousands."

Professionals also contributed in non-monetary forms by using their influence to unlock resources from their peers and networks. By providing informal reference checks, they created a "multiplier effect," generating additional funding from their circles. One professional noted, "I spoke to my network and said, 'Look at this organization — I'm giving my own money.' As a result, a few others have also contributed."

Drawing synergies between different nonprofits they supported was another way professionals utilized their networks. A married couple harnessed the fact that "people want to give, but do not know where to begin", and generated funding from friends and family for their self-run social initiative. An entrepreneur who had some experience anchoring collaboratives in the social sector described how building such a collaborative called upon their time, expertise, and networks all at once.

Service professionals, especially, conveyed a desire to deepen their engagement with nonprofits once they had more time, often coinciding with personal milestones such as retirement or their children becoming more independent. A few walked towards this aspiration by transitioning full-time to the social sector when the opportunity arose. "I was 47. And I decided I don't want to be an employee anymore. There's no guarantee you're going to live to do the things you want. I said I might as well start doing things now," a professional recounted, explaining why they made such a switch.

C. Geography-agnostic giving presents an opportunity to prioritize underserved regions

> *"Geographies have not been important in my giving decisions."*

Professionals shared that their philanthropy was India-focused, without strong preferences for specific local geographies. They emphasized that as long as their money was directed towards social impact within the country, geography was "not really a consideration." However, few professionals highlighted the importance of giving to physically proximate areas to see a direct impact. One professional noted, "No matter where you are in the world, there is something to do in your own locality." This local focus was often coupled with a desire to support a broader range of causes in India, irrespective of proximity.

Despite living in highly developed urban geographies such as Delhi and Mumbai, professionals aspired to fund causes in under-resourced geographies. A finance professional stressed that philanthropists should have a preference for giving to under-funded geographies such as "Northeast India, rural areas, and tribal areas." Another entrepreneur who gives to education in the remote Himalayan region shared, "I support these regions because no one cares for them. They're invisible in India. No one sees them because they're so far and remote."

D. Openness to collaborative forms of giving reflects significant potential

> *"Philanthropy is easier when you're doing it with a group of people. We're all on the same journey; some are a little ahead, some are a little behind. But the fact that you're doing it with other people of similar backgrounds and interests, that community makes it easier."*

Professionals expressed openness towards collaboration with like-minded funders in their giving, saying, "As a collective, you can do much more. It's not just one plus one, but two or even more."

Collaborative approaches to philanthropy are becoming more prominent across the world. A 2021 global survey of philanthropic practices saw 63% respondents agree that collaboration is key to delivering meaningful social impact. In recent years, collaborative giving has gained momentum in India, marked by a rise in the number of platforms, networks, and pooled funds. Examples include ACT Grants, a philanthropic initiative established by venture capitalists, tech entrepreneurs, and social impact leaders during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. The collective has since continued institutionalizing their contributions beyond monetary donations to include time, effort, and resources. Similarly, the Young India Philanthropic Pledge (YIPP) has brought together young Indian changemakers committed to dedicating a minimum of 25% of their wealth to philanthropic causes. Universities such as the Indian School of Business, Ashoka, Krea, and Plaksha also exemplify collective philanthropy models.

Even without extensive experience in collective and pooled forms of giving, professionals valued collaboration as a way to connect with like-minded individuals, feel a sense of belonging, and find inspiration. One professional remarked, “You’re not alone in the journey of philanthropy. You get to exchange ideas, toss around thoughts, and it feels like a collective. It’s like traveling with a group of friends versus traveling solo.” Another emphasized the importance of community-building, noting, “It’s very positive to see others thinking along similar lines, especially since philanthropy isn’t a common dining room conversation in most of our peer groups. It’s nice to hear what others are doing, their approaches, and being exposed to many more NGOs than we would encounter on our own.”

COLLABORATIVE PHILANTHROPY IN ACTION

Building enabling infrastructure to foster collaboration can encourage professionals to deepen their engagement with philanthropy. Pooled funding models, which simplify the process of giving by offering opportunities to identify impactful NGOs, decide where to contribute, and streamline processes like due diligence and monitoring, present a compelling pathway forward. These models provide structured and accessible entry points for individuals starting their philanthropic journey. The successful collaborative giving models of Dasra and SVP India, highlighted below, offer valuable insights into how such approaches can mobilize greater participation and drive significant impact within the sector.

In the future, professionals and business leaders can contribute to philanthropy in more strategic and impactful ways through enabling infrastructure. It is critical for philanthropy support organizations, to strengthen the infrastructure, by building giving vehicles, enabling rigorous research, and strengthening communication channels. SVP India and the Dasa Giving Circle (DGC) models demonstrate how structured, collaborative philanthropy can unlock new resources, attract diverse cohorts, and deepen donor engagement through skill-based contributions and long-term commitments.

Intermediaries and private wealth managers have a unique opportunity to build on these successful models, mobilizing untapped potential among professionals and fostering ecosystems that inspire, support, and guide them in their philanthropic journeys. The growing interest among professionals signals a significant opportunity to design tailored platforms that make philanthropy accessible while enabling individuals to give with confidence and purpose.

DASRA GIVING CIRCLE

The Dasra Giving Circle (DGC) is a model of collaborative philanthropy that brings together like-minded philanthropists to address India's most pressing social challenges. Each circle is anchored by Dasra and focuses on a specific thematic area identified through rigorous research and sector analysis. Typically, a DGC comprises 10 members, each contributing ₹1 million ($20,000) annually for three years. The pooled funds are directed toward a high-impact nonprofit selected by the circle members, guided by Dasra's research and strategic advice.

Functioning as a pooled fund and a structured engagement platform, the DGC facilitates active donor participation in the nonprofit selection process, regular progress monitoring through quarterly reviews, and the provision of strategic inputs. Dasra complements this by delivering technical expertise, including consulting, training, and mentoring, ensuring the nonprofit scales effectively and achieves sustainable impact.

By consolidating resources, fostering collective decision-making, and offering capacity-building support, the DGC ensures resources are allocated to the most scalable and impactful organizations.

KEY FEATURES OF MODEL

Rigorous Sectoral Research and Due Diligence

Each DGC is anchored in in-depth research to identify critical social issues and high-potential nonprofits with scalable models. This ensures a data-driven approach to funding decisions, backed by a thorough due diligence process

Collaborative Resource Mobilization

DGC brings together like-minded philanthropists to pool their resources, creating a community-driven funding model that amplifies the impact of individual contributions. By fostering collaborative decision-making, it ensures that initiatives with the highest potential for systemic change receive funding

Long-Term Financial and Operational Support

Each DGC provides a 3-year funding commitment, enabling nonprofits to focus on scaling and sustaining their impact. Additionally, it offers strategic non-financial support in areas such as planning, human resources, financial management, and program refinement, ensuring holistic growth

Thematic and Targeted Interventions

Each Giving Circle focuses on a specific theme, addressing some of India's most pressing social challenges, including girl child education, urban sanitation, adolescent nutrition, and anti-sex trafficking, among others. This ensures that funding priorities align with India's development needs, delivering targeted and relevant impact

IMPACT

Through 13 Giving Circles, Dasra catalyzed grassroots impact with a multiplier effect by:

- Channeling over $4 million in pooled funding over a decade, spanning 2010-2011 to 2019-2020, with over 100 givers engaged
- Supporting organizations working across 13 critical social causes, addressing India's most pressing challenges
- Providing a 3-year funding commitment, to ensure that organizations have strategic and long-term resource access
- Empowering non-profits to strengthen operational frameworks, scale their initiatives, and strengthen community engagement
- Serving as a vital entry point for new capital into the philanthropy ecosystem, with 35% of givers

Lorem ipsum

SVP INDIA

With 3400+ individual funders/partners coming together across 6 countries and supporting more than 900 nonprofits, Social Venture Partners (SVP) International has grown into a global collaborative philanthropy initiative with an ethos of 'Engaged Philanthropy' at its core.

SVP India, established in 2012, stands out among this model – which typically prioritizes local and hyperlocal engagement – due to its pan-India presence and focus. The organization's goal is to enable strategic philanthropy and create deeper engagement for its partners with grassroot organizations for their development.

SVP India operates as a pooled funding vehicle, leveraging the collective resources of its philanthropic partners. Nonprofits are selected in alignment with partner interests, through selection processes led by partners themselves. Upon selection, SVP India provides nonprofits with comprehensive multi-year support for non-programmatic areas, including both financial resources and focused capacity-building assistance through their partners.

KEY FEATURES OF MODEL

Comprehensive Support to Nonprofits

Through its focus on building capacities & capabilities, SVP India enables partners to provide strategic guidance, functional expertise, and network connects to nonprofits. A multi-year, largely non-programmatic funding commitment, enables nonprofits to build their organization sustainably for long-term growth

Strategic Engagement of Partners

SVP's engaged philanthropy model brings together a diverse network of partners who go beyond pooling resources to actively leverage their expertise and networks to support mid-sized nonprofits. As a critical enabler, SVP acts as a 'matchmaker,' connecting Lead Partners to nonprofits based on their relevant expertise, to provide them with hands-on strategic support

Diverse Sectoral Focus

Driven by partners' interests, SVP India widely supports sectors including livelihoods and income-generation, education, women's empowerment, environment, disability rights, health and waste management, among others. Partner-led selection processes encourage sectoral diversification and opportunities to support underserved causes

Accessible Model for New Philanthropists

The pooled fund model lowers entry barriers for early philanthropists by allowing them to contribute meaningfully to large-scale initiatives through a smaller ticket size. Exposure to cross-learning and networking with like-minded peers offers a structured mechanism for those who are new to philanthropy to learn more about the sector

IMPACT

In the 12 years since its inception, SVP India has unlocked significant impact through its efforts:

- Built a vibrant community of over 750 partners across eight city chapters, with an annual ticket-size donation of INR 3 lakhs per person, encompassing both individual and corporate contributors including professionals and business owners
- Disbursed over INR 33 crores in unrestricted (non-programmatic) funding to nonprofits from 2012 to 2024, and enabled INR 47 crores additionally for their grantee nonprofits through CSRs, institutions and network connects
- Supports nonprofits across diverse sectors including healthcare, disability rights, women's empowerment, employment generation, waste management, education, youth development, sustainability, and climate action
- Engaged over 50,000 hours of volunteer time from its partners, in the form of strategic guidance and operational support linked to functions such as finance, governance, communications, technology, talent management and marketing
- Supported 190+ nonprofit organizations, across urban & peri-urban areas and thematic areas, enabling up to 6X growth in their size and scale

CHAPTER 4: COMMON GIVING BEHAVIORS AMONG INDIAN PROFESSIONALS

Contrary to our hypothesis, we found more commonalities across the giving behaviours of service and sovereign professionals as compared to differences. This convergence can be attributed to several factors, which have been described in the subsequent paragraphs.

A. Indian values are pivotal in shaping the culture of giving

Most professionals, both in the service and sovereign sectors, reported growing up in financially constrained environments where they witnessed their parents and grandparents engaging in philanthropic activities within their communities. Despite their limited resources, families still participated in acts of giving, whether it was supporting extended families, hosting guests, or contributing to community efforts. This was driven by the strong ethos of giving embedded in Indian culture.

One professional recalled, "We were a lower middle-class family, and my parents, both teachers, always had an open house. People we barely knew would stay with us for days, weeks, even months. This was normal then, though it seems out of place now. Growing up in such an environment instilled in me the importance of giving back."

These early experiences of witnessing a strong sense of duty towards family, community, and society likely shaped their philanthropic mindset. Growing up in environments where giving was ingrained, despite financial constraints, fostered empathy and a commitment to giving back. This shared cultural backdrop among service and sovereign professionals likely fostered similar philanthropic behaviors, where giving was viewed not merely as an act of charity, but as a continuation of family legacy and cultural heritage.

B. Similar educational backgrounds shape comparable outlooks

The educational backgrounds of both service and sovereign professionals reveal a high level of academic achievement, with the majority holding postgraduate degrees and some also having doctorates. Many individuals studied at institutions such as the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) and Indian Institute of Management (IIM), as well as other universities in India and abroad. Exposure to social issues, ethical leadership, and community engagement was often a key component of their education, fostering a strong sense of duty to give back to society.

Studying in environments that prioritize similar values and ethics likely shapes comparable philanthropic outlooks among these professionals, resulting in aligned patterns of giving. Furthermore, the extensive and influential alumni networks of these institutions could reinforce these values over time. For instance, Nandan Nilekani, Co-founder and Chairman of Infosys and an IIT Bombay alumnus, donated

INR 315 crore ($USD 42.7 million) to his alma mater, building on previous grants. Such significant contributions exemplify his commitment to giving back, inspiring both current students and future graduates to uphold the legacy of philanthropy.

C. Knowledge consumption from media shapes exposure to global issues

Knowledge consumption from media and other sources can significantly influence the philanthropic outlooks of professionals. Consistent exposure to urgent global issues through news and media channels can drive professionals to invest in these areas. For instance, widespread coverage of climate change, public health crises, and social justice movements heightens awareness and urgency around these topics, leading to professionals aligning their philanthropic efforts accordingly.

Additionally, both service and sovereign professionals often relied on a relatively limited pool of information for philanthropy. The fragmented nature of available data narrows the scope of accessible information, exposing them to a concentrated set of ideas and frameworks. This shared exposure influences their philanthropic behaviors, potentially resulting in comparable patterns of giving across different professional backgrounds.

D. Participation in philanthropy networks increases awareness

Professionals in the study were part of philanthropy networks such as GivingPi and SVP India. These networks create a sense of community for philanthropists, allowing them to cross-learn from experiences. By mobilizing resources, strengthening the philanthropy narrative, and providing support to donors, these networks actively engage in accelerating the philanthropic journeys of its members.

Participation in such networks likely fosters similar philanthropic interests as members share insights, successful strategies, and common challenges. This collaborative environment may lead to aligned priorities and approaches to giving. Regular interactions expose members to a concentrated set of ideas and best practices, encouraging a standardized understanding and adoption of effective philanthropic strategies.

Additionally, these networks sometimes focus on specific areas of need, such as education, healthcare, or climate change, directing members' philanthropic efforts toward shared objectives through pooled funds or other investment-ready vehicles. This collective focus likely ensures that philanthropic behaviors and interests among network members are aligned, driven by a shared commitment to making a significant impact.

CHAPTER 5:
THE POWER OF WEALTH IS THE POWER TO GIVE

As India's wealth grows, so does the potential for catalytic philanthropy. According to the India Philanthropy Report 2024, the number of HNIs and affluent individuals is projected to reach 1.7 million by 2028, with a cumulative net worth of USD 54.7 million (INR 460 lakh crore). This growth represents a real opportunity with contributions from HNIs and affluent donors in private philanthropy, expected to rise from 22% in FY 2023 to over 35% by FY 2028.

This increase in wealth is paralleled by a deepening commitment to social impact. Professionals across sectors are beginning to view philanthropy not merely as a charitable endeavor, but as a core aspect of their personal and professional legacies. Many professionals are already engaged in giving, and plan to expand their efforts. Service professionals envision deepening their philanthropic involvement after retirement, while sovereign professionals see it as part of their succession planning, passing on their business to their children and devoting more time to giving. Reflecting this commitment, one service professional noted, "I want to have a discipline of philanthropy, where parts of this annual income aren't even considered yours, just as you don't consider tax money yours." Another shared, "I personally feel that my giving will and should grow."

This shift in mindset—from wealth as a tool for personal benefit to wealth as a means for societal good—emerged as a defining characteristic of this group. The realization that wealth is transient, and its true value lies in what it can accomplish for others was a strong motivator. One professional stated, "You only take to heaven what you give away on earth. Since you can't take anything with you, you might as well give it away." Another professional expressed, "Money has never held much value for me because I've always had an abundance of it. I don't intend to take anything with me when I die, so it's important that I leave something meaningful behind."

In terms of how they intend to give, this group showed a clear preference for grantmaking to nonprofit organizations through direct grants, rather than own-and-operate foundations. They seek more structure and aim to deepen their impact by honing areas of existing interest while staying open to new opportunities. With new wealth on the rise and a strong commitment to giving, the philanthropic sector has a unique opportunity to tap into this momentum. By engaging effectively with this cohort, the sector can unlock substantial capital and critical resources to address the country's most urgent developmental challenges.

UNLOCKING PHILANTHROPIC POTENTIAL – OPPORTUNITIES FOR INTERMEDIARIES AND WEALTH MANAGERS

As the wealth and philanthropic engagement of professionals grows, intermediaries and wealth managers are uniquely positioned to guide this cohort's giving journeys. Pathways to enhance their philanthropy include:

1. Bespoke Support Services

Intermediaries and wealth managers can offer high-quality, personalized strategic advice that support this cohort in planning and charting their philanthropic journeys. By understanding the unique values and goals of each donor, advisors can develop tailored philanthropic plans that maximize impact. Access to specialized consultants—including legal, compliance, tax advisors, M&E experts, and communications professionals—can provide additional support. These experts can ensure legal compliance, optimize tax benefits, and enhance the visibility and impact of philanthropic initiatives.

> *"Philanthropy should be tailored to corporate professionals' interests and time constraints, offering personalized projects over generic approaches. Wealth managers can position it as an innovative investment strategy, emphasizing both social and financial returns."*
>
> *– Prabhir Correa*

2. Deepening Donor Engagement

Wealth managers can support clients in navigating the complexities of hands-on philanthropy, offering guidance on sustainable funding models and ensuring long-term financial commitments align with their goals. Intermediaries can complement this by creating innovative pathways that facilitate direct engagement with NGO partners. These can include collaborative projects where donors work directly with NGOs on specific initiatives or advisory roles that leverage their professional expertise to provide strategic input. Intermediaries can further deepen engagement by offering immersive experiences, such as community stays or field visits, which allow donors to foster meaningful emotional connections. Models like listening circles, peer learning groups, and trust-building initiatives can also help donors cultivate stronger relationships with the organizations they support, making their philanthropic efforts more effective and personally fulfilling.

> *"It would be wonderful to see far more private wealth managers promote philanthropy (as actively as they do other financial instruments!) among their clients. Intermediaries and wealth managers could do more to facilitate matching between donors and NGOs, bridging existing gaps and fostering a stronger culture of giving in India."*
>
> *– Rati Forbes*

3. Building Peer Networks:

Creating strong local peer networks is essential for fostering a sense of community among philanthropists. Professionals in this study emphasized the unique value of these like-minded communities. These networks provided a supportive space for professionals to openly discuss their philanthropy —something often missing from their usual professional and social circles. Through the exchange of insights, challenges, and successful strategies, philanthropists could learn from each other and refine their approaches to giving. Spotlighting effective practices and showcasing role models who have successfully scaled their philanthropic efforts inspires members to deepen their own efforts. Wealth managers can play a key role in this by facilitating introductions to fellow philanthropists and thought leaders, allowing clients to benefit from shared knowledge and experiences. Intermediaries, meanwhile, can help create and sustain these peer networks, fostering an environment of collaboration and shared learning that encourages deeper, more engaged philanthropy.

4. Leveraging Technology:

Wealth managers and intermediaries play key roles in helping philanthropists harness technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their giving. Tools like comprehensive data dashboards simplify the management and tracking of contributions, offering real-time insights for more informed decision-making. By leveraging data from platforms such as Google Analytics, social media analytics, and custom databases, donors can identify trends, measure impact, and allocate resources more strategically. Additionally, professionals can be guided in using crowdfunding platforms like Give, Ketto, and Milaap, which provide user-friendly interfaces that streamline the process of making targeted contributions.

5. Expanding Volunteering Opportunities

There is significant potential to expand corporate citizenship and volunteering programs as companies deepen their CSR, ESG, and Business Responsibility and Sustainability Reporting (BRSR) efforts. Intermediaries and advisors can facilitate these initiatives by developing innovative models like payroll giving, which allows employees to automatically contribute a portion of their salary towards philanthropy. This approach makes it easier for employees to start with smaller amounts and gradually increase their contributions over time, fostering a habit of giving. Additionally, offering volunteering opportunities can expose employees to grassroots initiatives and provide firsthand experience of how NGOs and communities operate.

6. Improving Access to Credible Data

Robust, reliable data is critical for making informed grantmaking and partnership decisions. Wealth managers can provide insights on how philanthropy fits into a donor's broader financial strategy, ensuring that giving aligns with long-term wealth planning. Meanwhile, intermediaries can provide comprehensive well-organized information on funders and NGOs, helping donors understand who is funding what, where funds are directed, and which organizations are addressing specific issues and interventions across various geographies. Intermediaries can further enhance decision-making by providing data-backed, and evidence-based analyses of emerging development challenges. This allows donors to stay informed of evolving needs on the ground and ensure that their giving is targeted and aligned with current opportunities. By leveraging such credible data, donors can make more informed choices that maximize both the impact and alignment with their personal philanthropic goals.

> *"Data alone is not enough; it must be woven into compelling stories. Successful campaigns are driven by founder stories and emotional connections, enabling donors to truly visualize and understand the impact of their contributions."*
>
> *– Richa Singh*

CONCLUSION

With their growing wealth, professionals have the potential to significantly influence India's economic and social progress. This group is uniquely positioned to engage in thoughtful, strategic philanthropy, drawing from their lived experiences and distinct perspectives on wealth. Representing a new India – an emerging capability hub for the world – Indian professionals are driving advancements in key sectors like finance and digital technology globally. However, the current philanthropy ecosystem, with its predominant focus on UHNI and HNI givers, often overlooks this crucial demographic.

To close the gap between intent and impact – intermediaries, wealth managers, and other key stakeholders who provide support must offer tailored guidance, reliable data, and strategic insights that meet the philanthropic aspirations of this cohort. At the same time, professionals must acknowledge their influence and responsibility, seeking deeper engagement and contributing towards India's most pressing issues.

Collaboration between professionals and the wider philanthropic ecosystem will be essential to ensure their contributions are impactful, strategic, and aligned with building long-term resilience.

ANNEXURE

Detailed Profile of Participants:

S.No.	Location	Gender	Category of Giver	Sector	Education	Sectors of Funding Interest
Participant 1	Delhi	Male	Sovereign	Technology	Post-Graduate	Livelihoods
Participant 2	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Others*	Post-Graduate	Traditional** Ecosystem** strengthening Undeserved**
Participant 3	Hyderabad	Male	Sovereign	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional
Participant 4	Kolkata	Male	Sovereign	Others	Undergraduate	Traditional
Participant 5	Pune	Female	Sovereign	Social	Post-Graduate	Ecosystem Strengthening
Participant 6	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Technology	Undergraduate	Traditional Environment GEDI
Participant 7	Bangalore	Male	Sovereign	Others	Undergraduate	Traditional Livelihoods Ecosystem Strengthening
Participant 8	Bangalore	Male	Sovereign	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional
Participant 9	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional
Participant 10	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Others	Doctorate	Traditional Ecosystem Strengthening
Participant 11	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional Livelihoods
Participant 12	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Social	Post-Graduate	Traditional Ecosystem strengthening Environment Underserved
Participant 13	Bangalore	Male	Sovereign	Social	Post-Graduate	GEDI Environment
Participant 14	Delhi	Male	Sovereign	Technology	Post-Graduate	GEDI Ecosystem Strengthening
Participant 15	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Technology	Post-Graduate	Traditional Livelihoods Underserved

S.No.	Location	Gender	Category of Giver	Sector	Education	Sectors of Funding Interest
Participant 16	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Technology	Doctorate	Traditional Livelihoods
Participant 17	Mumbai	Male	Sovereign	Social	Post-Graduate	Traditional Ecosystem Strengthening Environment
Participant 18	Mumbai	Male	Service	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional Environment GEDI
Participant 19	Mumbai	Female	Service	Finance	Post-Graduate	Traditional Livelihoods Undeserved
Participant 20	Mumbai	Male	Service	Others	Undergraduate	Traditional
Participant 21	Hyderabad	Male	Service	Finance	Post-Graduate	Traditional Livelihoods
Participant 22	Mumbai	Male	Service	Finance	Undergraduate	GEDI Traditional
Participant 23	Mumbai	Male	Service	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional Livelihoods
Participant 24	Kolkata	Female	Service	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional GEDI
Participant 25	Mumbai	Male	Service	Social	Post-Graduate	Traditional Livelihoods GEDI
Participant 26	Delhi	Male	Service	Others	Post-Graduate	Livelihoods GEDI Undeserved
Participant 27	Kolkata	Female	Service	Social	Post-Graduate	Traditional GEDI Environment
Participant 28	Hyderabad	Male	Service	Others	Undergraduate	Undeserved
Participant 29	Mumbai	Male	Service	Finance	Post-Graduate	Ecosystem Strengthening Undeserved
Participant 30	Mumbai	Male	Service	Technology	Undergraduate	Traditional
Participant 31	Mumbai	Male	Service	Finance	Doctorate	Traditional GEDI
Participant 32	USA	Male	Service	Technology	Undergraduate	Livelihoods Environment
Participant 33	Mumbai	Male	Service	Others	Post-Graduate	Traditional

**Others: Law, medicine, real estate, consulting, FMCG, pharma, automobiles, engineering, mining, and cement, and chemicals; **Traditional: Education, healthcare, EdTech, senior care, and hunger relief; GEDI: Gender equality, social justice, disability, and mental health; ***Ecosystem strengthening: Capacity-building, research, and public policy; ****Underserved: Underserved geographies, underfunded sectors, vulnerable communities, and heritage*

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