N/Core
2018–21

Impact Assessment Report

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Executive Summary

N/Core is a social enterprise incubation and acceleration programme implemented by the Nudge Foundation, a section 8 company in Bengaluru, Karnataka. It seeks to provide enterprising non-profits with the requisite mentorship and tactical support for the non-profit to effectively establish itself in the social sector. N/Core was supported by Mphasis Ltd. as part of their Corporate Social Responsibility, with a grant of ₹ 4.85 crores from 2018 to 2021.

N/Core was created in 2017 after the Nudge Foundation noted a lack of a supportive ecosystem for social enterprises in India. Early-stage non-profits face various issues while building their organisations, ranging from weak organisational structures, absence of mentorship, and difficulties in navigating legal systems to low funding and poor industry connections. These problems hinder the non-profit from scaling up its operations and impact.

N/Core's primary goal is to support innovative, enterprising non-profits through experiential workshops, one-on-one mentorship, and financial grants. This would allow the non-profit to scale its impact and contribute to increasing the dynamism of the development sector in India.

This impact assessment report examines the N/Core programme from 2018 to 2021 (3 years). The assessment seeks to capture if, how, and to what extent the programme was effectively executed. Our report focusses on programme design, execution of intended activities and how they helped the target community. SoStakes has relied on a qualitative approach for analysing the programme. Primary data was collected by way of:
i.   personal interviews with the founders of 7 incubated and 1 accelerated non-profit;
ii.   group discussion with N/Core programme leads.
The framework for evaluation is based on the OECD-DAC standards of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact.

During the programme period, N/Core has successfully supported the number of non-profits it had set as its target. The programme has successfully incubated 22 non-profits between 2018 and 2021 and accelerated 1 non-profit in 2020-21. The selected non-profits interventions span across various sectors such as education (15 non-profits), livelihood (2 non-profits), and health, sports, entrepreneurship and environment (6 non-profits).
Most of the non-profits created their implementation and impact models with technology as an enabler to reach out to a more extensive beneficiary base.

Seed grants totalling ₹3.15 crores were disbursed to the 23 non-profits. Within one year of attending the N/Core programme, the non-profits raised cumulative ₹ 26.697 crore funding. Further, the incubated and accelerated organisations have survived post-incubation (except 1 non-profit) and expanded their operations and beneficiary reach.

Overall, the CSR-funded N/Core programme has gone a long way to address and support the needs of early-stage non-profits in India and assisted them in scaling their outreach and impact. Further, it has successfully contributed towards building an ecosystem of social enterprises.

Highlights (2018-21)

Programme

22 Non-profits incubated over 3 years:
- 2018-19 cohort – 6
- 2019-20 cohort – 9
- 2020-21 cohort – 7
- 1 non-profit accelerated in 2020-21

Grant Details

3.1 cr. Seed-grant (in ₹) given to 23 non-profits:
- 2018-19 cohort – 60 lakhs
- 2019-20 cohort – 90 lakhs
- 2020-21 cohort – 1.6 cr.

Implementation Process

Outreach for applications by leveraging alumni connects, & digital media.

Selection based on non-profit's impact idea, scalability and sustainability.

"Bootcamps" or workshops for building organisational competency.

One-on-one mentoring to build strategy and scale their impact.

Seed grants for refining model, product development and capacity-building.

Funding raised

- **₹~26.7 cr.** raised by 23 non-profits.
- **9** non-profits secured **more than ₹ 1 cr.** of funding within a year of their incubation/ acceleration:
  - 7 from education
  - 1 from livelihood
  - 1 from health

Survival rate

95% Out of 22 incubated non-profits, 21 have survived for at least 1 year after incubation.

Sectors & Outreach

Sector	Non-profits	Outreach
Education (capacity-building & policy)	**7** non-profits	**1 million+** children reached
Education (learning outcome-oriented)	**8** non-profits	**2.9 million+** children reached
Livelihood (women, persons with disabilities)	**2** non-profits	**2700+** persons impacted
Others (health, policy, agriculture, sports, entrepreneurship, environment)	**6** non-profits	**100k+** persons reached

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Chapter 1
Introduction

Introduction

1.1 Context

As per a 2015 study conducted by the Central Bureau of Investigation, India had more than 31 lakh registered non-government organisations operating across sectors. However, building an NGO/non-profit from an idea, sustaining it and effectively imparting social good is a complicated process. Some of the major hurdles faced by budding social entrepreneurs and early-stage non-profits are:

I.   <u>Strategic planning and bringing to scale</u>: While having a unique idea to generate social good is crucial, bringing it up to scale requires strategic planning. One of the ways this can be achieved is through mentorship opportunities from individuals and organisations from within the sector. Most first-time social entrepreneurs may not have access to such guidance.

II. <u>Gaining endorsement</u>: Philanthropic funders, impact investors, development agencies and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funders are looking towards solving a range of social issues by investing in social enterprises which can effectively 'scale' their operations and impact. However, the existence of a large number of non-profits in India makes it difficult to identify the right partners with the required expertise and credibility. While early-stage non-profits too are faced with the challenge of industry endorsement.

III. <u>Generating funds</u>: A majority of early-stage non-profits find it difficult to source continuous funding for their work. CSR grants can be effectively leveraged to scale and sustain operations. However, there are two significant problems for new non-profits –
   i.   As per Government of India regulations, only those non-profits which have existed/operated for three years or more are eligible for CSR funds. Thus, newer non-profits are ineligible for such funding.
   ii. Most CSR funds go to prominent non-profits. Smaller organisations, despite innovative interventions and reach, remain outside the CSR funding loop and are not able to secure larger grants.

IV. <u>Navigating legal structures</u>: Many early non-profits lack technical know-how of necessary legal compliances, especially related to financial laws, registration processes, required licenses etc, delay the process of setting up social enterprises.

These hurdles, among others, can be effectively addressed by early-stage stage non-profits through Social Enterprise Incubators (SEIs). SEIs address an urgent need of creating an ecosystem wherein social entrepreneurs can build up their ideas into an organisation of scale. They can aid organisations by providing mentorship, networking opportunities and access to funding channels. SEIs can assist in business plan development and execution, survival strategies, sustainability, and scaling efforts.

1.2 The Nudge Foundation

The/Nudge Foundation is a not-for-profit Section 8 company established in 2015 in Panchkula, Haryana. The foundation works towards poverty alleviation by addressing the challenge of skill deficit and increasing unemployment in India. The foundation operates through three centres – i. the Nudge Centre for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship dedicated to skill development and training; ii. N-Core, the Nudge Centre for Social Innovation, dedicated to incubating and accelerating early-stage non-profit founders through grants, deep mentoring by N/Core Partners; and iii. the Nudge Centre for Rural Development dedicated to addressing basic human development needs and extreme poverty.

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1.3 Corporate Social Responsibility of Mphasis Ltd.

Mphasis Limited carries out its CSR for the socially excluded and economically disadvantaged through its F1 Foundation The F1 Foundation, established in 1998, is a non-profit organisation aimed towards supporting unique socially beneficial programmes. The Foundation's focus areas are livelihood, education, and inclusion.

1.4 N/Core Programme (2018-21)

The Nudge Foundation has been engaging with non-profits in various capacities since its inception in 2015. In 2017, they organised a bootcamp with 20 non-profits to understand sector-related challenges, particularly those of scaling operations. The N/Core incubation programme was launched soon after with the specific objective of helping early stage non-profits to scale their impact models. N/Core's support model comprises seed grants, mentoring, facilitation of fundraising opportunities and strategic connects to high potential non-profits to achieve scalable impact.
For an organisation to be eligible for incubation, the basic criteria are:
* 12-36 months old, registered as a non-profit,
* Leverage technology as a solution.

The programme was expanded in 2018 to include an accelerator programme. The accelerator is aimed towards aiding technology-focussed non-profits which have reached growth stage to implement its model at scale. For an organisation to be eligible, the basic criteria are:
* 36+ months old, registered as a non-profit,
* leverage technology as a solution for the purpose of poverty alleviation with a proven and scalable model of change, and
* have most of core team in place.

1.4.a. Selection process

Phase 1

Outreach
* Outreach:
    * ✓ Alumni connects (e.g. Teach for India fellows, Ashoka fellows),
    * ✓ College networks, and
    * ✓ the Nudge Foundation's Center for Social Innovation's digital media sources.
* Call for applications on a rolling basis.

Phase 2

1st shortlist
* First shortlist made on the basis of basic eligibility criteria, along with
    * ✓ Non-profit's poverty linkage,
    * ✓ Details of on-ground pilot,
    * ✓ Whether one founder has a full-time commitment to the non-profit.
* Submission of business plan.
* Phone interviews with shortlisted non-profits.

Phase 3

Personal interviews
* Shortlist for personal interviews by Centre for Social Innovation mentors made on the basis of:
    * ✓ B-plan submitted in Phase 2 (clarity, scale aspirations, team capacity),
    * ✓ Founder's capabilities (commitment to the idea, understanding the complexity of the problem being addressed, compatibility of scale aspirations with the intervention idea),
    * ✓ Proof of success of the non-profit for the time period it has been in operation.
* 15-20 entrepreneurs are selected from Phase 2 for video/in-person interviews.

Final selections

Phase 4

- Final selections made by CSI mentors on the basis of:
  - ✓ B-plan submitted in Phase 2,
  - ✓ Founder's capability and commitment (personal achievements which would contribute to solving the problem at scale to the idea, long-term commitment),
  - ✓ Whether the goals set by the founder are ambitious and in alignment with the scale of the problem.
- 6-8 non-profits selected for the incubation process.
- Mentors choose non-profits for 1:1 mentoring.

1.4.b. The Incubator

N/Core's incubation programme spans 6 months. During the course of programme, an incubatee receives a seed grant, 1:1 mentoring, support for network development and potential donor connect.

The Incubation Process

SEED GRANT

Seed grant ranging between ₹ 10 lakh – 15 lakh per incubatee.
The grant is to be utilized for:
- refining impact model and executing proof-of concept,
- hiring and training early team members, and
- product development.

BOOTCAMPS
- Workshops to aid incubatees to gain crucial knowledge on aspects like Theory of Change, pitch, fundraising, marketing, and compliance structures.
- Structured workshops facilitated by industry leaders like Bridgespan, McKinsey, and DRK Foundation.

MENTORING
- Individual mentoring by a Center of Social Innovation partner to aid incubatees in refining their impact model.
- Center for Social Innovation Portfolio manager monitors achievement of stated goals.
- Site visits conducted to assess ground-level impact, and identify gaps.

NETWORKING
- Facilitation of one-on-one time with leaders, experts, and sector practitioners and potential donors.
- A large demo day event called 'Soiree' is organized for incubatees that achieved their targets to showcase their organisation.

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1.4.c. The Accelerator

N/Core's acceleration programme is for organisations older than 36 months. It spans 1-2 years, and is inclusive of 2 grant allotments, 1:1 mentoring, and a roadshow.

The Acceleration Process

GRANT

Seed grant:
₹ 25-50 lakhs to enable incubatees to complete pilot intervention, and roll-out Minimum Viable Products.

Scale Grant:
Up to ₹ 1.5 crores to help achieve a customer/beneficiary growth rate of 300-400%.

MENTORING

- Mentoring by Center for Social Innovation Partner; core team coached by functional mentors.
- Individual workshops for team-building, and for skill development like pitching, presentation skills, and long-term vision building.

ROADSHOW

- Facilitates 3-4 pitch sessions along with introductions in different cities.
- N/Core facilitates 15-40 face-to-face introductions with potential funders in their thematic focus areas and geographies for every non-profit selected for acceleration.

1.4.d. N/Core mentors

The Nudge Foundation's Centre for Social Innovation (CSI) houses several leaders from both the profit and for-profit sectors who provide mentorship to CSI initiatives, including N/Core. Over 3 years, N/Core's mentors provided crucial guidance to the incubated and accelerated organisations. The mentors for the 23 non-profits were:

I.   K R Lakshminarayana – Chief Endowment Officer, Azim Premji Foundation
II.   Kamakshi Rao – Senior Investment Director, Ankur Capital
III.   Madhav Chavan – Founder and former CEO, Pratham
IV.   Surendra K. Jain – Co-founder and Ex-Managing Director, Westbridge Capital
V.   Samit Ghosh – Founder, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank & Ujjivan Financial Services
VI.   Sanjay Purohit – Chief Curator, Societal Platform
VII.   Ujwal Thakar – Former CEO, GiveIndia and Pratham
VIII. Vandana Vishwanathan – Founder, Cocoon Consulting and ex-Independent Director, Ujjivan Small Finance Bank

What gets measured, gets valued

1.4.e. Incubated non-profits in 2018-19

1. Anthill Creations aims to bring back "play to children". It mobilizes communities to build lighter, quicker and cheaper playscapes by upcycling waste material like scrap tyres, cable drums and oil drums.

Children reached:
150k+ children;
283 playgrounds built
Reach: **18** states
Funds raised: **1.96 cr.**

2. Bridges of Sports is dedicated towards the upliftment of the Indo-African Siddi community (based in Karnataka. Their interventions impart quality sports education by equipping and developing community coaches.

Medals won by children trained: **100 (national, state, and district)**
Reach: **1** state
Funds raised: **56 lakhs**

3. Madhi Foundation focusses on strengthening foundational literacy and numeracy skills for children in primary grades across Tamil Nadu. It leverages context-specific technology (ranging from mobile apps to entire digital systems) to create meaningful learning opportunities for its target beneficiaries.

Children reached:
100k+ primary school students
*Reach*: **1** state
Funds raised: **2.7cr.**

4. Leadership for Equity is a systems-change, research and advisory organisation. It adopts a systemic approach to improve the effectiveness of public education programmes in Maharashtra. It addresses capacity-gap at two levels – institutional and system leaders – through its interventions.

Systems impact:
821k+ students and 1950+ systems leaders
Reach: **1** state
Funds raised: **2.54 cr.**
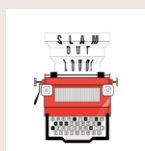
5. Slam Out Loud works at the intersection of arts, education, and leadership, using a community approach. Their intervention involves establishing art-based learning in safe spaces for children in at-risk communities.

Children reached:
50k+ at-risk children
Reach: **4** states
Funds raised: **34 lakhs**

6. Right Walk Foundation aims to achieve institutional social change through public policy interventions in Uttar Pradesh. One of its main interventions involves using the Right to Education Act Section 12.1.c to enrol children from Economically Weaker Section and Disadvantaged Group into private schools.

Children reached:
151k+ students from EWS and SC/ST/OBC groups
Reach: **1** state
Funds raised: **1.07 cr.**

1.4.f. Incubated non-profits in 2019-20

1. Anahata United Efforts Foundation provides mentoring to students in government high-schools, particularly career awareness. Its intervention includes career awareness sessions, industry visits and, scholarships/admission support for children from grades 8 – 10.

Children reached:
6000+ students
Reach: **1** state
Funds raised: **52 lakhs**

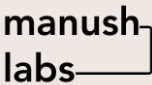| 2.	Ayang Trust works with the local community in Majuli Island, Assam to utilize modern resources and their own lived experiences to build capacity in education and livelihood. Its interventions include school transformation projects, fellowships, etc.	*Education impact:* **225** children (the Hummingbird School; LKG – Class 6) *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **1.62 cr.**
3.	Dakshas Foundation helps people from marginalised backgrounds to receive non-emergency medical treatment. Leveraging its network of healthcare partners, it boosts existing primary, secondary and tertiary healthcare structures by providing medical supplies and equipment, volunteers, pro-bono doctors, etc.	*Sectoral impact:* **Network** of hospitals and Urban Community Health Centres. *Reach*: **2** states *Funds raised:* **1.33 cr.**
4.	Green Communities Foundations assists any waste generator into turning waste neutral and prevent the waste from turning up in landfills. It works in-and-around rural and urban areas in Mumbai, Maharashtra with local NGOs, waste aggregators, and recyclers to set up reverse logistics systems and create awareness about waste management.	*Green impact:* **4000** tonnes of MSW saved from going to landfills *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **90 lakhs**
5.	MukkaMaar imparts self-defense training to school-going girls in grades 6-8 in Maharashtra. The self-defense training is incorporated into school curriculum and conducted during school hours, over 3 academic years.	*Students reached:* **6000+** in grades 6-8; *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **63 lakhs**
6.	Mitti Café, based in Bengaluru, Karnataka, creates employment and entrepreneurship opportunities for adults with physical, intellectual and multiple disability through cafes within institutional spaces.	*People reached:* **136** persons with disability; **17** Mitti Cafes *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **5.8 cr.**
7.	Shiksharth works towards improving the quality of education for *adivasi* communities in Sukma, Chhattisgarh through action-based interventions. Its interventions work towards increasing access to safe spaces for education, and developing a community-led model of education.	*Students reached:* **8000+** *adivasi* children *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **66 lakhs**
8.	SwaTaleem works in Kasturba Gandhi Residential Vidyalayas (KGBVs), with the aim of addressing educational challenges faces by its students. It works on capacity-building and professional development of KGBV teachers, along with a focus on building socio-emotional and cognitive skills of KGBV students.	*Children reached:* **900** girls in **6** schools *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **25 lakhs**

What gets measured, gets valued

| 9. | Thrive Foundation seeks to provide equitable access to mental health care, and quality social and emotional learning (SEL) curriculum programmes in low-income schools in Tamil Nadu. | *Downsized operations* *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **46 lakhs** |

1.4.f. Incubated non-profits in 2020-21

1.	Indian School of Democracy conducts short term and long-term educational and experiential programs for aspiring, grassroots political leaders between the ages of 18 and 50. Their programmes focus on creating hard skills required for public service.	*Lives reached:* **110** students *Reach*: **pan-India** *Funds raised:* **60 lakhs**
2.	Khetee has developed a fellowship program for farmers and aspiring farmers in Durdih village, Bihar, to enable them to build agro-ecological model farms. Additionally, they organize a training program for farmers for their capacity building in regenerative farming.	*Lives reached:* **29** fellows *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **12 lakhs**
3.	Labhya Foundation implements Social-Emotional Learning interventions, at scale, for vulnerable children from low-income households. It partners with state education boards to implement its programs in government schools to students in primary and secondary grades.	*Children reached:* **2.5 million+** students from **20,000+** schools *Reach*: **10** states *Funds raised:* **95 lakhs**
4.	Manush Labs, based in Mumbai, is an impact accelerator for underserved Indian innovators & entrepreneurs from tier 2 cities. It aims to empower impact driven innovators and entrepreneurs to nurture their ideas into equitable and scalable interventions.	*Non-profits reached:* **25** incubatees; *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **17 lakhs**
5.	MOWO Social Initiatives offers women motor-driving skills & create livelihood. It collaborates with organisations to create more employment opportunities for women in mobility, and works on policy advocacy.	*Lives reached:* **1900 women trained** *Reach*: **1** state *Funds raised:* **39 lakhs**
6.	VigyanShaala aims to make quality STEM education accessible to the most marginalised communities across India. They provide guided training, mentoring and project- based learning to help youth acquire critical 21st century skills.	*Students reached:* **10k+** undergraduate students *Reach*: **6** states *Funds raised:* **1 lakh**

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7. Rocket Learning (Ekho Foundation) is an ed-tech organisation. Its interventions include aiding state and district government to develop and disseminate appropriate foundational curriculum (for children aged 3-8 years) and leveraging technology to enable governments to conduct teacher training and certification.

Children impacted:
300k+ primary school students
Reach: **5** states
Funds raised: **1.26 cr.**

1.4.g. Incubated non-profits in 2020-21

1. Saarthi Education is an ed-tech organisation working towards improving foundational literacy in English and Math for children in grades 1 – 5. Its intervention uses data driven algorithms to assign worksheets to children according to their learning requirements and track the child's learning progress.

Children impacted:
7000+ from grades 1-5
Reach: **4** states
Funds raised: **1.85 cr.**

Non-profit locations

Uttarakhand 1
Haryana 1
Delhi 1 4
Bihar
Uttar Pradesh 1
Assam 1
Chhattisgarh 1
Maharashtra 4
Telangana 2

■ Incubated non-profit
■ Accelerated non-profit

Karnataka 4
Tamil Nadu 2

What gets measured, gets valued
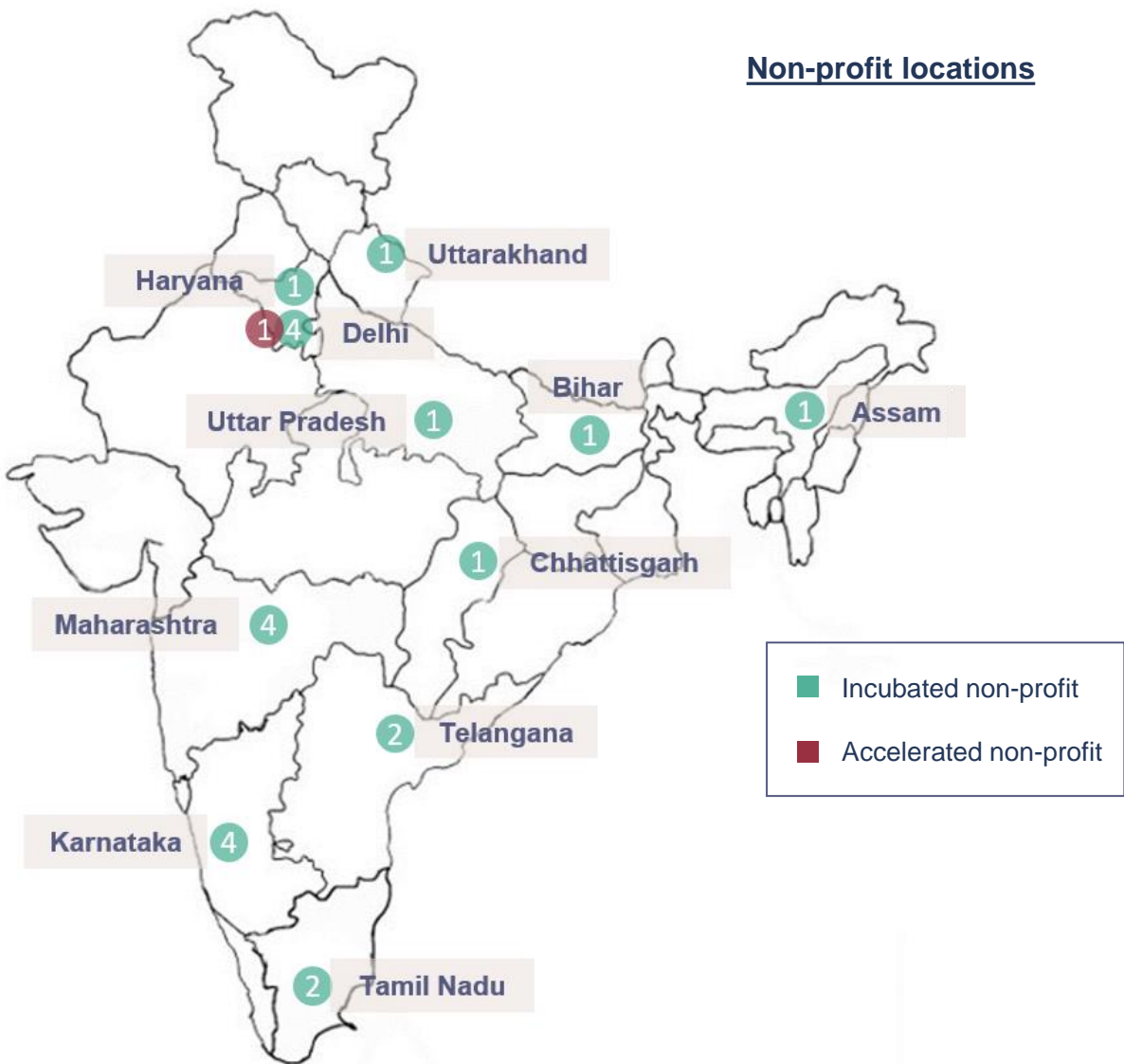
Programme Timeline (2018-21)

2974 applications received

22 non-profits incubated & **1** accelerated

₹ **3.1** cr. given as seed grant by N/Core

₹ ~**26.7** cr. funding raised by non-profits

2018-19
- ➢ **1117** applications;
- ➢ **6** non-profits incubated;
- ➢ **₹ 60 lakh** seed grant;
- ➢ **₹ 9.17 cr.** funding secured by non-profits from external donors.

2019-20
- ➢ **510** applications;
- ➢ **9** non-profits incubated;
- ➢ **₹ 95 lakh** seed grant;
- ➢ **₹ 12.17 cr.** funding secured by non-profits from external donors.

2020-21
- ➢ **550** applications;
- ➢ **7** non-profits incubated;
- ➢ **1** non-profit accelerated.
- ➢ **₹ 1.6 cr.** seed grant;
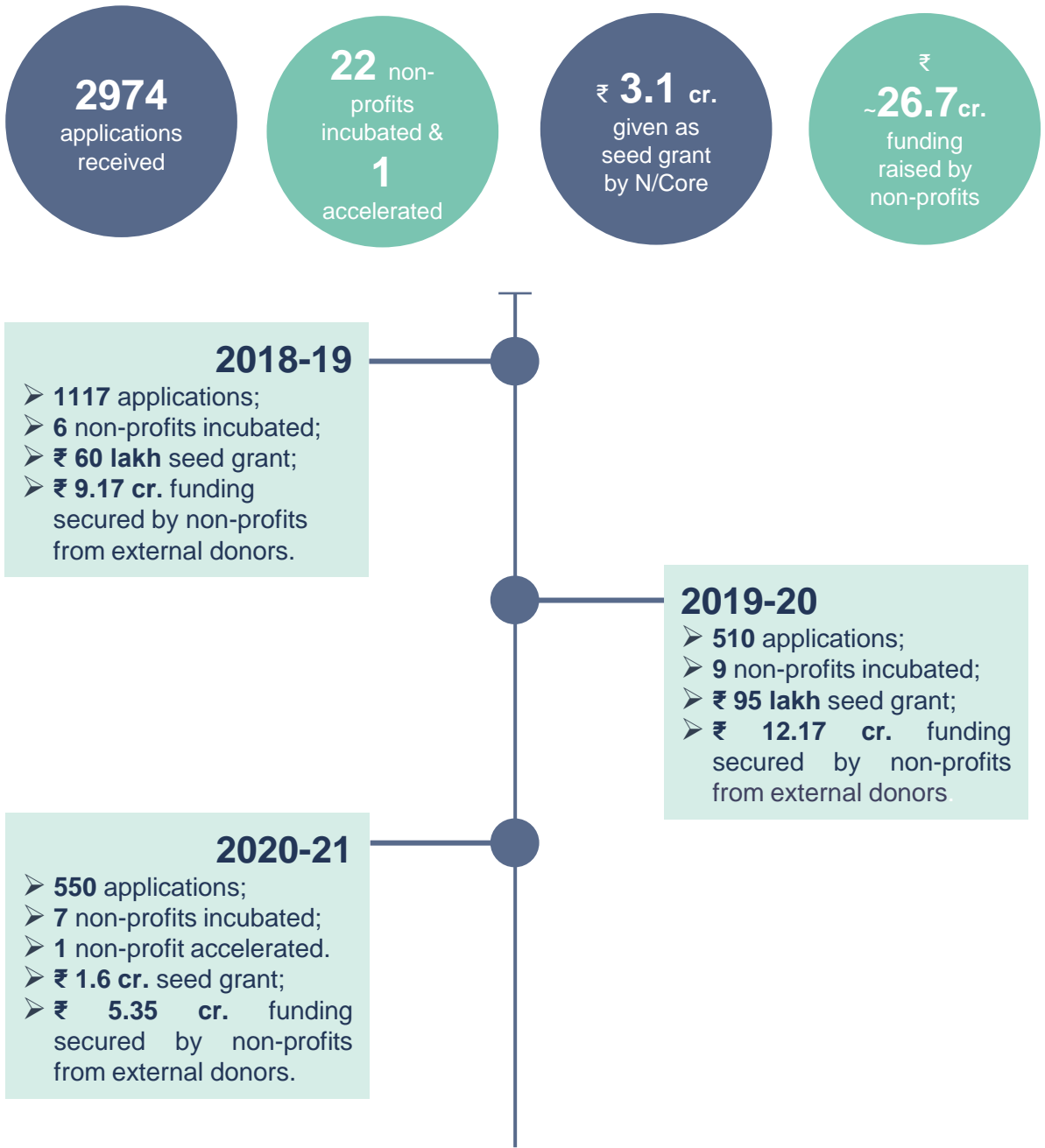- ➢ **₹ 5.35 cr.** funding secured by non-profits from external donors.

What gets measured, gets valued

Chapter 2
SoStakes' Approach and Methodology

SoStakes' Approach & Methodology

2.1 Objectives of the Impact Assessment

This impact assessment seeks to record the impact of N/Core's programme over 3 years. The study was undertaken to assess if the programme:

- Achieved the target number of incubatees as envisaged at the beginning of the programme;
- Contributed to better performance of the non-profits;
- Aided to secure external funding;
- Responded to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning to support and refine future programme implementation

2.2 a) Research Design

Secondary data analysis: Review of MoU, progress reports, and selection data.

Research approach:
- Identifying stakeholders and key beneficiaries;
- Qualitative data collection
- Case stories collected

Stakeholder identification: N/Core's programme is implemented with support from a wide range of stakeholders.
Apart from core programme staff, the team depends on external mentors, donor network, industry partners and public authorities.

Mentors — Non-profits — Prog. staff — Industry partners — Public authorities — Donors — N/Core programme

Primary data collection:
- Qualitative data collected from key stakeholders;
- Video & telephonic in-depth interviews undertaken using semi-structured interview guide.

Data analysis as per OECD criteria:
- Relevance
- Effectiveness
- Efficiency
- Impact

b) Data Sources

i. Primary data: Video and telephonic Interviews were conducted for collecting primary data. Data was collected from the following sources:

S.No.	Type of respondent	No. of respondents
1.	N/Core programme liaison	1
2.	N/Core implementing staff	2
3.	Non-profit (Incubated + accelerated)	7 + 1

ii. Secondary data: Project progress reports, beneficiary databases including demographic data, and project processes, and fund utilisation reports were provided by the implementing partner.

c) Ethical Considerations

✓ Prior consent was taken from the respondents (beneficiaries/stakeholders) interviewed for the study.
✓ The respondents were informed about the purpose of the study, as well as the ways in which the information provided would be used.
✓ SoStakes ensures confidentiality of data shared.

d) Limitations

• All interactions and interviews were conducted via telephone and online platforms due to prevailing COVID-19 restrictions.

2.3 Framework for Evaluation

We have relied on the DAC/OECD standards of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency and Impact for this evaluation. The OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) standards are aimed to improve the quality of, and strengthen the evaluation process. Evaluation practitioners widely use them for improving developing outcomes.

These parameters are measured as per indicators specified in table below:

Parameter	Description	Indicators	
Relevance	To assess whether the interventions adequately responded to the needs of intended beneficiaries.	i.	Programme Design
Effectiveness	To assess whether target outputs and outcomes were achieved.	i. ii.	Deal-flow of applicants Securing funding
Efficiency	To assess the efficiency with which the project has been managed.	i. ii. iii.	Mentoring process Programme feedback mechanism Adaption to COVID-19
Impact	To assess the contributions of the projects, in terms of social value, for the beneficiaries.	i. ii. iii. iv.	Building non-profit's financial stability Network-building Selected non-profits impact on different sectors Building an ecosystem of social entrepreneurship

What gets measured, gets valued

Photo credit: N/Core

Chapter 3
Findings and Impact

Findings and Impact

The findings have been analysed and presented using the DAC/OECD standards of Relevance, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability and Impact.

3.1 Relevance

For assessing if the programme met the needs of the target beneficiaries, we have looked at **programme design**.

3.1.a. Programme Design

Social Enterprise Incubators (SEIs) like N/Core have gained popularity in India for the last decade. It has been widely accepted that SEIs provide critical support to non-profits for them to be able to achieve stability and scale up their operations. SEIs commonly provide mentoring, grants, and networking opportunities. N/Core noted the needs of early-stage non-profits by engaging in a targeted conversation in the form of a 14-day workshop with 20 non-profits. With the observations made as well as the ideology of scaling impact, the N/Core programme was designed to include the following key components:

- **Selecting non-profits with scalable impact models:** N/Core selects non-profits with innovative ideas towards solving critical social issues in India. The selection criteria include assessing the founder's commitment to the non-profit and the scalability of the proposed impact model. Final selections into N/Core are made by the CSI mentors. 15 out of 23 selected non-profits are working in the education sector. The remaining 8 organisations operate in various sectors like health, environment, and livelihood.

- **Conducting effective workshops:** The "Bootcamp" workshops are interactive in nature. Incubatees apply the skills derived from the workshops to refine their vision and business plans. Since the workshops are conducted with non-profits belonging to various

Varied intervention models selected, such as:
- Providing safe spaces for children's learning: **Shiksharth Foundation, Slam Out Loud;**
- Facilitating access to education through the RTE Act Section 1.2.c – **Right Walk Foundation;**
- Generating livelihood opportunities for women and disabled persons **– MOWO Social Initiatives, Mitti Cafe;**
- Enabling marginalised persons in rural areas to access non-emergency medical care – **Dakshas Foundation**

sectors, it supports peer-group learning. The programme also supports the incubatee in developing pitch skills for their final graduation event (Soiree), presenting to mentors and potential funders. To ensure rigour and achievement of short-term goals, the seed grant is disbursed in 2 tranches.

Mentoring topics:
- goal-market strategy
- capacity-building
- developing monitoring and evaluation structures,
- systematic and effective project expansion, &
- financial planning.

- **Facilitating 1:1 mentoring:** Accomplished individuals from the profit and non-profit sectors mentor the non-profits on an individual basis. Non-profits who had applied multiple times before being selected reported that the mentors provided valuable inputs during the selection stage itself. This allowed them to refine their impact model even if they were not selected. Post-selection, the mentorship aids the non-profit founders in building strategy and scale impact.

3.2 Effectiveness

For assessing if and how the programme met its target outputs, we have looked at the following – **deal-flow of applicants** and **funding raised by selected non-profits.**

3.2.a. Deal-flow of applicants

N/Core set the following targets for its incubation programme:

- receive at least 500 applications for incubation for each cohort,
- maintain a selection rate of 1-2% ,
- select at least 7 non-profits for incubation and 1 non-profit acceleration.

N/Core has achieved its intended targets. Between 2018 and 2021, N/core received a high volume of applications, totalling to 2177 applications. A rigorous selection process was followed for all applicants. The average selection rate has been maintained at 1-2% to ensure support for most deserving enterprises.

Applications received:

2018-19 (Cohort 1) – 1117
2019-20 (Cohort 2) – 510
2020-21 (Cohort 3) – 550

Selection rate:

2018-19 (Cohort 1) – 0.90%
2019-20 (Cohort 2) – 2.16%
2020-21 (Cohort 3) – 2.73%

Non-profits have been selected from various sectors in order to ensure impact scaling across these sectors:

23 non-profits selected

Education – 15 non-profits

Livelihood – 2 non-profits

Others (agriculture, entrepreneurship, environment, health, livelihood, policy, sports) – 6 non-profits

3.2.b. Securing funding

Securing external funding post the incubation process is an important indicator of the success of these non-profits. N/Core has tracked external funds raised within a year of incubation. N/Core's targets for its incubatees' fund-raising were:

- Cumulative ₹ 2 crores raised by each cohort within 1 year of selection,
- At least 3 organisations raise 40 lakhs each.

Amount of funding raised:

- >2 cr. each by 3 non-profits
- 1 cr. – 1.99 crores by 4 non-profits
- 0.99 cr. – 40 lakhs by 9 non-profits
- Less than 40 lakhs by 4 non-profits

The seed grant of total 3.1 crores provided between 2018 and 2021 was used by incubatees for scaling up their operations and improving programme models. This has also helped to attract new donors.

N/Core incubatees have successfully achieved the funding targets, raising a total of ₹ 26.697 crores. All 3 cohorts (2018-21) raised more than ₹ 2 crores, with 17 organisations raising more than ₹ 40 lakhs each.

3.3 Efficiency

For assessing how efficiently the programme was managed, we have looked at the following – **mentoring process, programme feedback mechanism,** and **N/Core's adaption to COVID-19.**

3.3.a. Effective mentoring process

Mentorship was reported as the most beneficial programme activity. Mentors supported the founders to refine the clarity of the vision and mission of their organisation. According to incubatees, the most helpful insights were regarding capacity-building, project expansion, and financial planning.

Most beneficial activity: Mentorship

N/Core's mentors are from diverse backgrounds, belonging to both for-profit and non-profit sectors, and have considerable experience in their field of work *[see in Section 1.4.d]*. Mentoring consists of 45-60 minute sessions with mentors at least once every 14 days and is flexible depending on incubatees' requirements.

3.3.b. Effective feedback mechanism

N/Core has a well-structured system to enable a smooth incubation process. Portfolio managers interacted with incubatees every week to track the incubatees' progress and future requirements. Feedback from incubatees was collected in two stages:

i)   after workshop week – the incubatees were asked to rate every session conducted during the 5-day workshop week, and provide suggestions for better curation of sessions;

ii)   after graduation from incubation – the feedback questions covered the entirety of the programme, including
- ✓   N/Core's impact on the non-profit,
- ✓   mentoring,
- ✓   N/Core implementation team's support, &
- ✓   cohort culture.

Incubatees' NPS rating:
- Cohort 1 (2018-19) – **9.6**
- Cohort 2 (2019-20) – **9.55**
- Cohort 3 (2020-21) – **9.4**

As a form of programme rating, N/Core collects a Net Promoter Score (NPS) from all its incubated non-profits. N/Core's target for the NPS was obtaining a score of at least 7.5/10, which was achieved.

N/Core incorporated feedback periodically. For example, upon receiving feedback from several incubatees for increasing guidance in the field of finance, N/Core has started a Chartered Account Concierge Service for its incubatees, starting 2021.

3.3.c. Adaption to COVID-19

For the cohort incubated in 2020, the programme could not be conducted in person due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, all workshops and mentoring were conducted virtually. In addition, Soiree (or the graduation day event) was modified into a televised programme and broadcast on NewsX during a primetime slot to ensure that the incubatees did not lose out on showcasing their organisation to potential donors. Incubatees reported that the programme functioned smoothly even in the virtual model. A positive impact was that a more extensive section of sector leaders could give talks to the cohort due to the location and timing flexibility provided by an online model. Additionally, WhatsApp groups were formed to facilitate cohort connect. However, both incubatees and programme managers reported that the non-profits were unable to build strong cohort connections due to low personal engagement in the online mode.

3.4 Impact

For assessing the impact of the programme, we have looked at the following – **building the non-profit's financial stability, network-building, multi-sectoral impact of non-profits,** and **building an ecosystem of social entrepreneurship.**

3.4.a. Building the non-profit's financial stability

Other than providing the seed grant, N/Core aided the non-profits to build financial sustainability in 2 ways:

i)   It introduced non-profits to prospective funders via personal introductions, panel discussions and the Soiree event.
ii)   Its mentors provided donor connects as well as advice on how to create financially sustainable project models.

21 / 22
incubated have survived post-incubation

₹ 3.1 cr. seed grant multiplied to
₹ ~26.7 cr. external funding

The incubatees were given seed grants totalling 3.1 crores between 2018 and 2021. They have successfully multiplied the seed grant and secured significant external funding totalling 26.7 crores since graduating from the incubator. This has allowed the non-profits to gain financial stability. Additionally, 21 out of 22 non-profits have significantly expanded their operations. However, 1 non-profit (Thrive Foundation) has had to down-size its operations due to low funding.

3.4.b. Network-building

Since the incubated non-profits belonged to a mixed cohort, they were able to interact with a variety of organisations within the development sector. This helped many first-time social entrepreneurs to build a support network for themselves. N/Core also helped the non-profits to showcase their work at various national and international conferences, building visibility.

3.4.c. Multi-sectoral impact of incubated and accelerated non-profits

Post N/Core, the selected non-profits have impacted a large number of beneficiaries across sectors.

*   In education, 15 non-profits reached more than 3.9 million+ children through a variety of interventions like building foundational literacy, capacity-building of teachers and policy makers, building playscapes, improving school infrastructure, etc.
*   In livelihood, 2 non-profits directly impacted 2700+ women and persons with disabilities through interventions for capacity-building and employment generation.
*   6 non-profits working in health, policy, agriculture, sports, entrepreneurship, & environment reached more than 100k+ persons.

3.4.d. Building an ecosystem of social entrepreneurship

N/Core's efforts towards scaling impact by providing comprehensive support to early-stage non-profits contributes towards building an effective ecosystem of social entrepreneurship. While there exist several incubators supporting for-profits, the area of incubating non-profits is still in its developmental phase in India. The N/Core programme is, thus, crucial for the strengthening of an ecosystem of social entrepreneurship and in turn eliciting long-term social change.

What gets measured, gets valued

Photo credit: N/Core

Chapter 4
Case Stories

4.1 Madhi Foundation

Organisation Overview

Merlia Shaukath, the founder of Madhi Foundation, has extensive experience in the development sector in India, including two years in Teach for India. After working in both TFI and in policy consulting, she realised the need to merge policy implementation, bureaucracy, and on-ground work.

Madhi Foundation was created in 2015 to bridge the foundational literacy gap in Tamil Nadu. It began with a small pilot in 3 schools in Tamil Nadu and expanded to 15 schools in 2017. In 2018, Madhi was approached by the Tamil Nadu State Education Department to implement 5 projects on their behalf.

Madhi Foundation's operations comprise 4 key components:
- revamp school curriculum to make it age appropriate;
- train teachers with new pedagogy methods to effectively teach the revised curriculum content to students;
- build a strong system to monitor/ track classroom progress (using tech - apps, dashboards);
- use data derived from its monitoring to take corrective policy decisions.

Why N/Core?

Madhi Foundation applied to N/Core seeking guidance to evolve from the start-up phase to more complex operations. They required assistance to:

➤ learn fund-raising methods,
➤ establish donor relationship & obtaining funding, &
➤ scale up operations.

> **"**
>
> **Mentorship** was a distinct highlight for us. Ujwal, our mentor, helped us to look at ways to scale our impact. **The grant given by N/core proved crucial** for scaling our operations as we were struggling to obtain funding.
>
> Further, the **hands-on experiential sessions** as part of the bootcamp were quite helpful for us as well (e.g. - creating pitch and delivering it to an audience).
>
> **- Merlia Shaukath, Founder, Madhi Foundation**
>
> **"**

📊 The Incubation Impact

- Increased it operations from 2000 schools in 2018 to **37000 schools** in 2022 (**3 million students**, 60k teachers, 45k officials);
- Works in all **38 districts** in Tamil Nadu and is responsible for **implementing the Tamil Nadu Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Mission.**

4.2 Leadership for Equity

Organisation Overview

Madhukar Banuri, Leadership for Equity's founder, finished his Teach for India fellowship gaining significant insights into the education sector, but with a feeling of leaving things incomplete. He was eager to explore the idea of scaling impact in government schools, other than through the more common teacher-training and student-teaching approach.

LFE was created in 2016, aiming to elicit systemic change for wider and sustainable impact. It works with "systems leaders" i.e., all those involved in policy-making in the Indian education system above the teacher level. The driving question behind the organisation is: "what does policy need to be to meaningfully impact children from diverse backgrounds?"

LFE's work spans three key areas:
1. Capacity-building - Build the capacity of the government to deliver quality education by conducting certified leadership courses and assisting government employees in real-time for building policy.
2. Policy – exploring ways in which top-down processes can transform to effectively impact children in education; rolling out ed-tech programmes.
3. Refining processes – institutional capacity building.

Why N/Core?

LFE approached N/Core for incubation when they decided to expand their operations beyond Pune. They required guidance to:

➢ obtain a clarity in organisation's vision,
➢ learn methods for scaling up operations,
➢ build a network beyond Pune and Mumbai, &
➢ tap into larger and newer funding bases.

> "
>
> N/Core aided us to **tap into an extensive donor network** by setting up introductions, arranging panel discussions with industry leaders and media outreach.
>
> Also, N/Core's mentorship structure was extremely helpful for LFE's growth. Mentors, Sanjay and Ujwal, provided insights on how to implement **systematic project expansion**, **build administrative structures**, and **formulate effective elevator pitches** for potential funders.
>
> **- Madhukar Banuri, Founder, Leadership for Equity**
>
> "

📊 The Incubation Impact

• Successfully expanded its operations from operating in an around Pune, Maharashtra to **across 4 states**.
• Increased its direct beneficiary base from 150-200 systems leaders in 2018 to having worked with **2000+ systems leaders** till 2021.

4.3 Mitti Cafe

Organisation Overview

Mitti Café was started by founder Alina Alam with the aim of providing adequate livelihood opportunities to adults with disabilities. Mitti Café employs adults with all forms of disabilties

forms of disabilities including sensory. Persons with disabilities are responsible for all the day-to-day operations of the café, including
• prepping ingredients,
• cooking,
• serving customers, and,
• maintaining daily finances.
The first café was started in Hubbli, Karnataka in 2017, post a door-to-door campaign for filling vacancies in the café.

Why N/Core?

Mitti Café came to N/Core when they decided to significantly expand their operations. They were seeking to:

➢ improve storytelling skills,
➢ improve pitch capabilities,
➢ learn fund-raising methods,
➢ establish donor relationships, &
➢ gain clarity about compliance regulations.

“

Mentorship was a distinct highlight for us. Our mentor, K.R. Lakshminarayana, provided crucial inputs for **strategy-building**, **capacity-building,** and **goal-market strategy.**
N/Core also proved vital for our success as it gave us access to a **vast donor network** and raise funds for expansion.

- Alina Alam, Founder, Mitti Cafe

„

The Incubation Impact

- Increased from 6 cafes in 2019 to **17 cafes** in 2022, across **2 states** (Karnataka and West Bengal).
- Currently employs **130+** persons with disabilities in its cafes – an increase from less than 50 in 2019.
- Provided employment-training to more than **670+ adults with disabilities**, and placed them in various offices.
- Due to COVID-19 associated office closures, many of its cafes based in corporate offices went into hibernation. The strong relationships built due to the incubation helped the organisation to pivot very fast and **create new cafes** within residential complexes, and establish its first **two public cafes** in Bengaluru.

What gets measured, gets valued

4.4 MOWO Social Initiatives

Organisation Overview

Founder Jai Bharati, an architect by profession and motorcyclist by passion, noted two gaps in India's mobility sector, through her extensive travels in the country and abroad –
i)   lack of women in driving and other mobility-oriented occupations,
ii) dearth of social interventions focussing on women's mobility.

MOWO Social Initiatives was started in 2019 to enable a million women in mobility to strengthen their livelihood by 2030 through -
•   teaching skills to drive two- and three- wheelers,
•   teaching safe driving practices,
•   add women to the mobility sector by helping them obtain driving licenses and making them aware of livelihood opportunities in the sector

Why N/Core?

Within a year of starting operations, MOWO had to learn how to adapt its programme to COVID-19. Being a first generation social entrepreneur, the founder required guidance to ensure the organisation's survival. MOWO sought urgent counsel to:

➢ explore approaches for diversifying and scaling up operations,
➢ structure its organisation and retain trainers,
➢ learn financial planning and structuring, &
➢ establish M&E mechanisms.

> "
> N/Core's group workshops were very helpful as it helped us to interact with other cohort members and allowed us to see **best practices** observed by various organisations.
>
> Further, N/Core gave us a **platform** to showcase the problems in India's mobility, as well as our organisation. This helped us to attract donors.
>
> - **Jai Bharati, Founder, MOWO Social Initiatives**
> "

The Incubation Impact

Despite the challenges presented due to COVID-19, MOWO has diversified its programme.
•   All 2000 of its trainees have learners driving licenses and **200-300 women** have obtained their **permanent driving licenses**.
•   In 2021, it established India's first and exclusive **Motor Training Centre for Women** in Hyderabad in partnership with the Govt. of Telangana's Women and Child Welfare Department.

What gets measured, gets valued

4.5 Khetee

Organisation Overview

Kumar Neeraj from Durdih, Bihar observed that the farmers in his area were struggling with their agricultural output. The farmers practice monoculture (paddy) in a semi-arid zone, and are dependent on rainfall and artificial supplements to grow their crops. Unreliable weather and droughts further affects farmers' income. Recognizing this need, he sought to introduce a training focused on regenerative agro-forestry.

Khetee was created in 2018, operating on a half-acre form. The team works with youth and marginalised women through a full-time fellowship programme to provide hands-on training to develop and implement regenerative agro-forestry. Additionally, model farms are used for workshops to demonstrate farming practices to the area's farmers.

Why N/Core?

Khetee applied to N/Core in 2020. While the founder had experience in farming practices and had a community-connect, further guidance was required to:

➢ refine organisation's vision and mission,
➢ scale up operations and increase beneficiary base,
➢ access a donor network, &
➢ strengthen its financial model.

> "
> N/Core helped me to refine both mine and the organisation's vision and mission. The workshops we did on **organisation-building** along with the **grant** given by N/Core were crucial for Khetee's survival. My mentors, Madhav, and N/Core advisors, gave inputs on how I could **scale up operations and build financial sustainability.**
>
> **- Kumar Neeraj, Founder, Khetee**
> "

📊 The Incubation Impact

- Trained **29 fellows** in regenerative agro-forestry methods.
- Model farms are spread across **4 acres** - grow more than **25 types of produce** (e.g. rice, wheat, flowers, fruit trees like litchi and mango, timber like mahogany and teak, vegetables like tubers and plantains, etc.).
- **Finalist** for the Lush Spring Prize Award 2021 and the Hildur Jackson Award 2021.

4.6 VigyanShaala International

Organisation Overview

VigyanShaala International seeks to close the access and quality gap in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in India by providing quality STEM training and infrastructure to marginalised students.

Two of the founders, both scientists, noted that while they themselves had quality STEM educations, they were exceptions in India. There existed two distinct gaps in India's STEM education scenario:
- the rural vs urban opportunity gap in STEM at the college level;
- the gender gap – while there was a high enrolment of women into STEM courses at the college level, very few women made it into the STEM-oriented work-force, irrespective of geography.

Keeping these gaps in mind, VigyanShaala came into existence in 2019. Their programmes are:
1. VigyanShaala STEM Fellowship – 3-year mentoring and STEM skilling program with a monthly stipend for students in rural Uttarakhand, with a 21st-century skills curriculum. It further seeks to create local role models (STEM fellows), who will go to local schools and engage with children to generate awareness and interest in STEM education.
2. Kalpana – 7-week online immersive interpersonal development and mentoring program for women undergraduates in STEM. The aim is to enable the women to gain meaningful employment in STEM-related fields.

Why N/Core?

Although the founding team had built a rigorous curriculum for its programmes, they had no experience in either building an organisation or of social sector operations as a whole. They approached N/Core to:

➢ learn methods of organisation-building,
➢ gain pitch skills,
➢ scale its operations,
➢ build donor connects, &
➢ learn financial planning and sustainability approaches.

> "
>
> N/Core has helped the organisation to become what it is today. K.R. Lakshminarayana (mentor) helped us build a **rigorous financial outlook,** and tackle **product innovation**.
> N/Core helped us to hone our organisational and stakeholder engagement skills and set up **crucial donor connects**.
>
> **- Dr Darshana Joshi & Dr Vijay Venugopal, Founders, VigyanShaala International**
>
> "

📊 The Incubation Impact

- Increased its **funding more than three times** since its graduation from incubation (mid-2021) till present times.
- The STEM Fellowship has increased from 6 Fellows to **15 Fellows**. They have, in turn, conducted STEM-awareness sessions in schools for **550+ children**.
- Kalpana, using digital infrastructure, grew from 60 students in 2020 in to **200 students in 2021** and is expected to grow to 5000 in 2022.

4.7 Saarthi Education

Organisation Overview

Founder, Ankit Arora (a former Teach for India Fellow), started Saarthi in 2016 with a few pilots on the ground in Delhi.

Leveraging his experience in the ed-tech sector, his intervention comprised a community approach and technology usage to bridge the foundational literacy gap in English and Math among children (grades 1 - 5) from low-income households. Saarthi uses education-technology to provide a personalised learning journey for the child, based on the child's educational needs, through online worksheets. Three types fo tech are used for the programme

1. Delivery tech – a diagnostic test of the child places the child on a curriculum ladder as per the child's gaps in learning. As per the child's placement, which worksheet to be given to the child as a starting point is decided.

2. Data tech – the child's progress is tracked daily, to decide further course of study (new level of worksheets, repeat rates, how long the child is stuck on one worksheet)

3. Content tech – dynamic curriculum in place; Google script and LaTex software is used to create worksheets from a central database of exercises.

Initially, the technology was administered at the children's home through Saarthi's volunteers. Now the organisation has expanded to centre-based learning. Saarthi gives a one-time grant to a woman from the target community to set up a learning centre in an effort to create micro-entrepreneurs,. The grant covers set-up and student acquisition costs and a basic stipend for the first three months. The centre creates an income opportunity for the centre administrator and allows the child to learn in an encouraging setup.

Why N/Core?

Saarthi has been previously incubated by N/Core as well. Post-incubation, it approached the N/Core accelerator to explore how to become a financially sustainable model. The team felt that they needed inputs to:

➢ find a focal area of impact for the organisation,
➢ expand operations, &
➢ create a financially sustainable impact model.

> "
> The best and most crucial part of the acceleration journey has been the **mentorship** provided by Samit and Vandana Vishwanathan. The mentorship continues till today. I can brainstorm with them for further ideas, **implementation refinement**, etc.
>
> **- Ankit Arora, Founder, Saarthi**
> "

The Acceleration Impact

- Currently operates out of **28 centres**, having **40-50 children each.**
- **150 women** are delivering home-based learning.
- Its app has a Daily Response Rate of more than **85%.**
- **5000-7000 children** have used the technology.
- Saarthi presented at the Skoll Forum, 2021 & the Sankalp Summit (Intellecap initiative), 2021.

Key Takeaways

The N/Core programme has been successfully incubated and accelerated innovative early-stage social enterprises. The selected non-profits have scaled up their operations after graduating from N/Core. The following notable points emerged from this impact assessment:

- **Mentorship:** All non-profit founders interviewed reported that the mentors and mentorship structure was a distinct positive/highlight for them. The one-on-one interactions with highly-qualified mentors aided the non-profits to leverage the mentors' experiences in the development sector and in organisation-building. Further, the mentors helped the non-profits to connect to potential donors and obtain significant funding within a year of incubation.

- **Workshops**: N/Core "bootcamps"/ workshops aided the founders to refine their Theory of Change, vision, and mission and supported the founder's efforts towards organisation-building. However, non-profit founders with sectoral experience found certain workshops to be repetitive/not applicable. Thus, workshops could be further tailored for non-profits based on their needs. For instance, they could have mandatory core workshops along with the optional workshops as per their needs.

  The workshops helped the non-profit founders to network and supported peer-group learning. However, the virtual model created due to COVID-19 limited networking opportunities between founders of non-profits.

In conclusion, N/Core has been a valuable resource for non-profits, and a notable CSR investment. The programme has effectively provided ample scope for multiplying and scaling impact in the social sector.

What gets measured, gets valued

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What gets measured, gets valued

Photo credit: N/Core