

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT REPORT FOR PLAKSHA UNIVERSITY

(Reimagining Higher Education Foundation)

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## 01. ABBREVIATIONS

<b>AI</b>	Artificial Intelligence
<b>CSR</b>	Corporate Social Responsibility
<b>CFR</b>	Common European Framework for Reference
<b>NEP</b>	National Education Policy
<b>NGO</b>	Non-Governmental Organization
<b>RPWD</b>	Rights to Person with Disability
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals

## 02. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### Background of the Program

The collaboration between the Mphasis FI Foundation and the Reimagining Higher Education Foundation aimed to create both tangible and intangible resources to enhance inclusive learning opportunities for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds and those with disabilities. While higher education is a cornerstone for economic stability, social mobility, and self-esteem development, many students from vulnerable backgrounds face challenges accessing it due to socioeconomic barriers and the physical inaccessibility of educational institutions. To address this issue, the Mphasis FI Foundation supported the Plaksha University project, enabling five deserving students to pursue their educational aspirations. Additionally, students with disabilities at Plaksha University benefited from inclusive learning practices facilitated by infrastructural accessibility features implemented within the institution. This initiative not only provided educational opportunities but also fostered an inclusive environment for all students, regardless of their backgrounds or abilities.

### Project Activities



Identified students in need of financial aid to realise their educational pursuits.



Supported students in need of financial aid using a scholarship to ensure accessibility to quality education.



Accessible infrastructural re-established to support inclusive and conducive learning for students with disabilities.



Technology-based integration into infrastructure increases accessibility and enhances efficiency like visual audio alarm systems, accessible libraries, etc.



### Year of Implementation

FY 2022 up to 2023



### NGO partner

Reimagining Higher Education Foundation



### Year of assessment

FY 2023-2024



### Budget

INR 10,000,000



### Project location

Punjab, Mohali



### SDG Goals



### Design Snapshot



### Project Name

Plaksha University



### Research Design

Descriptive and Interpretive research design



### Sampling Methodology

Purposive and random sampling



### Sample Size

5 students for the Scholarship activity and 99 students for the Infrastructural activity

# Key Output



The Mphasis-supported scholarship has empowered students to pursue advanced education, enabling and facilitating their higher education.



The grant from Mphasis has enabled Plaksha University to build a state-of-the-art, inclusive infrastructure, complying with the Accessibility Act.



Enabling accessible infrastructure includes lifts, ramps, and specifically-abled toilets, ensuring the campus is accessible to all.

# Key Impact



The scholarship significantly reduced the economic burden on their families, allowing them to prioritise education and improve their financial situations.



Beneficiaries have excelled academically and secured promising job opportunities, contributing significantly to their families' income.



Incorporated sustainable practices and technologies into its infrastructure, reducing its carbon footprint and setting a benchmark for inclusivity and sustainability.



Ensures that students with disabilities have equal access to education and campus facilities, promoting inclusivity and diversity within the university community.

## CHAPTER 3

# INTRODUCTION



*Plaksha University*

### BACKGROUND AND NEED OF THE PROGRAM

Over the past two decades, the global gross enrollment rate in higher education has nearly doubled, rising from 19% to 38% between 2000 and 2018. However, it is important to note that there is a disparity between enrollment and graduation rates in higher education. The lack of equity resonates with factors like economic distress of families, poverty, and exclusion of students with diverse needs, like students with disabilities. To address critical issues of exclusion in learning environments, the Mphasis FI Foundation supported the Reimagining Higher Education Foundation. This partnership aimed to bridge the economic gap for students through financial aid and overcome physical barriers to learning at Plaksha University, ensuring that learning is physically and economically accessible.

The intervention had two crucial branches - Scholarship program and Infrastructure. Through the Scholarship Program, 5 students from the socio-economic weaker section were able to realise their aspiration of higher education, and 600 students were able to leverage accessible facilities.

## OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

### SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORT



Provide financial assistance to students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, enabling them to pursue higher education.

### ACCESSIBLE INFRASTRUCTURE



Establish infrastructure that caters to the needs of students with disabilities, ensuring they have equal access to educational opportunities.

### INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT



Create an inclusive learning environment at Plaksha University where all students, including those with disabilities, can thrive academically and socially.

## ABOUT MPHASIS FI FOUNDATION

The Mphasis FI Foundation, having its registered office at Bagmane World Technology Centre, Marathahalli Outer Ring Road, Doddanakundi Village, Mahadevapura, Bangalore 560048, India, functions as a distinct charitable entity. MphasisFI has always fostered the holistic progress of communities. Positioned at the forefront of introducing solutions powered by technology, Mphasis' commitment to social responsibility emphasises support for groups that are often marginalised or face economic challenges. Through innovative and technology-centric approaches, their efforts span critical areas such as promoting quality education, enhancing livelihood and financial stability, inclusion of minority demographics, and environmental protection to promote climate resilience. Mphasis' outreach in CSR endeavours not only covers its operational territories but also extends to regions in India.

## ABOUT NGO PARTNER

Reimagining Higher Education Foundation (RHEDF), registered as a Section 8 Company under the Companies Act 2013, is the sponsoring body of an upcoming 21st Century University dedicated to addressing real-world challenges by leveraging technology through Transformational Education. This initiative is propelled by a collaborative philanthropic effort. It aims to cultivate ethical leaders and problem solvers, using science and technology to drive global change. It strives to become a preferred institution through an open, interdisciplinary academic and research environment grounded in humanistic values, positioning itself as a leading choice for faculty and students in the decades ahead. Plaksha University's vision rests on three pillars: Reimagined Engineering Education, blending technical expertise with liberal arts to foster problem solvers; Innovation and Entrepreneurship, powered by industry partnerships and a focus on translating research into societal impacts, supported by mentorship for aspiring entrepreneurs; and Solving Real-World Problems, through research in thematic areas like Future Mobility and Digital Agriculture, with initial strengths in Data Science, AI, and Robotics, aiming at impactful solutions for global challenges.

# CHAPTER 4

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Mphasis FI Foundation commissioned SoulAce to conduct an impact assessment study to evaluate the immediate and enduring impacts of the program implemented under the capacity development CSR theme. The impact assessment study was conducted in the fiscal year FY 2023-24.

### OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY



To assess the immediate impacts of the program implemented.



To evaluate the enduring impacts of the program over time.



To measure the effectiveness of the program in achieving its intended goals and objectives.



To identify strengths and areas for improvement in the program's implementation.



To provide recommendations for enhancing the program's impact and sustainability.



To recommend a way forward for better and more impactful implementation of the program.

### DEFINITION OF RESEARCH

Research can be stated as a logical and systematic search for new and useful information on a particular subject matter. Social science research refers to the systematic activity of gaining new understanding by following scientific principles and methods to minimise bias and subjectivity. It is contrary to writing something based on assumptions or speculations. Though information on certain facts can also be gained through common sense and based on general observation and hearsay, those facts will not be considered valid until they have been obtained in a methodical manner, which can stand the test of time. The defining characteristics of scientific research are objectivity, ethical neutrality, reliability, testability and transparency. The identification of the research problem provides the starting point of research, which is then defined and redefined through a proper review of the literature on the problem or deliberations with research experts and knowledgeable others in the subject matter of interest. Each research problem has a multitude of perspectives and dimensions, and research cannot cover all of those in a single study. Thus, we need to delimit the research problem into a 'measurable problem and formulate objectives, make decisions on the research design, sample design, type of research instruments for collecting the data, and how these data can be edited, coded, classified, tabulated, and interpreted so that findings and conclusions can be reached'. Every research needs to have a proper methodology to foresee the problems that could arise in the process and steer through it in a proper direction without losing focus.

### KEY STAKEHOLDERS



Students



Dean and  
Director of the  
University



Project Staff



## USE OF MIXED METHODOLOGY FOR MAXIMUM INSIGHTS

The research problem pertained to assessing the impact of this initiative on local communities. The project's success lies in recognising the importance of education as a catalyst for positive societal change.

## APPLICATION OF QUANTITATIVE TECHNIQUES

A quantitative study is needed when the focus is on presenting the study problem in terms of numbers, frequencies, percentages, etc. In quantitative research, standardised instruments such as questionnaires and interview schedules are employed to collect data. Though the information that is obtained is easily amenable to various statistical measures and tests, quantitative information has its own limitations. It can uncover only the surface phenomena. It is unable to penetrate beneath the surface and identify what is hidden. In this study, to assess the impact, structured tools like the interview schedule administered were used. This helped in obtaining quantifiable information.

## APPLICATION OF QUALITATIVE TECHNIQUES

Qualitative research can only unravel enriched and hidden information that may not be evident on the face of it. The qualitative approach is distinguished by deeper probing and flexibility, and it can yield massive amounts of data that were not anticipated when the research was initiated. For better accuracy, to ensure anonymity, and at the same time, to cover a larger sample population, quantitative techniques were used. Qualitative techniques of interviews with key stakeholders and interviews with program staff were adopted for a better understanding of the problem alongside quantitative research.

## PROJECT EVALUATION FRAMEWORK

After the collection of relevant information and perceptions through interviews, the OECD framework would be followed/applied, and it would have six evaluation criteria - relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, and sustainability for each of the indicators.



## ENSURING TRIANGULATION

Triangulation was needed to increase the credibility and validity of the research findings. It was also a measure taken to ensure the trustworthiness of the research process. The findings of the quantitative research have been verified with the insights from qualitative research, and the report has also been structured to reflect this point.

### Research Design



#### Name of the project

Plaksha University



#### Implementing Agency

Reimagining Higher Education Foundation



#### Research Design Used

Descriptive research design



#### Sampling Technique

Purposive and stratified random sampling



#### Qualitative Methods Used

Structured interview with key information and Semi-structured questionnaires for other stakeholders

## STUDY TOOLS

### Tools used during the study

SoulAce has developed a mobile application platform for quantitative data collection. The field team used this app to undertake the study. This application has real-time data entry and data upload features with GPS location details along with a questionnaire for interaction with the project beneficiaries; the application has a provision to take pictures of each respondent.

**Primary data was collected using two types of questionnaires.**

### Questionnaires for primary beneficiaries

Structured questionnaires were developed, and the project details for each of the focus areas were reviewed. Indicators were pre-defined before conducting the surveys.

### Questionnaires for secondary beneficiaries and stakeholders

Semi-structured questionnaires were developed for each type of sample of this group. Stakeholders were identified across the focus areas.

**One-on-one discussions were done with beneficiaries to prepare case studies.**

## ENSURING COMMITMENT TO RESEARCH ETHICS



### Anonymity

Anonymity refers to not revealing the identity of the respondents. This research study strictly does not reveal the identity of respondents unless the same is warranted for the illustration of success stories or case studies. After the research was completed, the study did not reveal which individual respondents answered which question in what manner.

The results were revealed only as an aggregate, so no one would be able to single out the identity of a particular respondent. This was required to not break the trust of the respondent by not revealing the individual identity.



### Confidentiality

Research subjects participate in the process only based on the trust that confidentiality is maintained. Hence, the research would not reveal any data regarding the respondents for purposes other than the research study.



### Non-Maleficence

Research would not lead to harm to the research subjects. This study ensured that the respondents were not harmed in any way.



### Beneficence

Any research study should have some benefits for the respondents. This research study also ensures that individuals, groups, and communities benefit and their well-being is enhanced.



### Justice

Justice refers to being fair to all. This research study ensures equal treatment of all its research subjects and no biases or prejudices towards any group based on social stereotypes or stigma associated with being a member of a certain group or class.

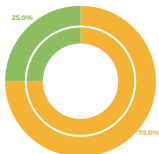
## CHAPTER 5

# KEY STUDY FINDINGS AND IMPACT



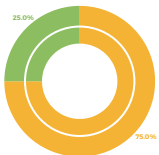
### BENEFICIARY DEMOGRAPHY

CHART 1: GENDER DISTRIBUTION



■ Male  
■ Female

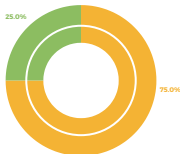
CHART 2: AGE-GROUP WISE DISTRIBUTION



■ 21-25 years  
■ Above 25 years

The dataset shows a higher proportion of male respondents, accounting for 75%, and the majority of the respondents (75%) are in the younger age group of 21-25 years. The dominant presence of male respondents and individuals in the 21-25 years age group suggests that this demographic might be the most engaged audience.

CHART 3: PRIMARY FAMILY OCCUPATION



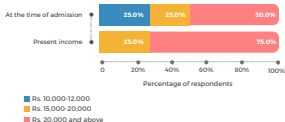
■ Small business  
■ Worker in the unorganized sector

The graph shows that the majority of the beneficiaries, 75%, belonged to low socio-economic families, showing the programs targeted intervention.



### PRE-INTERVENTION STATUS

CHART 4: MONTHLY INCOME AT THE TIME OF ADMISSION AND PRESENTLY



The upward shift in income brackets points to improved financial circumstances for the majority, with notable success in moving out of the lowest income category and an increase in those earning Rs. 20,000 and above.



Stuti Pasricha, a beneficiary of the Mphasis scholarship at Plaksha University, hails from a small business family in Meerut. For Stuti, the scholarship has been a pivotal turning point, ensuring the continuation of her academic journey despite financial constraints.

The scholarship not only motivated Stuti to excel in her studies but also significantly reduced the economic burden on her family. It covered a substantial portion of her fees, allowing her to focus solely on her academics without the need for part-time jobs.

Beyond academics, the Mphasis scholarship has opened up new job opportunities for Stuti, leading to a promising future. She is now able to contribute 80% of her earnings back to her family, significantly improving their financial situation. Stuti's success story is a testament to the transformative impact of the Mphasis scholarship program.

- Stuti Pasricha



## SCHOLARSHIP CRITERIA AND THEMATIC AREA

CHART 5: PRIMARY CRITERIA FOR THE SCHOLARSHIP DURING THE APPLICATION

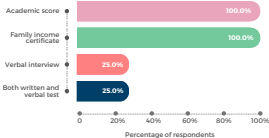
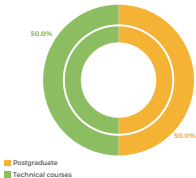


CHART 6: SPECIFIC COURSE OR DEGREE FOR WHICH RECEIVED THE SCHOLARSHIP

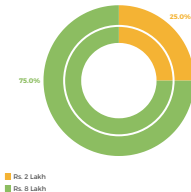


Family income certificate and academic score were the prominent eligibility criteria suggesting that the focus has been on students with brighter academic prospects but need financial stability. The division of scholarships concentrated on Postgraduate and Technical courses suggesting the inclination towards higher degree or professional course which guarantee income.



## FINANCIAL AID FROM THE SCHOLARSHIP

CHART 7: SCHOLARSHIP AMOUNT

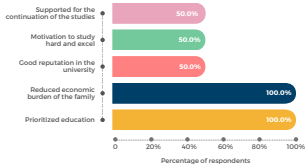


The majority of respondents, 75%, received scholarships amounting to Rs. 8 Lakh, suggesting a higher level of financial support.



## IMPACT GENERATED THROUGH SCHOLARSHIP

CHART 8: EXTENT OF IMPACT GENERATED AFTER RECEIVING THE SCHOLARSHIP



The scholarship had a significant impact in reducing the economic burden of the family, as confirmed by 100% of the participants, thereby providing the students with the opportunity to prioritise education.



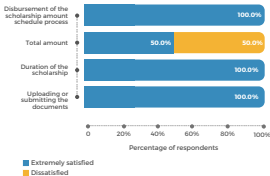
Harsh Bindal is a student at Plaksha University who belongs to a weaker socio-economic community and is supported by the Mphasis scholarship. His story is a testament to the transformative power of financial aid in education. The scholarship not only enabled him to pursue his academic aspirations without financial burden but also played a pivotal role in shaping his career path. Harsh's heartfelt gratitude towards the scholarship underlines its importance in his journey to graduation and beyond. It's clear that without this financial support, navigating through his studies and planning for the future would have been a daunting challenge.

As Harsh looks towards further education, his story reflects a deep commitment to his academic journey, made possible by the generous financial support of the Mphasis scholarship.



## BENEFICIARY SATISFACTION

CHART 9: SATISFACTION LEVEL



This indicates a smooth and satisfactory operational procedure in terms of timely financial disbursement, adequate scholarship length, and an efficient documentation process, highlighting the program's effectiveness in meeting the logistical and temporal needs of the recipients.

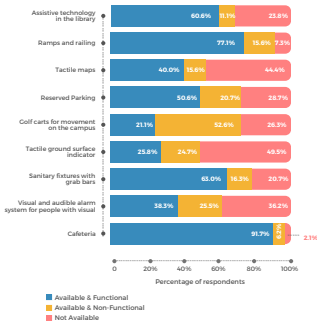
## CHAPTER 6

# KEY PROJECT IMPACT



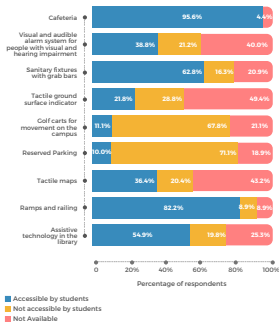
### HOLISTIC FACILITIES AVAILABLE

CHART 10: AVAILABILITY AND FUNCTIONALITY OF VARIOUS FACILITIES



### ACCESSIBILITY TO LEARNING

CHART 11: ACCESSIBILITY OF VARIOUS FACILITIES



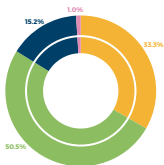
Cafeteria had the highest level of accessibility, with 91.7% reporting it as available and functional, followed by Ramps and Railings, with 77.1% finding it available. Sanitary Fixtures with Grab Bars had a 63% availability and functionality, which is essential for restroom accessibility. Assistive Technology in the Library was available to a significant portion, i.e. 60.6% and Tactile Maps had a 40% availability. Thus, Plaksha was successful in creating a truly inclusive and accessible campus environment for individuals with diverse needs.

The data highlights the improved accessibility of existing facilities, such as the cafeteria, sanitary fixtures with grab bars, ramps and railings, and assistive technology at libraries. The majority of respondents (95%) found the cafeteria to be the most accessible. This suggests a significant reduction in physical barriers to inclusive education.



## TECH-BASED INCLUSION

CHART 12: WHETHER THE UNIVERSITY PROVIDES MODERN TECH-BASED FACILITIES



The majority of the students, constituting an aggregate of 83.8%, had a positive response towards the availability of tech-based facilities at the university showing the tech-integration in the campus to promote efficiency and inclusion.



Mr. Arun Sharma, Director of Infrastructure at Plaksha University, expresses his gratitude to Mphasis for their grant, enabling the construction of state-of-the-art infrastructure. The planning process, meticulous and inclusive, ensured compliance with the Accessibility Act, with features like lifts, ramps, and specifically abled toilets.

Despite challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic, construction commenced in 2020, and by November 2021, the building was fully operational. A key achievement attributed to the Mphasis grant is the creation of an energy-efficient university, incorporating sustainable practices and technologies to reduce the carbon footprint. Mr. Sharma expresses appreciation to Mphasis for their invaluable contribution, recognising their role in not just constructing a premier educational facility but also establishing a standard for inclusive and sustainable infrastructure.



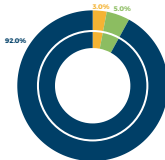
Mr. Manoj Kanna, Associate Dean of Academics and Student Well-being at Plaksha University, expresses thankfulness to Mphasis for their generous grant. This funding has facilitated the construction of state-of-the-art infrastructure compliant with the RPWD Act, including lifts, ramps, and specially designed toilets, ensuring an inclusive campus environment.

The integration of technology has further enhanced accessibility, enabling students with disabilities to navigate the campus more efficiently and fostering independence and empowerment.

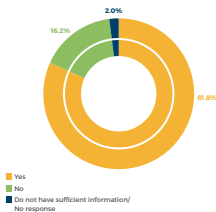


## REDRESSAL TO PHYSICAL BARRIERS TO LEARNING

CHART 13: WHETHER THERE IS ANY SYSTEM FOR REGISTERING COMPLAINTS IF ANY INFRASTRUCTURE IS NON-FUNCTIONAL

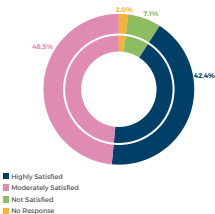


**CHART 14: WHETHER THERE IS ANY HELPLINE NUMBER FOR EMERGENCIES, ETC**



A vast majority of respondents, 92%, confirmed the existence of a complaint registration system for non-functional infrastructure, as well as a significant majority of 81.8% confirmed the existence of a helpline number for emergencies. The dataset reveals a strong foundational support for reporting and addressing issues with non-functional infrastructure and also a strong emphasis on emergency preparedness at the institution.

**CHART 16: SATISFACTION WITH THE HOSTEL ROOMS AND FACILITIES**

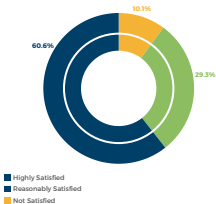


More than 70 % of students were satisfied with the facilities provided on the campus, and a significant portion of students, accounting for around 90%, confirmed that they were satisfied with the Hostel rooms and other facilities.



## BENEFICIARY SATISFACTION

**CHART 15: SATISFACTION WITH THE FACILITIES PROVIDED ON THE CAMPUS**





# Impact Created Across Multiple Levels



## INDIVIDUAL LEVEL

- Enhanced accessibility to higher education in technical skill and post-graduation programs.
- Facilitation of upward social mobility through higher educational attainment.
- Creation of permanent accessibility features to promote physical inclusivity.
- Braille, audio-visual accessible features, and technologically accessible libraries provide equal access to information and resources for individuals with diverse learning needs.



## FAMILY LEVEL

- These scholarships significantly reduced the economic burden on their families, allowing them to prioritise education and improve their financial situations.
- The scholarship reduces the financial burden on families, allowing them to allocate resources to other essential needs and improving their overall financial stability.



## COMMUNITY LEVEL

- These initiatives can raise awareness and promote understanding of diverse learning needs within the community, reducing stigma and discrimination.
- The scholarship inspires other members of the community to pursue higher education, creating a positive ripple effect within the community.



## STATE LEVEL

- Contributed to enhancing the number of graduate students in the state and promoting higher educational attainment aspirations among disadvantaged social groups.
- Strengthened digital infrastructure inclusive infrastructure to enhance youth educational accessibility and set role models of accessible campuses to other universities.



## NATIONAL LEVEL

- Alignment with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act and the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is crucial for fostering quality inclusive education in higher education.
- Scholarships provide opportunities for students from marginalised communities to improve their social and economic status, contributing to greater social mobility.
- A well-educated workforce, supported by scholarships and inclusive infrastructure, can enhance a country's global competitiveness by fostering innovation and productivity.

# Sustainability



The program helps break the cycle of poverty and dependence by empowering individuals through education and providing them with the skills and resources they need to succeed.



Permanent inclusive education and infrastructure ensure that future generations of students will continue to benefit, creating a sustainable impact that will last for years to come.

## 09. OECD FRAMEWORK

The program aligned with the following Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs):

SDG 4: Quality Education,  
SDG 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth  
SDG 10: Reduced Inequality



### Coherence

### Relevance

Plaksha University's intervention effectively serves and represents the appropriate target groups, such as students with disabilities and socio-economically disadvantaged individuals. It program stands out in its approach to inclusivity and infrastructure development, as evidenced by secondary documents and qualitative data from the ground.



### Effectiveness

The program goals align closely with the needs felt by beneficiaries, indicating a strong resonance with beneficiary priorities. This highlights the program's alignment with broader national goals and policies like NEP 2020 and the RPWD Act.



### Sustainability

This initiative incorporates multiple sustainability components, with key emphasis on fostering lifelong financial independence among students and addressing the persistent issue of dropouts among students with disabilities, caused by physical barriers to learning. These efforts are integral to ensuring the long-term success and impact of the program.



### Efficiency

The program effectively leveraged technology and financial resources in creating a campus that promotes the inclusion of socio-economic disparities and diverse abilities. Infrastructural adaptations like assistive technology in libraries, accessible maps, etc., ensure effective learning and enhanced campus participation of students.



### Impact

The evidence indicates that the program played a crucial role in empowering students from diverse backgrounds, including those with disabilities. It has fostered a lasting change in the mindset of students, ensuring their right to an inclusive learning environment where they can fully realise their potential.



Relevance



Coherence



Effectiveness



Efficiency



Impact



Sustainability

# The Way Forward

Based on the evaluation of the program, several indicators could be addressed to further enhance its impact and sustainability.



## **Nuanced Need identification**

A comprehensive needs assessment would have provided detailed insights into the specific needs and challenges faced by students with diverse needs, like curriculum adaptation and socio-emotional support, to make learning fully accessible.



## **Increased Outreach**

Expand outreach efforts to reach more underprivileged youth in remote and underserved areas, ensuring inclusivity and equal access to higher education.

## CHAPTER 11

# CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the collaborative initiative between the Mphasis FI Foundation and the Reimagining Higher Education Foundation, exemplified through the Plaksha University project, stands as a commendable effort in advancing inclusive learning opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with disabilities. By providing financial aid and implementing inclusive infrastructure, the program has not only facilitated access to higher education but has also fostered a more inclusive educational environment, promoting diversity and equality. The impact assessment study conducted on the program has yielded positive outcomes across various levels, including individual, familial, communal, state, and national levels. These outcomes encompass improved access to higher education, facilitation of social mobility, alleviation of economic burdens on families, promotion of inclusivity and diversity, and alignment with national policies and objectives. Evaluated against the OECD-DAC framework, the program has garnered high ratings for its relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. Nevertheless, there are areas for enhancement, such as the necessity for a more nuanced needs assessment and broader outreach to remote and underserved regions.