



Impact
Assessment
Report for
ITC's Social
Investments
Programme
across India

Submitted By
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Contents

Background	3
Study Objectives	4
Geographical and Thematic Coverage	4
Approach & Methodology.....	5
Sampling Rationale & Distribution	6
Key Findings and Discussions	7
1. Theme 1: Public Health – Mother and Child Health and Nutrition.....	7
2) Theme 2: Support to Education	8
2.1 Infrastructure support.....	8
3) Theme 3: Public Health Sanitation	9
3.1 School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH).....	9
3.2 Community Toilet	10
4) Theme 4: Solid Waste Management.....	10
5) Theme 5: Women Empowerment.....	11
5.1 Targeted Hardcore Poor Programme (THP).....	11
5.2 Self Help Groups.....	12
6) Theme 6: Skilling of Youth.....	13
7) Theme 7: Social Forestry	14
8) Theme 8: Water Stewardship.....	15
9) Theme 9: Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)	16

Background

India reiterated its commitment to achieving the [SDGs¹](#) at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit in September 2015. Noted experts underscored the fact that India's development agenda was mirrored in the Sustainable Development Goals. Through this commitment, India vowed to reduce poverty in all its dimensions for at least half of the targeted population (SDG 1.2) and foster resilience among the poor, those along the margins, and in vulnerable situations (SDG 1.5). As per NITI Aayog's MPI's Progress Report [2023²](#), between 2015-16 and 2019-21, multidimensional poverty reduced by 9.89% which translates to a mammoth 135.5 million persons emerging from the shackles of poverty.

It is against this backdrop that ITC's Social Investments [Programme¹](#) (SIP), functioning under the umbrella of ITC Mission Sunehra Kal (MSK) gains immense significance. Adopting a dual-Horizon strategy, the SIP endeavours to uplift the most marginalized within its stakeholder communities, fostering a life of dignity. It puts the vulnerable at the forefront of development interventions when addressing their present and future livelihood challenges. Through its holistic, integrated, and multi-pronged approach, the programme aspires to build a thriving, healthy, educated, and skilled community across the length and breadth of the country.

ITC's SIP in its bid to achieve the objective of creating significant and sustainable societal value for its stakeholders, adopts a Two-horizon approach.

Horizon - I initiatives cater to ensuring the sustainability of existing income sources through empowerment of rural communities. This entails the goal of creating better livelihood opportunities for communities around its operations. Additionally, it involves conserving and enhancing social and environmental capital, securing agricultural production systems through practices like Climate Smart Agriculture, Water Stewardship, Biodiversity Conservation, and diversifying livelihoods with programmes such as Social Forestry and Animal Husbandry.

Along with the above interventions, **Horizon - II** initiatives concentrate on enhancing the communities' capabilities to fully harness the opportunities coming their way in the future. Projects under this emphasize upon enhancing employability of youth, ensuring adoption of good health and hygiene practices as well as increasing the access to healthcare and improved nutrition. This includes initiatives like Education Support, Youth Skill Development, Public Health (Sanitation, Waste Management), and Mother & Child Health programmes.

¹ <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/16693India.pdf>

² <https://www.niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2023-08/India-National-Multidimensional-Poverty-Index-2023.pdf>

³ <https://www.itcportal.com/sustainability/sustainability-initiatives.aspx>

Study Objectives

An impact assessment tracks the progress of the projects, develops insights for course correction and amplifies successful outcomes on a broader scale. In line with this, the key objectives of the impact assessment included:

- **Objective 1:** To establish the effectiveness and efficiency of programme design and implementation.
- **Objective 2:** To quantify how much the projects have achieved the intended outcomes.
- **Objective 3:** To capture the short and long-term direct, indirect, intended, and unintended impacts.
- **Objective 4:** To establish attribution and contribution of the projects.
- **Objective 5:** To identify and capture success stories, challenges, and areas for improvement.

Geographical and Thematic Coverage

Sambodhi Research and Communication Pvt. Ltd. conducted impact assessments of MSK's 51 projects executed between FY 21-22 across 7 states covering both Horizon - I and Horizon - II initiatives, across 10 thematic areas.

Table 1: Thematic areas

S.No	State	Project Objective	Themes
1)	Andhra Pradesh	Horizon – I	Climate Smart Agriculture Water Stewardship Social Forestry
		Horizon – II	Health & Sanitation (School WASH) Solid Waste Management Support to Education
2)	Bihar	Horizon – I	Climate Smart Agriculture
		Horizon – II	Health & Sanitation (School WASH) Support to Education
3)	Jammu & Kashmir	Horizon – II	Skilling of Youth
4)	Karnataka	Horizon – I	Climate Smart Agriculture Water Stewardship Social Forestry
		Horizon – II	Women Empowerment (Self Help Gorup) Support to Education (Read India Plus)
5)	Telangana	Horizon – I	Climate Smart Agriculture Social Forestry Water Stewardship
		Horizon – II	Health & Sanitation (School WASH) Solid Waste Management Support to Education Women Empowerment (Targeting Hardcore Poor)
6)	Uttar Pradesh	Horizon – II	Solid Waste Management

S.No	State	Project Objective	Themes
			Health & Sanitation (School WASH) Women Empowerment (Targeting Hardcore Poor)
7)	West Bengal	Horizon – II	Skilling of Youth Health & Sanitation (School WASH) Health & Sanitation (Community Toilet) Mother & Child Health

Approach & Methodology

The **OECD DAC framework**² was adopted owing to its suitability & efficacy in impact evaluation of CSR projects, emphasising six evaluation criteria – **relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability** – and two principles for their use. These collectively aid in determining the merit of an intervention. A convergent mixed-methods approach was utilized with Project-Comparison study design using a mix of quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to assess the interventions with the

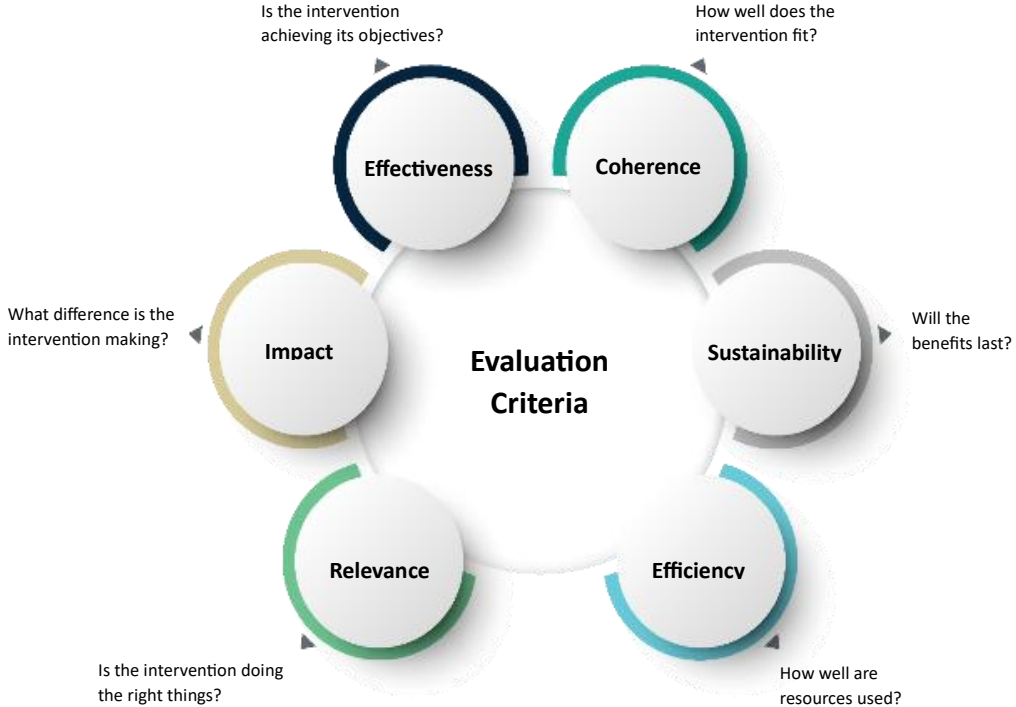


Figure 1: OECD DAC framework

underlying logic that quantitative data helped in measuring outcomes while qualitative insights enriched the study with an understanding of ‘why’ and ‘how’ these outcomes were observed.

To supplement the research design & approach, a detailed **review of existing literature** along with associated **programme documents and reports** was undertaken. **Semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and in-depth interviews** were conducted with the relevant stakeholders and implementing

² <https://www.oecd.org/dac/evaluation/dacriteriaforevaluatingdevelopmentassistance.htm>

agencies to gauge the processes adopted and understand the challenges confronted and best practices followed. This was critical in identifying the gaps and developing recommendations for future courses of action. The respondents were administered structured and semi-structured tools to capture quantitative data and qualitative insights.

Sampling Rationale & Distribution

For selection of quantitative samples, Sambodhi adopted a **proportionate probability sampling method** to draw samples for project group and control groups across the 7 states where study was conducted.

Villages selected was basis the inputs received from the implementing partner NGO for each project. Those shortlisted were used to complete the requirement of the target quantitative sample and the geographical expanse of the beneficiaries. While the villages where the project was not being implemented but shared the same block/and certain characteristics similar to the project villages, were chosen as **control group**.

Much like the case of villages, the project participant households were randomly sampled from the list of households/members obtained from the implementing partner/NGO. The households in the control village were sampled in the same block/ adjacent village/ block based on the nature of intervention of the project under each theme.

Qualitative assessments were also carried out with project participants, implementation partners, community-based organizations, value chain representatives, teachers/headmasters, mohalla committee members, SDMC members and government agencies using semi structured tools for focussed group discussions and in-depth interviews under each theme.

Table 2: State wise Quantitative and Qualitative Sample distribution

S.No.	State	No. of districts	Quantitative samples		Qualitative samples	
			Total project sample	Total control sample	Key Informant Interviews	Focus Group Discussions
1	Andhra Pradesh	4	1,295	636	37	15
2	Bihar	3	936	462	16	9
3	Jammu & Kashmir	1	20	10	4	0
4	Karnataka	3	756	352	24	11
5	Telangana	1	843	413	10	34
6	Uttar Pradesh	1	372	184	9	5
7	West Bengal	2	873	438	9	6
Total		15	5,095	2,495	109	80

The detailed topline findings presented in the subsequent sections offer a comprehensive overview of the key themes explored in this impact assessment study.

Key Findings and Discussions

1. Theme 1: Public Health – Mother and Child Health and Nutrition

The Public Health initiative under MSK focuses on improving mother and child health as well as nutrition in marginalized communities. Through this programme, comprehensive interventions are implemented to address healthcare disparities and promote healthy maternal and child development. 48 AWCs were selected, of which 32 were project AWCs and 16 were control. From each AWC, a quantitative tool was administered to 6 married women of reproductive age (15-49 years), 5 adolescent girls (10-19 years) as well as the AWW from each of the 48 AWCs. We assessed the intervention in one district of West Bengal. A total of 352 and 176 respondents were sampled from project group and from control group respectively.

Key Findings

ANC coverage & Healthcare Seeking Behaviour in Women: A higher proportion of pregnant women (82.4%) from project group registered for Antenatal Care (ANC) compared to control (75%). 100% of the women registered for ANC under project group adhered to all health monitoring procedures. In project group, there is a strong reliance on public healthcare facilities, with 55.1% of households seeking treatment at government/municipal hospitals. Conversely, in control group, private healthcare providers are notably preferred, with 39.3% opting for private doctors/clinics. This indicates preference of project group towards public health facilities which further indicates that the system strengthening interventions have worked and more people rely on it, while control group is still dependent on private clinics/ doctors for medical aid indicating higher out of pocket expenditure (OOPE) on health for this group. Also, lesser incidence of high blood pressure during pregnancy was reported by project group women (47.3%) as compared to control group (62.2%). The reason cited for this was health awareness and higher antenatal check-ups in project group.

Access to Healthcare Services to Adolescent Girl: 76.4% of adolescent girls in the programme underwent anaemia screening with a majority of these screenings (52.9%) conducted on a bi-monthly basis. This highlights project group's higher engagement and commitment to regular health monitoring. 96.7% of project group and 82.9% of control group have their vitals measured for BMI calculation.

Menstrual Hygiene of Women: A significantly higher proportion of respondents in project group (95.1%) reported utilizing sanitary pads, showcasing an enhanced adoption of modern and hygienic methods compared to the district average of 86.5% as per NFHS-5 (2019-20) data indicating a positive shift towards more effective methods of menstrual protection

Menstrual Hygiene of Adolescent Girls: All girls in both control and project groups use sanitary napkins as the primary means for menstrual protection. A higher percentage of girls in project group (77.2%) compared to control group (65.8%) indicated receiving sanitary pads from schools or Anganwadi centres.

Institutional Delivery: While only 54.9% of deliveries in control group were assisted by doctors, this figure rises significantly to 71% in project group. Conversely, assistance from ANMs, Staff Nurses, or LHVs was more prevalent in the control group, accounting for 45.1% of deliveries compared to only 29% in project group. This demonstrates a higher level of medical care in project group.

Postnatal Visits by AWWs: The vast majority (94.9%) of respondents in project group reported that their child was visited by an Anganwadi worker after birth. The impact on project group is significantly better

and aligns with the NFHS findings in the area. In control group, 36.6% of respondents reported that the visit occurred within 3 days after birth. These findings indicate higher compliance in project group, potentially facilitating better postnatal care and support.

Anganwadi Workers: 100% of the Anganwadi workers (AWWs) in project group have undergone training on maternal and child health and nutrition supported by ITC, showcasing comprehensive programme coverage. Anganwadi Workers have been conducting nutritional camps for lactating mothers at the Anganwadi centres, a 100% in project group and 87.5% in control group.

The AWWs from project group exhibit a stronger awareness of the potential risks related to iron deficiency anaemia during pregnancy, the benefits of institutional delivery, and the importance of home-based care.

2) Theme 2: Support to Education

2.1 Infrastructure support

In ITC's Support to Education Programme, infrastructure support is provided to government primary schools aimed at enhancing educational infrastructure. This includes providing essential amenities like desks, chairs, lights, fans, and even classrooms in certain cases. We assessed the intervention in four districts across **Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Bihar**. 12 schools from each district for the impact assessment, in which 8 were project schools and 4 were control schools. A total number of 456 and 228 respondents from project group and control group respectively.

Key Findings

Access to Basic Amenities: Interaction with the headmasters and teachers reflected a notable contrast in infrastructural changes in the last two years between project group and control group.

The intervention has significantly impacted project group, as evidenced by the improved basic amenities in classrooms. In project group, 95% of classrooms were equipped with adequate lighting and fans, compared to 83.3% in control group. Additionally, sufficient blackboards were available in 95.2% of programme schools, in contrast to only 75% of control schools. Furthermore, 81% of project group schools reported having adequate benches and desks, whereas only 66.7% of control group schools did.

Classroom Infrastructures: Students in project group reported significant improvements in school infrastructure, with 93.8% attesting to positive changes, compared to approximately 45% of respondents in control group. Well painted classrooms with alluring and informative designs on the wall have led to students in the programme geographies attending school regularly and potentially display improved learning outcomes over time.

E-classrooms: Another vital aid in students' learning prospects has been the provision of e-classroom/SMART classrooms. These technological teaching aids were present across 58.8% project schools compared to 31.2% in control groups in Andhra Pradesh.

School Development and Management Committee (SDMC): Key functionaries, including School Development and Management Committee (SDMC) members, reported significant infrastructure improvements in project schools following the ITC intervention, compared to control schools. In project schools, 37.1% reported the presence of new classrooms, compared to only 10% in control schools.

Additionally, 87.5% of project schools reported improved sanitation facilities, a stark contrast to 55% in control schools.

3) Theme 3: Public Health Sanitation

3.1 School Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH)

The WASH – Swachh Vidyalaya programme aims to transform the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) conditions in government educational institutions such as primary, upper primary, and high schools. This initiative involves improving infrastructure and promoting hygiene practices in selected schools. We assessed School WaSH theme in six districts of Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar and West Bengal. 12 schools from each district were selected, of which 8 were project schools and 4 were control. 696 and 342 respondents from project and control group were covered under this theme.

Key Findings

Hygiene Practices and Safety Measures: The aspect of privacy and safety was considered paramount in project schools vis-a-vis the control schools, with 90% of project schools installing separate toilet facilities for boys and girls, compared to merely 25% of control schools offering the same. Findings show significant improvement in project schools compared to control schools with respect to consistent supply of water (100% and 73% respectively) and installation of key facilities like disposable area for sanitary products (76% and 33.3% respectively), signalling better attendance rates among programme beneficiaries. The programme has had a markedly positive impact on project group, which reported a 95% increase in handwashing frequency, 92.5% improvement in toilet cleanliness, and 77.5% enhancement in waste disposal practices after the intervention. In West Bengal, project groups have shown better handwashing habits, with everyone washing their hands compared to 75% in control group. In Uttar Pradesh, project groups have improved toilet cleanliness, with everyone keeping the toilets clean compared to 75% in control group. They also have better waste disposal practices and more awareness about hygiene, with everyone practicing proper waste disposal and hygiene compared to 50% in control group. These results demonstrate project group's superior adoption of hygiene practices and overall sanitation standards due to the intervention.

Infrastructure Improvements: Post renovation, roughly 82.3% of the project schools offered clean drinking water to their students, which was earlier reported at 61.9%. A higher percentage of project schools had playgrounds (40.4%) compared to control (20.6%).

Impact on Learning Ambience: These improvements in school facilities and infrastructure have the potential to enhance learning outcomes by promoting better cognitive focus due to adequate nutrition and regular physical activity. In Andhra Pradesh, 92.9% of respondents were actively involved, compared to 50% in control groups. Similarly, Uttar Pradesh saw 71% active participation of children in project groups, contrasting with none in control groups. These developments were attested by members of the Child Cabinet Committee, whereby 84% of respondents from project group reported a high level of activity, indicating a strong engagement with the initiative. In contrast, only 58.8% of respondents from control group reported similar levels of activity, indicating a lower involvement.

3.2 Community Toilet

The ITC Community WASH initiative is dedicated to improving the living conditions of marginalized urban communities in one district -West Bengal, Kolkata, specifically targeting areas afflicted by open defecation in slums. The programme was assessed by covering 255 and 130 respondents from project group and control group respectively.

Sanitation Practices: The construction of toilets also altered the behaviour observed between the control and project groups concerning proper menstrual hygiene. While 55.6% of the participants in control group reported no access to a sanitary pad incinerator, only 19.6% in project group faced this issue.

Menstrual Hygiene: The intervention has significantly impacted project group, with 71.7% of respondents reporting access to adequate menstrual hygiene facilities, compared to only 30.1% in control group. This substantial increase suggests potentially improved menstrual health among programme beneficiaries over time.

WASH Awareness and Practices: A high percentage of respondents reported positive engagement with WASH initiative. Notably, 75% of respondents indicated receiving training on WASH from project implementers, reflecting an active effort towards educating and empowering individuals on hygiene practices. Additionally, all respondents from project group demonstrated knowledge about proper WASH practices, including handwashing, safe water handling, and toilet hygiene.

4) Theme 4: Solid Waste Management

Solid and Liquid Waste Management (SLWM) is one of the key components of Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM), launched with the objective of bringing improvement in cleanliness, hygiene and the general quality of life. The associated endeavor of ITC focuses on generating awareness and providing community managed sanitation systems. To implement its initiatives economically and efficiently, ownership at grass root level and community involvement at all stages is critical. Projects under this theme were evaluated in three districts of Uttar Pradesh, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. A total of 468 and 312 heads of the household were interviewed from project and control group respectively for assessment of the theme.

Key Findings

Waste Management Practices: The data indicates a significant divergence in waste disposal practices between the two groups, underscoring the positive impact of the intervention on project group. Specifically, 77.6% of project group relies on local waste collectors for waste disposal, compared to only 11.8% in control group. This significant shift towards organized waste collection in project group highlights the programme's success in encouraging proper waste disposal methods, leading to improved cleanliness and reduced public health risks.

The mode of waste disposal was strengthened by the regularity in waste collection. In terms of collection frequency, project group reported a higher frequency of daily waste collection at 69.2% compared to control group at 38.2%.

The intervention was successful in promoting effective waste segregation practices among project group, leading to better waste management and environmental sustainability. Engagement in home composting

is significantly higher in project group at 37.2% than in control group (14%), reflecting the programme's impact in promoting sustainable waste practices.

Behaviour Change, Community Involvement and Associated Health Outcomes: The intervention has successfully influenced behaviour change regarding environmental conservation. A significant majority of project group respondents (60.7%) believe that the waste management system has considerably reduced littering and illegal dumping, compared to 9.7% in control group.

Additionally, 63.7% of project group feel that the system has significantly fostered community involvement and responsibility towards environmental conservation, indicating a strong community buy-in facilitated by the programme. Conversely, only 13.4% of control group respondents perceive increased community involvement.

5) Theme 5: Women Empowerment

5.1 Targeted Hardcore Poor Programme (THP)

The programme is specifically designed for women from the poorest sections of the community termed as ultra-poor women, who have less than INR 1500 per month, with no possession of asset and no able-bodied male member working. The programme is aimed to ensure socio economic mainstreaming of women and help them to come out from vicious cycle of poverty through mainstreaming.

This programme offers comprehensive support to the ultra-poor women, aiming to foster their self-sufficiency and integration into the socio-economic fabric. Women eligible for the programme undergo selection via a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) process, which evaluates their socio-economic standing. We assessed the theme in two districts of Uttar Pradesh and Telangana, with 304 and 150 respondents from project group and control group, respectively.

Key Findings

The largest percentage of beneficiaries (49.8%) generate net income between Rs. 5,000 and Rs. 10,000, indicating a moderate level of profitability for most participants. A significant portion (24.6%) of beneficiaries generate less than Rs. 5,000, which could highlight a need for additional support or resources to boost their income. 18.2% of beneficiaries earn between Rs. 10,000 and Rs. 15,000 monthly. While only 7.1% of beneficiaries are achieving net income more than Rs.15,000 per month, which shows there is potential for substantial earnings within the programme.

Livelihood and Entrepreneurship in the THP programme: The assessment indicates significant shifts in occupations between control group and project group. Among programme beneficiaries, there is a notable shift towards entrepreneurial activities, covering both agri-business (37.9% as compared to 5.8% in control group) and non-agri-business (39.2% as compared to 9% in control group) leading to additional income. Conversely, self-employment witnesses a substantial increase in project group (79.4%) compared to control group (26.7%), highlighting the programme's success in fostering entrepreneurship and self-sufficiency. Similarly, in Uttar Pradesh, an overwhelming majority of 98.6% of project group was self-employed, in stark contrast to only 24.4% in control group. This highlights the remarkable impact of the programme in fostering self-employment and economic empowerment.

Scheme Linkages: Access to Credit and Bank Accounts: Project group demonstrates higher reliance on Self Help Groups (SHGs) for loans (78%) compared to control group (69.6%). Additionally, 83% of the women from project group were covered under health insurance schemes as compared to only 19% in control group.

Training and Capacity Building: Most beneficiaries (74.1%) rate the training as highly effective, reflecting its impact on skill development. Additionally, financial literacy is high among beneficiaries (78.8%), with a positive attitude towards ongoing learning.

Tangible support in the form of material assets is provided to 97% of beneficiaries, enhancing entrepreneurial activities. This included assets such as Sewing machines (17.7%) and makeup products (9.7%), etc. enabling women to kick start their entrepreneurial ventures. 77.4% of the beneficiaries reported that the mentorship provided by the implementing partner was “highly effective”.

5.2 Self Help Groups

The project aims to promote economic and social upliftment by strengthening SHGs in rural communities. Through capacity building, access to financial services, and fostering entrepreneurship, with the help of Yojana Sakhis. The project seeks to enable women to become agents of change, driving sustainable development within their households and communities. This theme was assessed in the state of Karnataka, in Hassan and Mysore districts. The sample size comprised of 111 project beneficiaries and 38 respondents from control group.

Key Findings:

Training and Capacity Building: Training initiatives within project group, primarily facilitated by NGO partners under the ITC MSK programme (91.7%), demonstrate higher efficacy compared to other NGO programmes prevalent in control group (33.3%). 70% of project group beneficiaries received training on entrepreneurship skills which is significantly higher as compared to control group (28.6%).

The trainings provided to the respondents and their Self-Help Groups (SHGs) varied considerably between the control and project groups. In project group, a significant majority of 70% received training in entrepreneurship skills, while only 28.6% of control group received such training.

Savings and Loans: Saving habits are prevalent across both groups, with 97.6% in the Control and 95.8% in project group reporting saving regularly. In project group majority invest their savings in animal husbandry (66.7%) and agriculture (50%) while 33.3% utilised it for educational expense.

Project group also demonstrated a clear vision for their SHGs, with 69.4% emphasizing consistent savings among members and 75.5% focusing on financial resilience. Additionally, 40.8% aimed to connect with government schemes, 28.6% sought to develop SHG-level entrepreneurial ventures, and 14.3% promoted business initiatives among members.

Financially, SHGs in project group show significant growth, with 98% reporting an increase in corpus month-on-month. These improvements underscore the positive impact of the intervention, fostering more democratic leadership, clear vision, and financial growth within project group.

SHG's Entrepreneurial Ventures: The programme has significantly boosted entrepreneurial ventures within SHGs. 89.8% of project group respondents reported such ventures. External support, particularly from NGO volunteers under the ITC MSK programme (85.7%), and government officials (22.4%), played a

crucial role. Handicrafts and artisanal products are preferred, with a notable preference for tailoring and garment manufacturing in control group (25%) versus only 2% in project group.

Impact on Livelihood: The SHGs have significantly supported livelihoods, particularly in project group, where 81.7% of respondents reported positive impacts compared to just 28.6% in control group. The SHGs have facilitated business growth for 45.8% of respondents in project group, nearly double the 23.8% in control group. Additionally, the SHGs have supported the expansion of agricultural and animal husbandry activities, demonstrating their role in promoting diverse livelihood opportunities in both groups.

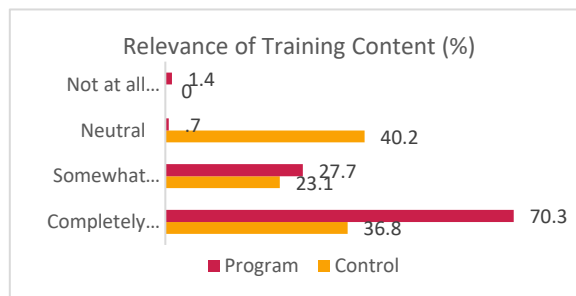
6) Theme 6: Skilling of Youth

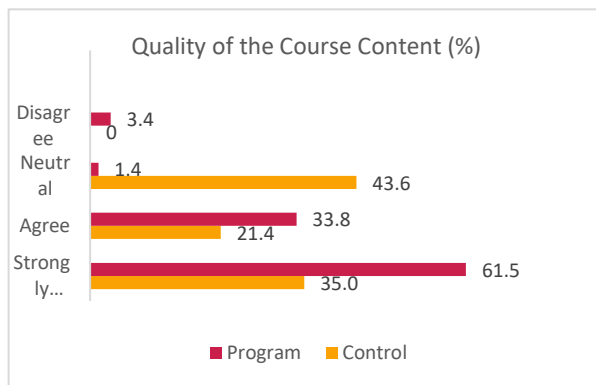
The skilling programme aims to uplift youth from disadvantaged backgrounds, enabling them to carve out a brighter future by equipping them with market-relevant skills. The focus areas include vocational training in hospitality, electricals, computers, and bedside assistance, retails, etc. thereby enhancing their employability by imparting in-demand competencies. Impact assessment for this theme was conducted in 1 district each of Kolkata & Jammu & Kashmir covering a total of 170 and 85 respondents from project group and control group respectively. Control group consists of youth who meet specific criteria for receiving vocational training and are either obtaining it from institutions **not supported by ITC or have not received any vocational training at all**. This careful selection process ensured that a comprehensive understanding is gained of the program's impact by comparing it with those who are receiving ITC supported vocational training. The implementing partners' insights and support was taken to accurately identify the control group and reach out to them for the purpose of the study.

Key Findings

Training Experience: Overwhelmingly, 93.9% of project group found the training mode appropriate and convenient, contrasting starkly with the 56.4% in control group. 43.9% of project group respondents stated that the inclusion of practical sessions along with classroom education and technical training made the curriculum more suited to the industry standards in comparison to 8.5% of the respondents belonging to control groups.

In project group, a significant majority of respondents, comprising 70.3%, found the training content to be completely relevant to their career goals and work profiles, compared to only 36.8% in control group. Control group exhibited higher proportions in the neutral category, with 40.2%, compared to just 0.7% in project group.



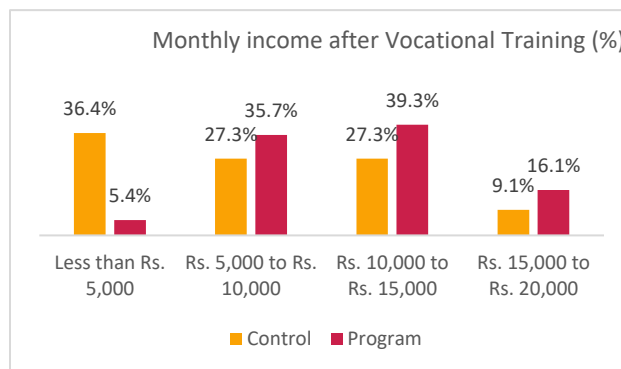


As shown in the graph, respondents' perceptions of the quality of the course content concerning industry requirements, substantial differences between the two groups emerge. Within project group, a significant majority, constituting 61.5%, strongly agreed that the quality of the course content met industry standards, in contrast to 35% in control group. Similarly, for those who agreed with the statement, 33.8% were in project group, while 21.4% were in control group.

Building Life Skills: The vocational training programme incorporated additional training alongside the core curriculum, with a focus on Life Skills, Social and Personal Management, and Problem Solving for project group, constituting 66.2%, 71.6%, and 73.6% respectively. In comparison, control group received additional training predominantly in Problem Solving (47%), Interpersonal Communication (33.3%), and Social and Personal Management (32.5%).

Placements and resulting benefits: In both Jammu & Kashmir and West Bengal, 61.5% of project group reported significant improvements in confidence, whereas only 29.1% in the control group reported the same. Likewise in these two states, 93.2% of project group believed the vocational training contributed to their personality development, in contrast to 56.4% in control group.

Income: Regarding salaries secured post vocational training, the interventions benefited project group respondents significantly. Nearly 99% of project group respondents reported an increase in their household income post their training. Project group shows remarkable advancement in income with 35.7% of project group respondents reporting post-training salaries ranging upto Rs. 10,000/-, compared to only 27.3% in control group. Similarly, higher salary brackets, (Rs. 10,000/- to Rs. 15,000/-) show a larger proportion of 39.3% in project group compared to just 9.1% in control group. Notably, 3.6% of project group respondents reported receiving monthly salaries exceeding Rs. 20,000 per month, which was not reached by any control group respondents.



7) Theme 7: Social Forestry

Social Forestry under ITC's MSK is an initiative aimed at promoting sustainable land management practices by engaging local communities in afforestation and reforestation activities, thereby enhancing environmental conservation, and supporting rural livelihoods. This theme was evaluated in four districts across Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Telangana. The sample size comprised of 559 project beneficiaries and 280 respondents from a control group.

Key Findings

Income: The tree plantation done under programme has resulted in improving household income. 84% of project farmers have reported income improvement, of which 41% households reported more than 50% additional income from plantations as compared to 14% of control group farmers reported getting more than 50% additional income. The programme respondents exhibit a higher average income of Rs. 65,600 compared to control group's average income of Rs. 61,500.

Success Rate of Plantation: The success rate of plantation reflected the effectiveness of the programmes in enhancing favorable results, with more than 75% survival being reported by 17.1% respondents in the project group against 9.9% in case of control.

After implementing social forestry initiatives on their lands, project group also noted significant improvements in agricultural practices and income levels. The findings underscore the positive impact of the programme, promoting sustainable forestry practices and enhancing economic outcomes for participants.

8) Theme 8: Water Stewardship

The Water Stewardship programme aims to enhance agricultural resilience to drought and achieve a positive impact on water resources through effective supply and demand management strategies. It champions water stewardship for all stakeholders in ITC's operational areas to promote water security through community-based participation in planning and execution and scientific water-balance assessments. Additionally, the programme aligns with the government's Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchai Yojana, focusing on micro-irrigation initiatives. The impact assessment of Water Stewardship theme was conducted in 3 districts each of Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, and 1 district of Telangana by covering 630 and 306 respondents from project group and control group respectively.

Key Findings

Access to Water Harvesting Structures & associated benefits: The greater presence of check dams and percolation tanks in programme areas indicates improved water infrastructure, positively impacting water availability for agricultural activities. This easier attainability could possibly have proved important in 48.3% of project group respondents experiencing better agricultural productivity when compared to 17.7% of those in control group. Furthermore, a substantial increase in groundwater levels was reported by 88.65% of project group respondents, highlighting the effectiveness of these water harvesting structures in replenishing groundwater resources and contributing to the enhanced agricultural yield and resilience.

Water Availability and Maintenance: The increased access to water supply in project group suggests improved water infrastructure, contributing to enhanced water security and convenience for farmers. Project groups exhibited a higher percentage (79.68%) of water availability for irrigation purposes compared to control groups (49.32%), leading to increased agricultural productivity. In Karnataka, project groups had the highest number of households using irrigation (82.35%) compared to control groups (50%). Similarly, in Telangana, it was 80.62% and 61.54% for project group and control group respectively

Significant number of community members took part in maintaining water structures in programme areas reflecting the collective effort towards ensuring the sustainability of water management practices and highlights the important role that communities play in safeguarding precious resources for future generations. 72.20% of project group members were satisfied with water management by groups as compared to 48.80% in case of control group members.

Training, Participation and Awareness:

Project groups experienced significant benefits from their awareness surrounding soil and moisture conservation measures. 68.61% respondents belonging to project group reported improved soil moisture retention vis-à-vis 53.24% of their counterparts in control group. Additionally, 65.31% project group respondents affirmed better crop growth through adoption of soil and moisture conservation measures compared to 53.88% respondents in control group. Notably, in Andhra Pradesh, 71.34% of project group respondents experienced enhanced crop growth, contrasting with 57.55% in control groups.

9) Theme 9: Climate Smart Agriculture (CSA)

CSA helps farmers to manage climate risks specific to their contexts. Under the ITC MSK programme, agricultural projects are designed to enhance productivity while ensuring environmental sustainability and resilience to climate change. By integrating climate resilient, advanced and resource-efficient practices the programme aims to improve crop yields, reduce damage due to extreme weather episodes and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, thereby supporting farmers in adapting to and mitigating the impacts of climate change. Impact assessment of this theme was conducted across 10 districts with 3 each belonging to the states of Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Bihar with 1 district in Telangana. Being a critical area of intervention for SIP, quantitative tool was administered to a total of 1148 and 548 respondents from project group and control group respectively.

Key Findings

CSA practices – Adoption, Awareness & Activities: A significant share of farmers in project group at 67.5% reported uptake of CSA practices in contrast to only 32.5% of their counterparts in control group in all the four states.

The key CSA practices included, zero tillage farming, Direct Seeding of Rice, adopting climate resilient varieties and green manuring and water use efficient practices

Delving deeper into individual practices, zero tillage was adopted by 75.8% of the project farmers against 39.2% of control groups in Bihar. With respect to Green Manuring, Andhra Pradesh (53.3% project group respondents versus 32.8% control respondents), Karnataka (31.3% project group respondents versus 18% control respondents) and Telangana (15.5% project group respondents versus 4.8% control respondents) displayed encouraging results. These results indicate the programme's efficacy in promoting these techniques and bore well to achieve the increased productivity, enhanced resilience, and reduced emissions.

Agriculture Economics and other benefits: Project group farmers practicing CSA methods realized higher incomes as compared to their counterparts in control group. A key underlying cause to the higher income stemmed from improvement in crop yields. 35.10% of the respondents in project groups stated reaping

improved crop yields, through implementation of CSA methods vis-a-vis conventional farming techniques, against just 22% of those in control groups. Furthermore, the profitability of CSA farming versus conventional farming methods were also reportedly higher among beneficiaries of project groups at 75% as compared to 52.5% of the farmers in control groups.

Livestock Engagement: This intervention is part of livelihood diversification approach of ITC followed along with CSA to de-risk livelihoods. With respect to ownership of livestock, project groups exhibit a higher percentage of households with livestock, accounting for 55% of respondents, compared to 45.8% in control groups. Possessing livestock provided gainful employment throughout the year, with project group respondents affirming a higher percentage at 32.4% against 27% in control groups.