CALL OF THE NORTHEAST

Locally flavoured social development rings clear in a region with unique and diverse needs

INTERVIEW
Horizons speaks to Rajiv Kumar, vice chairman, NITI Aayog

CANCER CARE
A new approach in the battle against the Big C

STAYING HOME
Stemming the migration tide from Odisha
Despite opening up to the rest of the country much more significantly than ever before over the recent past, Northeast India remains a relatively unexplored region. That explains why doing the cover story of this edition has been a journey of discovery for all of us at Horizons.

The Northeast is unique in ways too many to list, but framing it as a monolith — as I have just done — would be a mistake. Each of the states of this diverse and captivating geographical spread is unique. An appreciation of that reality has been the starting point of the splendid work the Tata Trusts have been doing to advance the cause of social development in the region.

Through programmes in livelihoods, education, animal husbandry, skilling and sports, the Trusts have been making a difference in the lives of numerous people in the Northeast. Our cover story, which touches Assam, Mizoram, Manipur and Nagaland, is an attempt to illuminate some of these efforts.

This issue of Horizons includes a project to ease the distress visited upon migrants moving from state to state in search of seasonal jobs and the means to simply survive. Our feature article on the India Consensus initiative examines how this collaboration involving the Trusts is striving to bring cost-benefit analyses to bear on social development decisions.

We also have on the magazine’s menu interviews with two doctors: veteran economist Rajiv Kumar, the vice chairman of NITI Aayog, and public health expert Chandrakant S Pandav (economics and medicine do mix). Additionally there are stories from urban as well as village milieus: a pan-India library programme; reinvented public health centres in Nagpur; and the enabling of craftspeople from across India.

Perhaps most crucially, this edition features a cancer care initiative with the potential to change the equation, across the country, in dealing with the disease.

Here’s to interesting reading and — because belatedly is better than never — wishing you, dear reader, the best in this still new year.

Christinelle Naranta

We hope you will help us make Horizons better with your valuable feedback. Please do write to us at horizons@tatatrusts.org.
HAPPENINGS AT THE TATA TRUSTS
The Tata Trusts and Mars Inc collaborate to tackle malnutrition; Tata Hall for the Sciences inaugurated at UC San Diego; IHF supports four innovators; a Spanish fillip for Indian football; and more

NORTHEAST IN THE FRAME
In livelihoods, education, sports and more, the social development programmes of the Tata Trusts in the region are making a difference

HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTH IS
Minimising the woes of migrant workers is the prime objective of a pilot project in Odisha

‘I HAVE THIS HUGE FEELING OF GRATITUDE THAT I GOT THIS OPPORTUNITY’
Veteran economist and NITI Aayog vice chairman Rajiv Kumar on the government think tank, its priorities and what it has accomplished
FEATURE STORIES

59 CRAFTING A BETTER FUTURE
The handicrafts sector, and handloom weavers in particular, are at the centre of a project that aims to uplift artisans and their creative traditions.

63 STANDING UP TO CANCER BY SPREADING THE NET
A radical new approach in the battle against the Big C aims to create multiple institutions to deliver high quality and affordable care.

67 BY THE BOOK
The Parag Library Programme helps government schools in Karnataka and Rajasthan instil a love for reading books in children.

INTERVIEW

71 THE BIGGEST BANG FOR EVERY BUCK
The India Consensus project employs rigorous cost-benefit analyses to help state governments pinpoint the most effective social development interventions.

75 HELPING HEALING
An ongoing transformation of Nagpur’s urban primary health centres has made affordable medical care more accessible to people in need.

79 ‘OUR DOCTORS NEED TO BE TAUGHT THE SKILL OF LISTENING’
Public health expert Chandrakant S Pandav on his life’s mission — eliminating iodine deficiency disorders — the ambitious National Nutrition Mission and more.

PERSPECTIVE

84 ‘ACTION WITH QUALITY ON TIME’ IS THE NEED
That’s the never-fail formula to secure the best social development outcomes, says Nayantara Sabavala.

Cover image: An Angami Naga tribal in the near wilderness of Dzüläke, a village in Nagaland’s Kohima district that has transformed itself into an eco-tourism destination.

DESIGN
Shilpa Naresh
Abraham K John

CONTACT
Tata Trusts
World Trade Centre 1
26th Floor, Cuffe Parade
Mumbai 400 005
India

DISCLAIMER
All matter in Tata Trusts Horizons is copyrighted. Material published in it can be reproduced with permission. To know more, please email the editor at horizons@tatatrusts.org.
The Tata Trusts and global confectionery giant Mars Inc have joined hands to deliver enhanced nutrition through protein-rich food products. The venture, aimed at addressing India’s nutrition deficit, was inaugurated by Stephen Badger, the chairman of Mars, and R Venkataramanan, managing trustee of the Tata Trusts, at a recent event in Pune.

The collaboration brings together two organisations with singular strengths. While Mars’s expertise includes innovation, product development and marketing, the Trusts have substantial knowledge of nutrition in India and an understanding of local communities and their needs.

Mr Badger said: “As a global business, we believe we have a responsibility and the capability to help address some of the critical challenges faced by society by creating commercially viable products that can make a difference. The Tata Trusts’ strong commitment to improving quality of life and nutrition in India made them a natural partner for us.”

Mars will work on the nutrition project through Mars Edge, its division dedicated to human health and wellness.

**A sweet solution to tackle malnutrition**

_The Indian Health Fund (IHF) has selected four innovators as part of its goal to support national efforts to effectively tackle tuberculosis and malaria. Of the winners, three are related to tuberculosis and one to malaria._

_IHF supports four innovators_

_The Indian Health Fund (IHF) has selected four innovators as part of its goal to support national efforts to effectively tackle tuberculosis and malaria. Of the winners, three are related to tuberculosis and one to malaria._

_The selected innovators are Tuberculosis Monitoring Encouragement Adherence Drive, Valetude Primus Healthcare, Centre for Health Research and Innovation, and Hemex Health._

_The IHF’s aim with these selections is to utilise technology to improve early detection and prompt treatment._

_IHF was launched in 2016 by the Tata Trusts in collaboration with the Global Fund. The Indian government has set a target of eliminating tuberculosis by 2025 and malaria by 2030._

**Hegde, Sabnani felicitated for ‘Big little Book’ victory**

_Kannada writer Nagesh Hegde and illustrator Nina Sabnani, winners of the Big little Book Award 2018 for their contribution to children’s literature in India, were felicitated recently for bagging the honour._

_Instituted under the Parag initiative of the Tata Trusts, the awards aim to highlight the importance of reading and good quality children’s literature. It also seeks to foster an environment where publishers invest in the promotion of original, thought-provoking content for children in various regional Indian languages._

_“I am happy and surprised that the Big Little Book Award recognises my work,” said Mr Hegde on the honour. “I am happily surprised, humbled and grateful for this recognition. I thank the jury for investing their trust in me,” said Ms Sabnani._

_Commenting about the awards, Swaha Sahoo, who heads Parag, said: “Having access to books in the mother tongue or home language is important. Studies have shown the gains that can be achieved when children learn in languages they speak and understand.”_
TIE-UP PROVIDES SPANISH FILLIP FOR INDIAN FOOTBALL

The Tata Football Academy (TFA) and the Tata Trusts have inked a partnership with Spanish La Liga giants Atlético de Madrid to promote Indian football. The collaboration aims to encourage football as a sport as well as support the Indian national football team with a pipeline of talent.

TFA will be renamed as Tata Atlético Football Academia under the partnership and will receive training and knowledge support. Technical experts from Atlético will visit TFA to provide guidance on best practices in physiotherapy, strength and conditioning, nutrition, video analysis, etc.

The collaboration includes a residential programme in Madrid — at the Atlético academy — for talented Indian players in the 12-14 age group. Twenty candidates will go to Spain in batches in three years. The programme will initially be for a period of three years. A team from Atlético has selected 10 boys thus far for the training programme.

FELLOWSHIP LAUNCHED

The Tata Trusts and Social Alpha have announced the launch of their flagship initiative, ‘the Social Alpha entrepreneurs for impact programme’ (E4i), a 12-month fellowship that equips ‘entrepreneurs-in-the-making’ to make the most of India’s science, innovation and entrepreneurship environment.

The first cohort of the E4i programme will focus on finding solutions across high-priority areas such as water, sanitation, health, agriculture, energy and environment.

Social Alpha will support the E4i finalists through its network of experts from the public and private sector.

TATA HALL FOR THE SCIENCES INAUGURATED AT UC SAN DIEGO

The Tata Hall for the Sciences, a cutting-edge campus research centre, was inaugurated on November 17, 2018 at the University of California San Diego (UC San Diego). The Tata Hall is named in recognition of the collaboration between UC San Diego and the Tata Trusts to create the Tata Institute for Genetics and Society (TIGS).

The partnership between the university and the Trusts was established to pursue the goal of research, training and capacity building to improve human health, agriculture and the environment in India. TIGS is advancing new technologies that will address the daunting challenges of hunger, poverty, malnutrition and health-related issues facing India.

Through TIGS, the Trusts and UC San Diego will promote bioscience research and discoveries through socially conscious means. One of the initiative’s initial efforts is the application of ‘active genetics’, a new field pioneered at UC San Diego, to develop strains of mosquitoes that are unable to propagate malarial parasites.

UC San Diego will promote bioscience research and discoveries through socially conscious means. One of the initiative’s initial efforts is the application of ‘active genetics’, a new field pioneered at UC San Diego, to develop strains of mosquitoes that are unable to propagate malarial parasites.
Spreading the canopy

A wide-angle view of initiatives by the Tata Trusts in Northeast India

**ASSAM**

**Reach**
- **556** villages in 18 districts
- **51,906** beneficiaries

**Programmes**
- Livelihoods (agriculture; fisheries; goat rearing; poultry; handloom)
- Skills and microenterprises development
- Education (primary education; school dropouts)
- Water and sanitation
- Nutrition

**TRIPURA**

**Reach**
- **95** villages in 4 districts
- **14,721** beneficiaries

**Programmes**
- Livelihoods (dairy development; fisheries)
- Skills development
- Education
- Watershed development
- Nutrition

**MIZORAM**

**Reach**
- **130** villages in 8 districts
- **57,800** beneficiaries

**Programmes**
- Livelihoods (agriculture; piggeries)
- Sports (football; badminton)
- Education (elementary schools; technology aids)
- Water (safe drinking water)

**MANIPUR**

**Reach**
- **93** villages in 14 districts
- **6,212** beneficiaries

**Programmes**
- Rural uplift (agriculture; dairy development)
- Sports (football; women’s polo; boxing)
- Skills and enterprises development
Northeast in the frame

In livelihoods, education, sports and more, the social development programmes of the Tata Trusts in the region are making a difference.

By Philip Chacko and Gayatri Kamath

Time was when denizens of India’s Northeast travelling to other parts of the country would feel like strangers in a strange land — and were sometimes made to feel so. That prickly period has passed as the people of the region identify ever more with the national ethos and get woven to an ever greater extent into the fabric of India.

Differences remain and so does the distinctiveness but the link with the mainland has gained in strength. It is the similar and the shared that tend to get highlighted these days and one sphere where the parallels are impossible to ignore is the challenge of social development.

Helping address this challenge is the purpose behind the multihued programmes of the Tata Trusts in what is a unique geography.

The interventions of the Trusts in the Northeast commenced about 12 years back. The effort was tentative in the initial days before it started gathering momentum. By 2007, with a better understanding of the region’s requirements and realities on the ground, the basic foundation to create a meaningful impact was in place.

The rural populace, especially the most marginalised and backward, were the focus of the Trusts’ programmes from the first and that continues to be. Strategy and the manner of execution have changed, most noticeably since the Trusts got into transformation mode in 2014, and the road less travelled has shown the way forward.

Need-based solutions

The journey in the years after has carried the Trusts into new areas of social uplift and, through the direct implementation of projects, deepened their connect with the community. In livelihoods, animal husbandry, education, water and sanitation, skilling and, not least, sports, the Trusts have spread their wings to reach those who most need a hand. And they have made a difference where it matters most — in the lives of folks...
burdened by poverty and the lack of opportunities.

The setting up, in 2008, of two associate organisations signalled a shift in thinking at the Trusts. The Northeast Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA) was established to look after projects in Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh and the Centre for Microfinance & Livelihoods (CML) in Assam, Manipur, Tripura and Meghalaya. That was only a start, though, and it would be a while before NEIDA and CML found traction.

This was a phase where the Trusts gave grants and depended on NGOs to execute ideas. There were benefits in the approach but working at a safe remove is rarely the optimal way to ensure maximum output in social development. Methods and attitudes needed a revision and, by 2014, the Trusts were up to making the necessary alterations.

“We realised that relying on NGO partners was not going to take us far; this was an essential learning,” says Arun Pandhi, director, programme implementation, at the Trusts. “There were issues with capacity, financial management and the region’s geographical isolation.”

The positive was the understanding gained through association. “We had laid the foundation and our engagements with the NGOs taught us a lot.”

That direct connection
There has been the inevitable heartburn. “It’s an evolutionary process, and not one without pain,” adds Mr Pandhi. “There were teething troubles because we were reorienting our teams. But I can say with confidence that today they are brimming with the belief that comes from interacting directly with communities.”

That was a challenge overcome
and then there are those that keep cropping up: finding the right people and retaining them, the difficulty of generating resources from financially-strapped state economies, governance deficits, transportation and more. Navigating these can be deflating, but that has not stymied the Trusts.

Transportation is among the worst of the lot and zonal manager Biswanath Sinha has an anecdote that explains why: “We have a livelihoods project in Pungro in the Kiphire district of Nagaland. For our team, which is based in Kohima, the state capital, getting to the site is a 13-hour road trip. And there is only one road; if it stops functioning due to a landslide or a disturbance of any kind, the place gets cut off from the world.”

Though not a problem in the conventional sense, the diversity of the Northeast is a factor that has to be borne in mind. “We have to work keeping this in view,” says Mr Sinha. “The rest of India is inclined to think the entire region is one continuous block. They are wrong. There are, for example, 29 scheduled tribes in Manipur and I’m not counting the sub-tribes.

“In Nagaland there are major tribes and minor tribes and sub-tribes. The state is a collection of villages and, typically, one village will have only one tribe. If you belong to a different tribe or you are an outsider, you have to take permission from the village head to enter the village. We have to deal with such situations in the course of our work.”

The Northeast cannot be compared with any other part of India on the social development scale, adds Mr Sinha. “There is no set formula here for philanthropic organisations like the Trusts. If we invest ₹1 billion in, say, Punjab, we could expect to reach 3 million people. We wouldn’t be able to do that in the Northeast. You have to be realistic.”

Piggeries and fisheries, water and sanitation, horticulture, craft and sports, conserving community forests — the priorities with target communities have defined and determined the how and the why of the Trusts’ programmes in Northeast India.

Grassroots approach
Going to the grassroots has been an important facet of the work the Trusts are involved with, the best example being in sports, particularly football. “Our grassroots football initiative is the biggest we have [in the sports portfolio],” says Mr Sinha. The reason is simple: the Northeast is a nursery for the game in India.

The Tata Trusts have overachieved with many of their programmes, wrested what was expected with others and underperformed with some. But be it in the plains of Assam or the hills of Mizoram, the knowledge the Trusts have gleaned from each of their initiatives has been invaluable.

“What we are doing in the Northeast is not stereotypical,” says Mr Pandhi. “The fundamental point is the pioneering role we are playing out there. It is not a place where anybody — be it a philanthropic entity or an NGO — can go and change things.

“The people of this region have missed out on decades of development and they have been forced to live through long spells of strife. There is a huge desire for development and the Tata Trusts are playing their part. I truly believe this is in the national interest. We have gained the credibility and created the space to make a crucial difference.”

The Trusts have some 400 professionals working in their programmes in the Northeast and they hope to touch the lives of at least 1 million people by 2022. That means further expansion and the incorporation of, for instance, social enterprises that can push towards eco-tourism and other promising avenues. As the stories that follow reveal, the capability to pull it off is certainly there.
Integration is the watchword in a programme that uses a variety of methods to enhance the earning capacity of rural folks

Being able to get his three girls into an English-medium school is what Lalramthara Hauhulh likes most about having extra money in his hands. “I want them to graduate, maybe become doctors or engineers,” says the 40-year-old farmer from Zawlpui village in Serchhip district. That may have seemed a farfetched idea for Mr Hauhulh and his family a while back, but not anymore.

Mr Hauhulh has set his sights high for the future on the strength of what he has managed to secure over the recent past by being part of the ‘integrated livelihood promotion’ (ILP) programme, an initiative that covers more than 17,000 households spread across eight sub-districts of Mizoram. The evidence is in the income Mr Hauhulh has been able to pull in, which has jumped from about ₹200,000 a year before he joined the project to double that amount now.

The programme’s pillars
Farming — particularly horticulture — piggery development, and the reinforcement of community institutions are the three pillars of the ILP programme, which kicked off in 2016 as a collaboration involving
the Mizoram government and the Tata Trusts. The watchword here is integration and with solid reason.

For traditional Mizo communities low on resources, depending on a single source for income or food security is a dicey proposition. “That’s why our programme has a basket of interventions, such that we can ensure support for a family moving from point A to point B in a manner that is sustainable for them and also economically incremental,” explains Bawlte Lalrinkima, programme coordinator for Mizoram with the Northeast Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA), an associate organisation of the Trusts that is charged with implementing the ILP initiative.

Making good use of the small land parcels that families in the region typically possess is vital in the context. “We are trying to maximise the disposable income families can generate from, say, an acre of land,” adds Mr Lalrinkima. “That’s why we chose to pursue horticulture, which delivers a perennial source of earning.”

NEIDA has focused on bananas, oranges, pineapple and seasonal vegetables in the farming component of the project.

‘Stabilising land use’ is the term employed to take in what happens, and it includes training farmers and equipping them with agricultural knowhow, planting new orchards and rejuvenating existing ones, supplying saplings and secateurs, cultivating winter vegetables, and helping with irrigation facilities and pest management.

In Zawlpui the Trusts have gone further still by providing two tractors to the 200-odd villagers who are in the programme. These hardy machines have been invaluable, and not just for ploughing, in a place where roads range from unpaved to non-existent. “The roads here are terrible, as you can see, and the tractors also allow us to transport our produce,” says Mr Hauhulh.

Progressing to pigs
From farming to piggery development was a natural progression in the logic of the programme. “The rearing of pigs has been an ancient practice in Mizoram and elsewhere in the Northeast,” says Mr Lalrinkima. “The problem is management and hygiene. To deal with that we have introduced scientific methods of rearing pigs while keeping health and hygiene at the fore.”

Developing low-cost pigsties and providing veterinary services at rural doorsteps are part of the blend NEIDA has brewed. Add to that the feed for the pigs — which has to be of the right order to ensure quality piglets are produced — free vaccination and health camps, and ‘livelihood service providers’, a band of village youth educated in piggery development and horticulture activities.

There are 67 service providers in the initiative and their importance, especially in the piggery development portion — which has thus far covered nearly 5,900 households in 104 villages — cannot be understated. They are the first line of defence when the ever-present danger of livestock diseases comes calling, and they are also the link between the community, the state government and NEIDA.

Community institutions, the final piece in the ILP programme, may not have the obvious import of what’s happening in horticulture and piggery development, but they are crucial as well. “Mizo culture has always had strong community institutions,” says Mr Lalrinkima. “We are looking to incentivise these institutions so that they can earn some money — through retailing, the supply of inputs and the aggregation of produce.”

Agriculture is the mainstay for many in the project.
On a dusty stretch of highway near North Mualthuam village in Lunglei district, a partnership involving the public sector National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard), the Tata Trusts and the local council has engineered a fruitful solution.

Opened in April 2017, Jerusalem Market — named so at the insistence of a former benefactor — is a secure shelter where 19 women farmers from the area sell their tasty produce: oranges, bananas and more. The market is a huge improvement on what it has supplanted, a rickety shed open to the elements and less than protective of those forced to use it to make a living.

The new Jerusalem Market, which provides separate, multi-tiered platforms and storage space as well for its exclusively female vendors, came about thanks to a push and a pitch by the village council, which tapped Nabard and the Trusts for support to build it.

“This market is a comfort for our farmer-sellers,” says Pachuau Chhawnkima, president of the North Mualthuam village council. “Their incomes have risen and we have become well-known in the district due to the development that has happened here.”

Selling secure

One of the 19 farmer-sellers — all of them women — of Jerusalem Market

The financial side counts for a lot, of course, and the beneficiaries in the programme have to contribute their bit. They and the Trusts put in roughly 40% each of the cost and the remaining 20% comes from the state government and institutions such as the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development.

“The households contribute in cash and kind and they are very willing to, but the issue is that they often don’t have the money,” says Mr Lalrinkima, who expects every household in the programme to have an additional income of at least ₹200,000 a year by 2021, the slated end of the timeline for it. “That is our quantifiable goal,” he says while expressing confidence that the initiative will be self-sustaining in the longer run.

Not quite ready

Lalzuatliana Ralte, a 42-year-old who also hails from Zawlpui, earned nearly ₹300,000 last year from growing brinjal, tomato, chilly, cabbage and mustard on 2 acres of land — up from the ₹100,000 he made in 2016 — but he is not so sure about striking out successfully on his own. “I hope the NEIDA-state government partnership continues because we are not quite ready to do this without them,” he says.

Mr Hauhulh has no such doubts. “I know I can keep doing well even after this programme closes,” he says. “If all goes well, I’ll soon be able to build a proper, concrete house and maybe even buy a truck.”
find badminton easy to play — the backhand is my favourite shot — and I want to get better at it,” says Ruthi Lalhmangaihi, a nine-year-old with an impish smile on her face and hope in her heart. “I want to compete in more tournaments. I reached the final of one last year. I lost in three games but I’m happy I got that far.”

Ruthi is taking a break from her training routine at Aizawl’s Saron Badminton Club, one of 25 centres where a grassroots initiative supported by the Tata Trusts is working to tap and nurture talent in a sport that ranks among the most popular in Mizoram. There’s more to it than that for Ruthi. “I have plenty of pals here and I love being with them,” she adds.

Getting together
There are 815 children from the 7-13 age bracket in the badminton programme, which is spread over all eight districts of the state. The Trusts are one part of a collaborative effort that also includes the Pulela Gopichand Badminton Foundation (PGBF), the Mizoram Badminton Association (MBA) and the Mizoram State Sports Council (MSSP).

The programme, which began in May 2018 and is filled to the brim with participants, is the first phase of what will eventually be a three-tier pyramid structure. In the next stage are ‘regional development centres’ — six of these are slated to be set up in 2019 — where the best of the lot from the grassroots initiative will be absorbed.

The cherry on the top, literally as well, will be a state-of-the-art high-altitude training centre. Land to house the centre has been provided by the state government (in Siphir district) and the designing of it is expected to be along the lines of a full-fledged sports academy.

The way it is envisioned, the centre will be a residential facility, with a sports laboratory, a library, a swimming pool and a football
Baddy boost

The badminton coaching initiative has a three-tiered pyramid structure:

**Grassroots project**

- 815 children in the 7-13 age group
- 27 coaches at 25 centres in 8 districts
- **Duration:** 3 years per individual

**Regional development centres**

- 6 to be set up in 2019

**Objectives:** To absorb the best from the grassroots project, to provide infrastructure and training for further development of talent

**High-altitude training centre**

- A residential facility that will be established in Sihphir district by 2021, primarily for badminton but also for other sports
- Will be a world-class sports academy, with a sports laboratory, a library, a swimming pool and a football ground
- **Objectives:** To train the best from the regional development centres and to be a finishing school for national and international sportspeople

To be self-sustaining, the centre will concentrate on badminton but by no means will it be restricted to a single sport.

There’s a three-year timeline for the centre to come up but, meanwhile, the talent it has been fashioned to hone is in the pipeline. The grassroots programme is where the action is currently and there is no dearth of commitment from the partners involved.

The biggest name here is Mr Gopichand’s foundation, one of the best in the business of moulding sporting standouts for a country way too short on them. The foundation plays the role of technical partner in the project and its expertise is expected to go a long way in helping the initiative achieve its objectives.

**Bureaucratic zeal**

The genesis of the badminton programme can be traced to the zeal of a regional bureaucrat — Kannan Gopinathan, the deputy commissioner of Aizawl — to put a structured coaching setup in place for the sport across the state.

Mr Gopinathan sought and secured the backing of the Trusts for the programme and he roped in Mr Gopichand, a personal friend, to lend assistance.

The reason badminton got picked as the sport to pursue was patent. “Every locality in Mizoram has at least one badminton court; it’s the most played game in the state after football,” says project coordinator Lalropuia, who is with the North East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA),
the Tata Trusts associate organisation in charge of implementing the initiative.

NEIDA’s task has been rendered relatively straightforward thanks to the steadfastness of the partners involved, particularly MBA, MSSP and other arms of the state administration. There are wrinkles, though. “The main problem is finding the right coaches,” adds Mr Lalropuia. “We have a total of 27 coaches who have been selected and trained by PGBF but, given their sparse numbers in the districts, this hasn’t been easy.”

Having to share facilities is another issue. Most of the courts where the coaching happens are in community centres that are open to everyone. As elsewhere, adults and their priorities tend to take precedence over children and that means the time the trainees get to spend on court is restricted.

The lack of unlimited minutes for playing has not dampened the enthusiasm of the kids who have flocked to the coaching programme. “We had no need to publicise this initiative to any great extent,” says Mr Lalropuia. “In fact, it was oversubscribed and we had to put a ceiling on the number of children who wanted to participate.”

The eagerness to join the programme had something to do with the parents of the kids as well, worried as they were of their offspring spending too many hours glued to one kind of screen or the other. “The majority of kids in the age group we cater to are very fond of mobile phones and television,” says coach Ralte Chalhmingliana, stern of face but with plenty of patience for his wards.

“Their parents want them to learn badminton, for sure, but they also want to instil discipline in them, and they want to keep them away from TV and the internet as far as possible,” says Mr Chalhmingliana, who gave up football, his childhood love, for badminton following an injury. “Discipline and the behavioural change that brings are the stepping stones to better on-court performance.”

Mr Chalhmingliana has high expectations that stars can emerge from the badminton programme in the not-too-distant future. “Not all of them will be champions, of course, but we are seeing lots of improvement despite this being a new programme. Our students have been reaching the quarters, semis and finals of local tournaments. No winners as yet but we are hopeful of producing one soon.”

Sustainability factor

Financial and operational independence is, as always, a cherished Tata Trusts goal for the programme. The long-range idea is to make the badminton initiative self-sustaining through the funds collected as fees from trainees and from the resources that will be generated by the high-altitude training centre.

Vanlallawmzuali Bawitlung, all of 13 and filled with that blend of doubts and dreams characteristic of her age, is not looking so far. “I want to continue with this coaching programme as long as I can,” she says. “I’ve participated in three tournaments and I reached the final in one of them; I couldn’t go far in the other two. I know I have to work harder to be a good badminton player, but studies are most important for me. I want to be an Indian Administrative Services officer when I grow up.”

For 11-year-old Dolreign Vanlalthalawra, an ‘advanced learner’ in the initiative, initial reluctance has given way to fondness. “I didn’t want to join this coaching at first — I did it because my father was insistent — but I’ve grown to like this new lesson I’m learning,” he says with a serious look. “I have a lot of fun here but sometimes the intensity of the training gets me tired. I will stay in the programme; I want to be a champion. There are many here better than me as of now, but I’ll beat them someday.”

Dolreign doesn’t get much time these days to watch TV or get on his mobile phone. Asked if he missed all that, his answer is austere and cryptic — “No.”
A league of their own

The Centre of Excellence in Aizawl has been designed to play the role of cradle for young ones chasing a bright future in the beautiful game.

I guess God blessed me; that’s why I got selected,” says Phijam Vikash Singh, citing divinity to explain how he found a place at the Centre of Excellence (CoE), the residential football academy in Aizawl where the Tata Trusts have unveiled a scheme to groom fledgling talents in the sport dearest to Northeastern hearts.

But Vikash, all of 15, has got his deduction wrong. The supernatural has nothing to do with how this Manipuri lad from Imphal came through a rigorous and extensive scouting-and-trials process to win a coveted spot at the state-of-the-art Centre, which offers a quality academic education alongside lessons in football to 28 boys in the 12-15 age group.

A fan of Manchester City’s Spanish star David Silva and the rock band Metallica, Vikash is more on the ball when looking ahead. “I want to be a professional player and I’ll become one by working hard,” he says. What about the classroom part? “My studies are going okay but remembering all those dates from history is tricky.”

Vikash will have to solve that problem and others, too, in order to help the Tata Trusts make good on their goal with the programme: to nurture the sporting, educational and personality characteristics of a carefully chosen bunch of promising footballing talent from the region by providing them with the best possible coaching, infrastructure and schooling.

**Extensive scouting**

This is the first batch of trainees at the Centre, which began its journey in early 2017 with a scouting mission that covered Mizoram, Manipur, Meghalaya, Nagaland and Assam. In excess of 3,000 boys participated in the first phase of training.

---

**Footie at fever pitch**

The focus on football in the Northeast has spawned many initiatives...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MIZORAM</th>
<th>MANIPUR</th>
<th>MEGHALAYA</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Centre of Excellence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Grassroots project</strong></td>
<td><strong>The Meghalaya Baby League</strong> — Initiated in May 2018 participation by about 1,200 footballers, including girls, ranging from 4 to 13 years of age</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-year residential programme for 28 boys in the 12-16 age group</td>
<td>1,500 kids, 380 of them girls, in the 6-14 age group being trained at 30 centres in 9 districts</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Grassroots project</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3,000 kids, including 300 girls, in the 6-14 age group being trained at 60 centres in 6 districts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Trials in these states, candidates were shortlisted and brought together for a six-day camp in Aizawl before the final selection.

The geographical setting is the reason why the majority of those inducted into the programme are from Mizoram (16 of the 28) but the Trusts have gone the distance in searching out kids from other parts of the region. Seven of the boys hail from Manipur, four are from Assam’s Bodoland—a fertile place for football to flourish—and one is from Nagaland.

The Mizoram government and the Mizoram Football Association (MFA) are partners in the CoE project, which operates out of space granted by the Mizoram Police. The Northeast Initiative Development Agency, the associate organisation of the Trusts that implements the programme, has built the facilities for the Centre and refurbished the adjoining ground where the boys practise. The trainees themselves don’t have to shell out anything (they, in fact, get compensated once selected).

The collaborative facet of the endeavour is further highlighted by the contribution of the Aizawl Diocesan Education Society, which has provided teachers from the Holy Trinity School it runs to ensure that the academic learning the boys receive keeps pace with their football coaching. Personality development and community service are on the menu as well for these student athletes.

Simply put, the Centre’s objective is the all-round development of the children, not only their footballing and education knowledge but also their communication and IT skills,” says Renthlei Malsawma, the manager of CoE.

**Technique first**

It’s more serious still on the football side. Nutrition, physiotherapy, psychology, recovery sessions—the Centre offers all of these and then some to the trainees. What counts for most, though, is technique and the honing of it. “It’s always technique first; everything else—tactics, formations, maturity—comes after that,” says Bitan Singh, CoE’s senior assistant coach.

Mr Singh should know. A former professional with wide-ranging scouting and coaching experience at the junior level, he has high hopes for the boys at the Centre. “They are talented and it’s
The grassroots gets greener

Children playing cricket is a commonplace sight across much of India. Not so in the Northeast. Folks here have a preference — nay, an unbridled ardour — for the game more beautiful, and it shows in every nook and cranny, every spread of green or brown of the region.

It was only a matter of time before the rest of the country understood this reality, and that time has well and truly arrived. Which may explain why, for instance, the side that India fielded in the last under-17 World Cup had 10 players from the northeast.

Tapping the source of such passion and making the most of the advantages it delivers is the objective of the now-thriving grassroots football programme being implemented by the Northeast Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA), a nodal organisation of the Tata Trusts.

A collaboration that involves the Mizoram chapter of the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan — an Indian government programme aimed at universalising elementary education — the Mizoram Football Association, Aizawl Football Club and NEIDA, the grassroots initiative has more than 3,000 children, including about 300 girls, in the 6-14 age group learning and training to play the game better in 60 academies in six districts of the state.

Thanks to scrupulous preparation and the dedication of those who did the groundwork, the grassroots initiative, which kicked off in 2016, has progressed smoothly from its baby-step days to become entrenched in the communities where it has taken root. “Getting qualified coaches was an issue in the early days but we have got over that bump,” says Jacob Lalthazuala, senior project associate with NEIDA.

Having more girls in the programme is a priority for NEIDA now and that will happen in the next phase. By then, NEIDA expects, the total number of kids in the project will be between 6,000 and 7,000.

talent that we are focusing on,” he says. “Mentality is important here. We are moulding them into players who want to win, who understand both attack and defence and who can transition from one to the other fluidly.”

The boys spend two hours every day with the football coaching — the studies part takes up four hours, Monday to Friday, and there are extra classes for spoken English — and evidence of their on-field quality has become clear. The team sits in top position in the inaugural under-15 league organised by the MFA and one of the trainees, Thlacheu Vanlalruatfela, has made it to the Indian team in his age category.

Professional help

As for the future, the plan is to lay out a path for the boys to be absorbed into a professional club once they cross the age-16 threshold. Across-the-board expansion is also on the Centre’s agenda. “We want to increase the number of students to 30 next season,” says Mr Malsawma. “If all goes well over the next five years, we should have our own setup, an additional under-19 group and up to 50 boys in the scheme. And perhaps even a similar academy for girls.”

What lies beyond the horizon will, to an extent, depend on how kids like Bapen Yimjong shape up in the days ahead. “This place has turned out to be better than what I expected,” says the 14-year-old CoE cadet from Dimapur in Nagaland. “I hope I can become good enough to play for India someday.”
A band of women artisans in Thoubal district are using a supple water reed as raw material to craft an improved life for themselves.
but that may have to wait till my children finish their education.”

The crafts programme capitalises on the traditional knowhow of the community in a region where the making of mats from Kauna reeds is an expertise handed down the generations. Used in homes and for ritual purposes, these mats are part of the local culture, but they don’t fetch much. Changing tack to create higher-value products has resulted in a recasting of the revenue equation for the women artisans.

The current phase of the programme began in 2016 and has the steadfast backing of the Tata Trusts. It is being implemented by the Centre for Microfinance & Livelihoods (CML), the nodal agency for the Trusts in Manipur, in partnership with the NGO, Odesh. CML’s vehicle for implementation is called, in space-age style, ‘livelihood propulsion and support services’. There’s no rocket science, though, behind what the agency and Odesh have set out to achieve. Their objective is to build a Kauna craft ecosystem for Thoubal that blends technique and marketing to fashion a business model that will become self-sustaining in the near future.

The whole nine yards
In the details of how the idea will be further strengthened are trendy design, continual training, entrepreneurship, logistics, branding and packaging, quality upgrades, sales support and product diversification. The immediate goal is to widen the domestic client base and, for the longer term, to secure international recognition and start exporting Kauna products.

Upping the numbers of those in the programme is also a priority. “We want to add another 200 people and have a total of 375 artisans by 2020,” says Bharjit Singh, the chief executive of Odesh. “The potential is there. In fact, given the bulk orders we are getting, we can’t keep up with demand.”

Being unable to supply enough shows how far the project has come since the Trusts first began backing the Kauna artisans, back in 2013, with funding for an overhaul of their design process. Odesh was instrumental in making that happen and the spark was a livelihoods training workshop organised by the Trusts in Nalabari in Assam a year earlier. Mr Singh was in attendance and it opened his eyes to the possibilities available to chart a new course.

“I sensed we could use the traditional knowledge the women artisans had in mat making to do something different,” says
Kauna grass — to call it by its proper name — is a species of water reed that grows extensively in the wetlands and marshlands of the northeast. Manipur is a particularly fertile place for this hardy plant, which takes less time and effort than the more popular paddy to cultivate and harvest.

The stem of the Kauna reed is soft, spongy and supple, which makes it ideal to be woven into baskets, mats, cushions, mattresses and purses. The reed has to be processed before it can be crafted into products and this is done by cutting it near the base and drying it in the sun.

The Kauna reeds used by the women artisans are smoked and stored for a period — to increase its shelf life — before being woven with basic tools. Typically a secondary crop in rural Manipur, the reed’s flexibility, durability and water-resistant quality are its strengths.

Mr Singh. “That’s why we branched out into making baskets. We had already established a relationship with the villagers and that was an advantage. We concentrated on skills transfer, design and on cutting out the intermediaries fleecing the artisans.”

About 100 artisans were selected for training, producer groups were set up to get the best price for the products and the Odesh team got serious about publicising the appeal and quality of the Kauna merchandise. “We would take the products to exhibitions around India and we started looking at it as a proper business,” adds Mr Singh.

Nearing the magic mark

The Kauna initiative has found its feet in the years since. It recorded a turnover of ₹210,000 in 2017-18 and the figure should rise substantially in the current financial year. “We are nearing the sustainability mark and we should get there by 2022,” says Mr Singh.

There are issues to be resolved and the partners in the project — this includes EXIM bank, which has pitched in with financial backing — are working hard to iron them out. “Our products are handmade and that results in a slowness of supply,” says Mr Singh. “Then there’s the problem of absences during the crop harvesting season, when everybody here, rich and poor, is required in the field.”

Adequate access to the raw material needed, the water reed, is another concern but that is being eased as more local farmers switch from paddy cultivation to growing Kauna. Niggles of this sort are not so much a deterrent as getting more women artisans involved in the project. “We have to up their numbers,” says Mr Singh.

From the Tata Trusts perspective, sustainability is the key and hopes are high that this can be achieved if the programme pans out further in the manner that it has thus far. “We do believe this initiative can be self-sustaining and we are doing everything we can to make that possible,” says Hravahlou Thekho, the CML project coordinator.

Mr Thekho cites the shift in the dynamics of the households brought into the programme. “Women making up to ₹10,000 a month — that has never happened in these families,” he says. “Earlier only husbands were breadwinners; now the wives also earn, sometimes more than the men.”
The women’s polo project has saddled up for a ride that will provide much-needed support to a sport gifted by Manipur to the world

No horsing around

The women’s polo project has saddled up for a ride that will provide much-needed support to a sport gifted by Manipur to the world

Tanna Thoudam’s laugh warms up a chilly morning at the Northeast Sporting Union ground in Imphal as she tells the story: “My first taste of horse riding was thanks to my uncle. My father — his elder brother — didn’t want me to learn but my uncle didn’t bother with that and he went ahead and taught me the basics. I got a caning from my father when he heard about it.”

Ms Thoudam, whose encounters with horses and riding in the years since have not caused any such strife, is taking time from training at the ‘women’s polo grassroots development programme’ initiated by the Tata Trusts in November 2018. Aimed at providing a leg up to Manipuri women keen on the game, the programme has a three-year timeline and includes capsules for coaching education, scouting and, most crucially, structured training for up to 50 women.

“I love polo but I’ve never been formally trained in the sport,” says 22-year-old Ms Thoudam, who has represented Manipur at the national level in rowing. “This is an opportunity to get properly coached. Women in Manipur have the chance to shine in different sports but not in polo. I want to show people that women can play this game as well. I want to stand up and be counted as a polo player.”

A shot at recognition

The 30-odd hopefuls currently in the programme will get their shot at just that, and making Manipur the setting for the initiative is appropriate. “Polo has an important place in our history, our culture and our mythology,” explains Maisnam Kheledro, head coach in the initiative and a former captain of the Manipuri polo team. “For us the game is unique and the ponies we play with — the Meitei Sagol — are among the purest breeds in India.”

Pushing the envelope with women’s polo is a considered attempt by the Trusts to create a system where none existed. The reasons are ample. The women’s game in the country is handicapped, bereft of support and lacking in infrastructure. The scenario in Manipur is a little better. There are women players, the game has widespread appeal and its popularity is egalitarian in nature.

Making the most of these
advantages is the declared objective of the programme, which is being implemented by the Centre for Microfinance & Livelihoods (CML), an associate organisation of the Trusts, in collaboration with the All Manipur Polo Association. “This gives us the opportunity to empower women through polo and to mould a talent pool of players,” says Rajesh Siwakoti, senior executive (programmes) with CML.

The components of the programme define its scope and ambition. In the coaching education part, the idea is to get experts from the United States and Britain, powerhouses in the sport, to train and mentor local coaches. The scouting portion is about finding promising candidates from the 15-30 age group. Player development focuses on customised and regular coaching, practice sessions and life-skills education. Additionally, the initiative is aimed at providing competition exposure to the women players.

**Pony boost**

The encouragement for the women polo players aside, the expectation is that the programme will boost the numbers of the Meitei Sagol. “These ponies are an endangered species; there are fewer than 1,000 alive and only 500 in Manipur,” says Mr Khelendro. “We hope this initiative leads to more people breeding and raising them.” (The Marjing temple, perched on a hill outside Imphal, is dedicated to horses, and its main deity, Iboudhou Marjing, sits on a winged pony.)

Mr Khelendro has an order of priorities for the training of the players. “Physical fitness is critical and then comes building a relationship with the horse, game knowledge, technique, tactics and formations,” he says. “By the third year we want to have a squad that can take on international teams. I’m sure we can get to that point.”

Getting all the pieces in place has not been an easy ride for the Trusts. “It took some labour to get the partnerships together,” says Mr Siwakoti. “Finding the right candidates was also a challenge. Despite our best efforts, we could not attract a big number of applicants. We started out wanting players from the 15-to-25 age group, but we have relaxed that to take in women up to 30.”
Manipur first? Yes but...

Polo’s origins are shrouded in doubt and conjecture but the historical consensus is that the so-called game of kings was first played by nomads in Central Asia. Try convincing Manipuris about that. Polo, they will insist, was born in the state. And they are right, in as much as the British chanced upon the sport in Manipur and took it to the world.

The Central Asia version holds that mounted horsemen of Iranian and Turkic extract played the game around 500 BC or earlier, with up to 100 a side, as part sport and part training for war. Nomadic migrations then took polo, it is further said, to Persia, Constantinople, China, Mongolia, Tibet, Japan and India.

The Manipur-first account, with its superior historical antecedents, is more precise, even if dated much later. References to polo — called Sagol Kangjei in the state — have been found in a script from AD 33. More solid evidence has it that British army officers saw the game being played in Manipur and were fascinated by the spectacle.

That led to the founding of the Silchar Polo Club in 1859 by colonial military men and tea planters. Polo spread quickly from there on, to Malta in 1868, England in 1869, Ireland in 1870, Argentina in 1872 and Australia in 1874. The oldest polo ground in the world is the Imphal Polo Ground in Manipur. The oldest polo club still in existence is the Calcutta Polo Club, set up in 1862 by British soldiers.

The rules of the sport, as framed by the British, are somewhat different from how the Manipuris have theirs. It’s seven a side in Manipur to four a side in the global game. There are no goalposts in Manipuri polo (you score by hitting the ball out at either end of the field). There are two referees on horseback in the modern game. In the Manipuri variety there is only one, and he’s on foot.

Mr Siwakoti is modest about his long-term expectations of the project. “We are not in a position to give the players a professional future because the setup does not exist in India,” he says. “What we are trying to accomplish is make Manipur the fulcrum of women’s polo in India. Ultimately, from the sustainability standpoint, we want to convince the state government and the community to carry the baton. I think we can do this by running a successful programme.”

The fun bit in the programme is what Donkhamdar Khaling, a 17-year-old fresher in the project, is chasing after. “I’ve wanted to learn to play polo from my childhood,” she says. “This is my first time on a horse; I feel like I’m on top of the world. I want to be an international player and I’m hoping this project makes my dream come true.”
Fostering glove love

Backing for the Mary Kom Boxing Academy is principally about promoting the sport, but also about recognising the legend behind it.

One-two-hook-upper cut—that’s been easier to learn than the classroom lessons,” says Punshiba Singh. “I like the sporting part, the training sessions and the routine here, but studies are a big problem. Nothing in the school textbooks goes into my head.”

A 12-year-old standard VII student, Punshiba is talking about the year he has spent at the Mary Kom Boxing Academy in Imphal, and about the trouble he has had balancing his passion and his obligation. “I was scared when I got here; it was the first time I was away from my family,” says Punshiba, born to subsistence farmers from Wangjing village in Manipur’s Thoubal district. “It took me nearly a month to make friends, but it has gone well since. I don’t miss home now.”

15 for the future

A standout talent who has performed well at state-level competitions—and who nurses ambitions of becoming an army officer—Punshiba is one of 15 young boxers being sponsored by the Tata Trusts at the Academy. He does not have to pay for the privilege and neither do the 75 other girls and boys at the centre, which caters largely to kids from poor backgrounds.
The Academy, which started functioning in 2015, has a tie-up with the Sports Authority of India and draws support from the state government and a mix of business houses, charitable organisations and individuals. It has come a long way since beginning modestly and is now primed to realise its objective of being a world-class boxing institution that unearths and moulds potential from the abundant talent pool the region has in the sport.

From finding the right kids to cutting-edge coaching, nutritional inputs, performance analysis and exposure to competition, the Academy offers trainees the platform to shine in a sport that has found flight in India. The multidimensional effort has paid off for the Academy, with its wards winning copious honours in state and national boxing contests.

The trainees range in age from 12 to 16 — with a smattering of students above that threshold — and the regimen they have to follow is as tough as boxing itself. The hours between the wake-up time of 4.30am and bedtime of 9.30pm include three-and-a-half hours of boxing, school and evening tuitions for the stragglers. The schedule can be gruelling.

**Keeping up is hard**

“I get so tired sometimes it’s hard to complete my classwork,” says Chinghauniang Tunglut, a 14-year-old from New Lamka village in Churachandpur district. It’s a deterrent Chinghauniang, who will presently be appearing for her standard X board exams, is determined to get past. “I have a goal and, the way I see it, if there are difficulties it’s up to me to overcome them,” she says. “Studies are not easy but I’m sure I’ll get a first class.”

My responsibility is to take care of them, not to look after them,” says Karong Thangrengkhup, the warden of the Academy hostel, whose surface strictness hides a soft heart. “I keep track of their boxing and their studies. They have to manage both and that can be complicated, but these kids cannot progress in life without decent grades.”

The emphasis is on boxing but the formal education part is almost equally important. “We are not chasing after top marks but they have to get through at least,” says Mr Thangrengkhup. “There are so many distractions these days, so I keep reminding them to not go astray.”

Giving the children individual attention is not possible but the Academy does its best. “It’s easier to chat with the boys; the girls just listen to me and go away,” adds Mr Thangrengkhup. “We don’t allow the use of mobiles and television time is severely limited. But no restrictions on watching when Mary Kom is in action.”

Inconsistent funding support, erratic electricity and internet connectivity and the relative remoteness of the facility are handicaps the Academy has
Mary truly is magnificent

It is unlikely many people know who Chungneijang Mary Kom Hmangte is. Eliminate two words from that proper noun and it would be highly improper for anybody, in India at least, to be oblivious of the person who bears that name.

The sporting peaks of ‘Magnificent Mary’, as she is known, bear repeating: six world championship titles, a bronze medal at the 2012 London Olympics, gold at the 2014 Asian Games and gold again at the 2018 Commonwealth Games. Beyond boxing, too, there is something about Mary Kom.

Currently a nominated member of the Rajya Sabha, the upper house of the Indian Parliament, she has a road named after her in her home state.

The path to such rarefied heights has been long and arduous for the 35-year-old Ms Kom, the eldest of three children born in a poor farming family in Kangathei village in Manipur’s Churachandpur district. An athlete in her school days, Ms Kom got inspired to take up boxing after seeing fellow-Manipuri Dingko Singh win a gold medal at the 1998 Bangkok Asian Games.

It is said that Ms Kom kept the progress of her boxing career a secret from her father, an ex-wrestler who frowned on his daughter’s growing interest in a sport that he believed would damage her face and thus hinder chances of finding a suitable husband.

He came to know of his child’s growing prowess in the ring when her photo appeared in newspapers following victory in the Manipur State Boxing Championship in 2000.

The rest of India would soon become aware of the singular boxing gem in their midst.

Comfort of the financial kind is what Tata Trusts — which have been supporting the boxing programme since 2017 and will continue doing so till 2022 — and the other backers of the Academy bring to the table. “I hope we can take this initiative to the grassroots,” says Rajesh Siwakoti, senior executive (programmes) with the Centre for Microfinance & Livelihoods, the nodal organisation for the Trusts in Manipur. “We don’t expect all the 15 kids we are sponsoring to make it to the Olympics, but it would be a huge boost if a few get to the national level. Personally speaking, I’d like to see at least one of them on television someday.”

learned to live with. This affects administration rather than the children themselves. Their issues are different. “Most of them are from villages, very poor and with parents who are struggling,” says Mr Thangrengkhup. “Some of the parents hardly ever visit their kids and we have orphans here as well. I try and comfort them.”
Milky way forward

Dairy farming has been the stairway to a fuller life for many households in an all-women project executed with precision over a long period

Omita Karam was struggling to cope with rising expenses when a new income stream flowed in to change her existence for the better. “I was able to send my children to a private school and to save up for emergencies,” says the 51-year-old mother of four from Ithaiwapokpi village in Manipur’s Bishnupur district. “Also, I understood how to keep accounts and I learned about the world outside my kitchen.”

For 38-year-old Kanjam Geetasana from nearby Ithaibazar village, more money in the family kitty has resulted in a refurbished house and the fuelling of optimism about the future of her two kids. “I will give my daughter a good education; no question of marrying her off early,” she says. “I want her to be a nurse or some other kind of professional. More marks and she could even become a doctor.”

**Liquid nutrition**

Ms Geetasana’s son is into karate and he’s adept enough at the martial art, even if only 11, to think of representing Manipur someday. “If I continue doing well I can help him realise his ambitions,” says the proud mother. “And the milk we have at home will make him stronger.”

Milk is the life-enhancing lubricant for Ms Karam and Ms Geetasana, two of 580 women in the ‘integrated dairy development programme’ backed by the Tata Trusts. Spread across 27 villages in five districts of the state, the initiative is being implemented by Youth Volunteers’ Union (YVU), a long-standing nonprofit with solid credentials.

The Trusts have been supporting the programme since 2007 and, officially, the support period ended in June 2018 but they continue to be involved with it. The way the initiative works is straightforward. Rural women are organised in dairy groups 10 to 20 strong and they are provided with training and low-interest loans to
purchase high-yield cows. The women deposit the milk produced at village collection centres to earn money as well as repay the loan in kind. The milk is processed and packed at a plant set up under the programme before being marketed.

That’s the big picture. The details explain the programme’s success, its precision and its sustainability. YVU has brought the member groups together and organised them under a producer company — YVU Diary — and this is the pivot of the programme. Resources from the Trusts have enabled the setting up of a milk processing plant, with a capacity of 10,000 litres a day, that has branched out into the production and sales of ice cream, butter, ghee (clarified butter), paneer (soft cheese) and curds.

YVU has roped in financial institutions and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (Nabard) for the loan-disbursals component in the project, which borrows heavily from the trailblazing Amul model in Gujarat. Farmers can avail loans of up to ₹120,000 (for two units of cattle) and Nabard deposits 25% of the loan amount as grants to them through its Dairy Development Entrepreneurship Scheme. Furthermore, there is a revolving fund — created through a contribution from the Trusts that has to be paid back — from which farmers can get interest-free loans.

**High-yield breed**

The cows procured by the beneficiaries are of the Holstein Friesian breed, a Dutch-origin variety that delivers milk in much greater quantities than the other breeds available in Manipur. YVU Dairy provides veterinary services to take care of the cows and much else besides: fodder and specialised feed, sales support and insurance for the animals. These and other efforts, taken together, have resulted in each member in the programme being able to earn upwards of ₹7,000 a month from the milk produced by a single head of cattle.

YVU Diary, the producer company, has evolved in the last phase of the project into an independent entity. The beneficiaries are the shareholders of the company, which now manages the programme and the milk processing plant and will, in time, take exclusive ownership of the entire business.

The progress achieved in the programme thus far has been built brick by brick, from the pilot phase of 2007 to the present day, and there is no plan or expectation for further funding support from the outside. “We began with the idea of generating livelihood opportunities and we have evolved to a stage where we can confidently say this can go on without our hand-holding,” says Akoijam Tikendrajit Singh, who heads YVU.

The numbers corroborate what Mr Singh, a respected figure in Manipur’s NGO sector, believes. YVU Diary — or the YVU Milk Producer Company Limited, its official name — made a profit of ₹212,000 in 2016-17 and is on course to garner more in the days ahead.

What will remain constant is the gender equation. Poor and unemployed women comprise the vast majority of the farmers in the programme. But why only women? “We have more trust in women; they work harder,” says Akoijam Tikeshwori, the lady boss of YVU. “The money comes to me and my husband comes to me when he needs some,” says Ms Geetasana, before adding with the hint of a smile. “That’s fine by me.”

A farmers group in Bishnupur, one of the five districts in the state where the dairy development project has unfolded
Chongtham Ibotomba was expecting better — and fearing the worst. The first had to wait while the second played out as anxiety gripped the 70-year-old from Kangmong village (Imphal West district) in the days immediately following his decision to try out a new, and for him untested, method of improving the yield from his 1-acre rice field.

“I did not sleep the night after planting the seeds,” he says, “and only fitfully in that first week. I was plagued by worry. What if it did not work, what if the rice died on me? This continued for a month, until the seeds began flowering. When harvesting time came I was over the moon: my output had increased by more than 50%.”

Mr Ibotomba should never have agonised so much. He had joined the ‘system of rice intensification’ (SRI) programme being supported by the Tata Trusts in Manipur and there was plenty of evidence that those swearing by its tenets would reap serious benefits. But Mr Ibotomba had to see before he believed.

The SRI initiative, which has in its fold 4,580 farmers from 41 villages in five districts of the state, is primarily aimed at offering food and nutritional security for households with meagre resources. It does this by organising farmers into collectives, training them in the principles of SRI, and providing them with cono weeders — highly efficient machines that remove the weeds between rows of paddy — seeds, water pumps and guidance on pesticide use and crop diseases. And there are two additional components: an ‘agro business centre’ (for paid services) and an ‘agro information centre’.

The farmers contribute 10% as their share of input costs and that is about the limit of what they can bear. Mr Ibotomba is typical of
those in the project. He makes his living as a mason and carpenter and by selling the small quantity of vegetables he grows. The rice he plants goes almost entirely into feeding his seven-member family.

The Trusts began backing this phase of the SRI programme in end-2017 and have committed to it till November 2019. Implementation is being handled by the Centre for Microfinance & Livelihoods (CML), the nodal agency for the Trusts in Manipur, through three NGO partners: the Self-Employment Voluntary Association (SEVA), the Resource Upliftment Centre for Human Interest and the Plain and Hills Development Organisation.

Scarcé rains? No problem
Enrolling in the project has enabled Mr Ibotomba to up the yield of his 1 acre plot from about 1,000 kg a year to roughly 1,600 kg. The story is the same with others who have taken the SRI path. “Every farmer who has joined the scheme has profited, even in years when rains have been scarce,” he says. “The community as a whole has been lifted. Farmers once wary of SRI have had their eyes opened and ever more of them are joining the project. The benefits are so obvious.”

It wasn’t so obvious to Mainam Rajmani, a 63-year-old farmer and village priest who also hails from Kangmong. “I used to poke fun at those jumping into the programme,” says Mr Rajmani, a recent inductee who cultivates rice on a 1-acre land parcel he has taken on lease. “I wasn’t convinced; my

Shout it out for SRI

The only thing clunky about ‘system of rice intensification’ (SRI) is its nomenclature. A straightforward method of improving the production yield of rice, SRI has shaped a revolution in agriculture around the world, especially in Africa and Asia.

Developed in Madagascar in the early 1980s by Henri de Lalanié, a Jesuit priest of French origin, SRI’s core principles are uncomplicated: plant fewer seeds to minimise competition between them; use younger seedlings and space them optimally; control the water the plants receive to keep them alternately wet and dry; and use organic fertilisers.

Initially met with scepticism by some experts, the SRI way has been scientifically validated many times since being taken to rice-growing cultures outside Madagascar from the late 1990s. Credit for the popularity of the method is due to Norman Uphoff of Cornell University, New York. Convinced about its efficacy, Mr Uphoff promoted and pushed for SRI to be employed in Asia.

The SRI system has spread at a quick clip in recent years and is now used by close to 20 million farmers in 61 countries (according to the SRI centre at Cornell University). The system has found particularly rich soil in India, where its adoption has been widespread.

The India connection got global attention in 2011 when Sumant Kumar, a farmer from Darveshpura village in Bihar’s Nalanda district, broke the world record for rice production by using SRI principles. Mr Kumar’s harvest of 22 tonnes of rice from a single hectare (2.47 acres) of land was so mindboggling that he was initially accused of cheating. His record was confirmed after the state’s head of agriculture visited his field and confirmed the yield.

To add to SRI’s lustre, it has been found lately that using the method can significantly reduce emissions of the greenhouse gas methane (this is released into the air when crops remain waterlogged for long periods).
thinking was that it would be wiser to stick to our traditional ways. It was a mindset problem. Using the cono weeder, especially, has been a revelation. It saves me so much on time and labour.”

The reluctance of people like Mr Rajmani is mostly down to a lack of knowledge about the world around them. Educating such holdouts is among the tasks Achom Moirangthoi has set for himself. “I keep telling them about the positives of the programme,” says the 65-year-old head of a local farmers group. “My main role is to motivate them to join the scheme. We work together and help one another, sharing knowhow and, when the need arises, labour too.”

Set to go it alone
Collaboration, adds Mr Moirangthoi, is the key to making the most of the collective. “Some 20 farmers in Kangmong are in the programme and I’m certain that all of them — there are about 50 farmers in this village — will join within the next year. As for the long-term, I have no doubt that we can profit from the programme on our own once the Tata Trusts people leave.”

This is the third phase of the SRI initiative in Manipur for the Tata Trusts and their plans, going forward, include widening its scope and spread (the experiment with growing antioxidant-rich black rice is an example). “We are looking at bringing 2,500 farmers under the SRI umbrella in the next two years,” says Siddharth Gahoi, area manager for the Northeast with the Trusts.

“We want to use SRI techniques with different crops, which is why we now call it ‘system of root intensification’.”

Getting the farmers to accept SRI methods is not always easy, but that’s par for the course. “Whether it is with seeds or water use, we have to keep on informing and training them,” adds Mr Gahoi. “The first-time farmer will follow only one or two of the SRI principles but they come around in time. We are comfortable with that because we understand that change cannot happen overnight.”

The partnerships with the NGOs are the backbone of the project as of now, but Mr Gahoi foresees a point when CML will get involved directly in implementation. “The collaborations are good because learning happens both ways,” he says. “We support them with technical inputs and they do the on-field work. But in time we will expand into direct implementation.”

No matter how the SRI programme evolves in the days ahead, rice will likely remain its focus. “This project is essentially about reducing dependence,” says Chingkhei Singh, operations head of SEVA, the Tata Trusts partner. “The demand for rice is heavy in Manipur and we don’t produce enough in the state to meet this demand. SRI is not a breakthrough; rather, it is a simple process of enhancing crop production. And this initiative is helping accomplish that.”
Where water is wealth

A canal-based irrigation system has led to a new flow of income opportunities for the farmers of Baksa district

In the village of Nagrijuli in Assam’s Baksa district, a group of farmers sits down to discuss what’s top of their mind — water. They refer to the chart that hangs on the wall behind them, showing a web of blue lines crisscrossing an area of about 2,000 acres.

The blue lines represent canals built of cement and earth that carry water from the hills in Bhutan to the plains. The canals have brought new hope to the lives of an agrarian community literally living on the edge of India in what is a bleak environment.

Wild and parched

Water and wild elephants are what the locals would lose sleep over. The wild elephants still trample through fields occasionally in search of food. Water has become less of a concern thanks to Gramya Vikash Mancha (GVM), the NGO behind the diversion-based irrigation (DBI) project that has benefitted Nagrijuli and two other districts, Kamrup and Nalbari.

The DBI project in Assam, which got started in 2015, has been implemented by GVM with support from the Centre for Microfinance and Livelihoods, an associate organisation of the Tata Trusts that

Haridas Bhowmik of Nagrijuli village is reaping the benefits of the farming project
that manage the flow of water in the canal network in such a way that all farms get their fair share. Munindra Choudhuri, the president of the Nagrijuli Dongban Samiti, says the canals have reduced the ‘water stress’ that used to be a part of the villagers’ lives. “Earlier, all of us farmers would work for two months every year to build earthen canals, but these would get washed away when the rains got heavy. Now we have proper canals and we spend just about 10 days of work in fixing the problems that crop up with them. It gives us more time in our fields.”

In one place the GVM team and local farmers have got two canals crossing, one on top of the other, an architectural feat they are quite proud of. Ratiranjan Mandal, 54, recalls that earlier the water from Bhutan’s streams would cover barely 3 sq km. Today, thanks to the intricate canal network, an area of about 10 sq km gets regular water.

Moving away from paddy
GVM has also helped local households reduce their dependence on paddy cultivation by introducing good horticulture practices. The NGO works with farmers to demonstrate how growing tomatoes, brinjal, cabbage, cauliflower, turmeric, areca and black pepper will bring in year-round income and keep households going, even during periods when the paddy crop fails.

Yet another intervention involves the use of vermicompost. GVM picks two-three ‘progressive farmers’ in each village to demonstrate the benefits of vermicomposting. This natural manure brings down the amount of urea needed on farms by half, which is a substantial saving for the small farmer. Over three years, GVM has helped build about 200 vermicompost pits.

The difference these efforts of the last three years have made is clear. “Earlier I could grow 400kg of rice on 1 bigha of land (roughly one-third of an acre),” says Madhav Chetri, a beneficiary. “Today I can grow double that. We can grow vegetables and our income has doubled, even tripled.”

The Trusts’ philosophy is to bring about sustainable change in the lives of beneficiaries and the GVM project is in line with this. The project began with a three-year tenure and this has been extended to June 2019. Meanwhile, GVM is doing the groundwork for its gradual disengagement from canals and horticulture, and planning its next phase of engagement.

“We have trained a few people in every village to be the community resource to help farmers,” says Mr Deka. “We are helping local farmers organise themselves into producer groups. The next step is to set up a producer company. We will help the farmers develop strong links to the market that will get them a higher return on their yields.”

From water to vegetables to natural fertilisers to markets — the intensive endeavour by GVM and the Trusts has opened up new prospects of a better life for villagers in this region of Assam.
Arnold Pathak, a class IX student, displays a scratch project on a laptop with an animation that explains the water cycle. This would not be remarkable in a city school. But Arnold studies in a government school, the Adarsh Vidyalaya Barkhetri, in Kaldi village in Assam’s Nalbari district. And three years ago, the school had no working computers at all.

An informal survey conducted a while back by the NGO Gramya Vikash Mancha (GVM) found that though every government school in Assam was supposed to have computers, in reality none of them had functioning machines.

Child-centric learning
In 2015, GVM approached the Tata Trusts for support for an education programme with a simple objective to integrate digital technologies into teaching and learning processes in schools. The intent is to encourage child-centric education and improve the pedagogy accordingly. This will in turn improve learning outcomes while enabling schoolchildren in Assam to learn modern day IT skills.

The programme has blossomed in the years since, leading to 12,000 children in 64 government schools in three districts — Kamrup, Baksa and Nalbari — getting access to computers and the internet.

The project came with huge challenges. “Infrastructure and teacher training were unexpectedly tough hurdles for us but we persevered,” says Utpal Medhi, GVM’s head of education. “We realised that putting functioning computers in schools could lead to a revival of interest in learning.”

When schoolchildren have access to computers, they get more interested in learning. “It reduces drop-out rates and increases attendance,” adds Mr Medhi. “It’s about self-paced learning. The children do their own research and learn through multimedia. Getting functioning computers in schools has made a lot of difference to the education these children receive.”

Getting the infrastructure up and running was the first step. GVM set up an IT team that would
visit each school to understand why the computers there were not working. In some cases, the team even found new machines sitting unpacked in boxes. Diagnostics, rewiring, maintenance contracts with local service providers — GVM supported the schools with all possible help. Where the internet was not available, the GVM team set up Wi-Fi hotspots.

**Motivating teachers**
The next step was teacher training. “It was hard to motivate the teachers,” says Mr Medhi. “We covered about 200 teachers in batches and trained them in the use of computers and technology aided learning.” Of the 200 teachers, 38 became master trainers and each of them was given the task of training 15 teachers. That’s how the project has been able to introduce technology aided teaching to about 700 teachers in Assam.

“The teachers came fully on board when they saw for themselves how even ‘poor’ students were working better with computers,” says Mr Medhi. “Government officials came visiting and they praised the schools. Such positive feedback has been very motivating.”

“Earlier we had only one teacher who knew about computers,” says Nilakshi Borah, principal of the Adarsh Vidyalaya Barkhetri, which has 22 computers that are used by about 240 students from classes VI to X. “Now we have five teachers who can teach what we call ‘smart’ classes. We have seen that the children are more interested in learning and, with the help of IT, they are learning by doing.”

The impact of the project on the children is obvious. “We have hundreds of children who are learning to go beyond textbooks and use the internet for research and studies,” says Mr Medhi. “Some of these youngsters have become savvy enough to start their own YouTube channels.”

GVM backs the schools by suggesting school curriculum topics that can benefit from multimedia learning. The children work on these with the help of open source software. They present their work to teachers, parents and government officials, and this builds their communication skills.

“The children are creating things that amaze the teachers,” says Naba Kumar Sarma, principal of Milan High School in Banekuchi village of Nalbari, which was computerised a year back and where 500 students from classes VI to XII are learning on the machines. “On the days when they have a computer lab class, we see 100% attendance and smiling faces. The kids like doing things on their own and this facility allows them to learn and explore. It has opened up the world for them.”

Access to the net has helped students of Adarsh Vidyalaya in Barkhetri village in Nalbari to go beyond textbooks.
From handloom and paddy to fish and ducks, the Mising community in Upper Assam has found ways to make a living and improve their lives

Under an aluminium-roofed shed outside the house, Anjali Kaman sits weaving on her loom. As the shuttle flies back and forth, a beautiful fabric emerges, resplendent with the rich colours preferred by the women of the Mising tribe of Upper Assam. The shed is kept closed so that the fabric is safe from the squealing piglets and clucking roosters that roam the grounds outside.

Ms Kaman can weave 2-3 metres of cloth, enough fabric for a dress or a shawl, in a couple of hours. She takes much longer — at least three days — to create the intricately woven *mekhela sador*, the two-piece Assamese version of the sari.

**Dreaming of better**

Last year Ms Keman, who lives in Silikhaguri village of Dhemaji district, earned ₹10,000, a huge sum by her standards. It is money that will make her dream of a better education for her son possible. The tribe she belongs to have remained at the mercy of nature for decades.

The Subansiri, a tributary of the Brahmaputra river, flows through the region, bringing with it an annual monsoon tale of floods and havoc. That aside, Dhemaji remains one of the most underdeveloped districts in Assam, with agriculture an unreliable means of survival.

The Tata Trusts have been working to improve livelihoods in this region since 2015 and their partner has been the Mising Autonomous Council (MAC), which oversees the local administration. The Trusts’ engagement began when the local MLA and MAC leader Ranoj Pegu flew to Mumbai and approached the Trusts directly seeking help for his community.

“Our people here have plenty of land and water and we have always lived the traditional, tribal way,” explains Dr Pegu. “Our people only knew subsistence agriculture. I believed that to improve their way of life, we needed to infuse technology and encourage the entrepreneurial spirit. That is where the Trusts have helped us.”
The Centre for Microfinance & Livelihoods (CML), an associate organisation of the Trusts, started work in three key areas: supporting women to earn more through handloom weaving, increasing farm incomes through integrated fishery-duckery-horticulture projects and encouraging paddy farmers to shift to boro paddy (the summer crop harvested before the monsoons).

The intent, says Manas Pratim Chutia, the CML team head in Dhemaji, is to increase household incomes to sustainable levels. CML works in close partnership with MAC to touch the lives of some 48,000 people in 121 villages. “All the initiatives we have undertaken have been a success,” says Dr Pegu.

The handloom story is the most heartwarming. The Mising women have traditionally woven their mekhela sador on ‘throw shuttle’ looms. CML has trained 450 weavers from in and around Silikhaguri and Medak villages to work on the faster fly-shuttle looms.

**Designed to attract**

Many of the trained women have started earning. “The fly-shuttle process gives them the potential of earning as much as ₹15,000 a month,” says Chatra Medak, who heads the handloom project at CML. The weavers have been organised into a producer group with about 150 members in 13 villages. From CML, the women get support in the form of design ideas to make their fabrics more attractive.

The other fascinating story is the integrated fishery-duckery scheme that CML has introduced. Most houses typically have their own fish ponds, where they breed local fish varieties for food. It is this resource which is now being used to generate extra income.

CML provides knowhow on breeding techniques and access to quality fish food and fish fingerlings of breeds that have a higher market value. A koi fish fingerling costs ₹3, takes six months to mature, and can sell at ₹400 a kilo. The potential to improve incomes is tremendous.

Amravati Kul had a fish pond in her backyard for years but did not earn anything from it. Since 2016, she has been a part of CML’s fishery initiative. Her investment in food and fingerlings is about ₹3,000-4,000, but she expects to earn about ₹35,000 this year.

CML is attempting to take the fishery project to the next level by making it a year-round income generator. It is experimenting with small pits lined with thick plastic sheets that will retain water.

One of the participants in this pilot project is 40-year-old Dinesh Dole who has built a 15x8x4 ft pit in his garden. The pit holds about 600 koi fish, he says, which will bring him ₹15,000 as profit. “Previously I didn’t even know that fish need proper feed to grow.”

Fish alone may not be enough to sustain households when the Subansiri does its seasonal damage. CML has introduced duck rearing...
integrated with fishery as the ducks use the same pond, help aerate the water and thus increase the plankton for the fish.

CML has identified a species of ducks that grow fast and lays more eggs. Participating farmers get a starting brood of 30 ducks. Dinesh Dole is one of those who has bought into this scheme. He is hoping for ₹24,000 in extra income by selling duck eggs and the drakes. CML has got about 515 farmers to participate in the project.

Homing in on horticulture

Rain-sheltered horticulture is one of the ideas being piloted among the farmers. Partho Pratim Taid, a beneficiary, grows organic tomatoes, mustard greens and coriander under a rain shelter. Apart from his fish pond, he has also invested in a fish nursery to sell fingerlings. “I hope to make a profit of ₹100,000,” says the 25-year-old graduate.

Another change that CML is working on is convincing farmers to change their traditional monsoon sowing to adopt boro paddy. “We want them to start planting around January and harvest in early May before the floods,” says Mr Chutia. CML works with about 10,000 farmers in Dhemaji and Lakhimpura districts.

Purnakant Kumbang, a boro paddy adopter, says he has been able to double his yield and income. The bigger benefit, he adds, is that the new method will help revive farming and give hope to local youth. Like Mr Kumbang, 27-year-old Manas Dole has also benefitted. Currently pursuing his post graduation, he has been able to fund his education through farming. “Boro paddy gives an assured income, with no risk of our paddy getting affected by rain,” he says.

Perhaps the biggest change that CML has achieved is to set up a governance model for the local communities. It has organised local farmers into producer groups and supports them in managing their funds. Now self-sustaining, these groups have a ₹1,000 membership fee and farmers get loans for buying what they need — fish fingerlings, vegetable seeds, rain sheets, etc — at nominal interest rates. The group is also able to sell to wholesalers at a higher price as they can offer larger quantities.

CML is now working with MAC to scale up their interventions. A 22-acre plot in Dhemaji is being converted into a skilling and research centre where about 400 farmers can learn best practices in running fisheries, duckeries, piggeries, etc.

CML is already crafting the next step in its Mising journey — to set up a producer company that will support the local farmers and enable more efficient market linkages. A new bridge that connects Dhemaji with Arunachal Pradesh will make life easier and open up new markets. The Subansiri will continue to flow, but there will be fewer fortunes linked to the rain and river gods.
A chicken raising project in 57 villages of Goalpara and Khowang districts is helping women from poor families get ahead

Raising chickens had helped create a brighter future for Dharmalata Rabha, her husband and two children, residents of Siluk Bakhrapara village in Assam’s Goalpara district. “I raised five batches of broilers and earned ₹43,000 in a year,” says Ms Rabha.

Ms Rabha is the beneficiary of the poultry rearing project, one of the many Tata Trusts initiatives in Assam to introduce new income streams for less than privileged households. The chicken business, small though it may be, has been a boon for the Rabhas, a landless couple who worked previously as daily wage labourers.

Ms Rabha started chicken farming in 2016, a year after the Trusts started the three-year poultry project. The initiative is being implemented by the National Small-holder Poultry Development Trust in 57 villages in two areas, Dudhnoi in Goalpara district and Khowang in Dibrugarh district.

In Assam, the Trusts have supported the initiative by connecting women poultry farmers to the market and by promoting producer collectives. The two producer companies set up at Dudhnoi and Khowang have about 1,000 members, each of whom earn at least ₹25,000-30,000 a year. The producer companies also generate employment for local youth.

Ms Rabha, a member of the Dudhnoi Women Poultry Producer Company, is counting her chickens now that they have hatched. “Now I can stay at home and look after my family. I’m living a better life.”

Poultry rearing has helped landless farmers in Bakhrapara village in Assam’s Goalpara district earn more money.
Dzüleke is a small farming village in Nagaland, about 40 km away from Kohima, the state capital. Home to only about 200 Angami Naga families, the village in Kohima district has transformed itself into a unique eco-tourism destination.

Dzüleke’s change in fortune dates back 20 years, when the local village council took the bold step of banning the hunting and trapping of wild animals in the nearby forests. As a result, the region soon became home to a wider variety of flora and fauna—birds, freshwater and snow trout, mithun (the local bison), bears, deer, monkeys and much more. The rich wildlife started to attract bird lovers, animal lovers, botanists and trekkers, as well as researchers and scientists.

Initially the village found it difficult to cope with its new identity as a tourist site. The village council set up the Dzüleke Eco-Tourism Board (DETB) but this remained largely inactive.

In 2014, the North East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA), an associate organisation of Tata Trusts, stepped in to help. NEIDA’s aim was two-fold:
ensuring the local community benefits from tourism while, at the same time, preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the region.

NEIDA decided to follow a structured process for capacity building, given that it was important to train the locals to handle the demands of tourism. The project started with a learning mission to Yuksam village in Sikkim, where a similar community-based eco-tourism project was being successfully implemented. Also, selected youngsters were sent to the Kaziranga Wildlife Sanctuary in Assam to be trained as guides.

To cope with the influx of tourists, homeowners were given training in setting up homestays. The training included hospitality management, housekeeping, English classes, cooking, workshops on sanitation and basic accounting.

**Equal benefits**

One of NEIDA’s goals was to ensure that the project became self-sustaining. Care was taken to ensure that each participating family benefited equally from Dzüleke’s growth. Working with the community, NEIDA set up the Dzüleke Development Fund. A tenth of all income from tourism-related activities goes into this fund, thus creating a sustainable model for community development.

Eco-tourism has provided a new lease of life to this tiny community in the hills, which now plays host to visitors from around the world. In the last three years, it has had more than 800 tourists. Homestays, trekking, camping and the provision of guides have pulled in more than ₹1 million as income.

NEIDA is taking its intervention in Dzüleke a step further by introducing agro-tourism as a new initiative. Tourists can spend time working in the fields and harvesting their own vegetables alongside local farmers.

Once at risk of having its population migrating away from the village, Dzüleke is now charting its own path — as a destination for nature lovers.
NAGALAND — LIVELIHOODS

Building the piggy bank

Developing piggeries as a small-scale business is the path forward in a state where the animal is worth its weight in additional income

According to PG Wodehouse, the Empress of Blandings was a fine pig indeed, famous for her size. The size of the swine matters, especially when pigs are an important part of the agricultural sector, as is the case in Nagaland. That’s the big reason Tata Trusts are using piggeries as a way to improve household income levels in the state.

Nagaland consumes the highest quantity of pork in the country. There isn’t enough to go around and it had to import about 10,000 tonnes of pork — worth ₹920 million — from other states last year to meet demand. Local supply of the meat has dropped steadily over the years and this is mainly due to lack of knowhow on the part of the farmers.

Pig rearing in Nagaland is
mostly a backyard activity, with the animals feeding on household waste and whatever else they can scrounge. Lack of awareness on the right kinds of feed, breeding strategies, and animal health has led, as well, to a decline in the quality of pork available in the state.

The North East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA), a Tata Trusts associate, has been working to improve local pig production as an alternative livelihood option for small farmers. NEIDA has focused on increasing the supply of pigs, improving breeds and training farmers on care and management so that they can earn more from pig rearing.

Over the last three years, NEIDA has put 4,600 households on the entrepreneurial track by helping them set up properly managed piggery units. More than 100 health camps have been held during the period and about 80 ‘livestock service providers’ have been trained in basic animal care.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Improved breed stock and modern rearing practices have helped improve pig production in Nagaland.

Over the last three years, NEIDA has put 4,600 households on the entrepreneurial track by helping them set up properly managed piggery units. More than 100 health camps have been held during the period and about 80 ‘livestock service providers’ have been trained in basic animal care.

Improving standards

Since good quality feed was not available in the market, NEIDA has opted to produce and supply the feed. The agency got infrastructural support from the state Department of Veterinary and Animal Husbandry, and production started in 2016.

NEIDA has also worked with the state government to develop a pig breeding policy so that the quality of breeds can be improved over time, and the state can become less dependent on imported meat.

The piggery initiative has shown encouraging results. Farmers are reporting an average increase in litter size from 4 to 6.5 piglets per farrowing. And they were able to earn ₹19,000 to ₹22,000 every year from sale of pigs.

NEIDA has also backed the setting up of a pig producer enterprise, the Nagamaiki Smallholder Pig Producer Company, which has 900 shareholders. If pig production can become a significant domestic activity, Nagaland will benefit in several ways — import savings, local jobs, better quality meat and the further development of well-paying economic activity.
Minimising the woes of migrant workers is the prime objective of a pilot project in Odisha that takes a multi-pronged approach in dealing with a humanitarian problem.
I did my penance for seven years and I couldn’t do it anymore,” says 50-year-old Lakhan Majhi as he describes his experience of migrating every year from Odisha to Uttar Pradesh to work as seasonal labour in the brickkiln industry. Till a year ago, Mr Majhi, who hails from Chindpani village in Odisha’s Nuapada district, was among the hundreds of thousands of migrant labourers from the state who travel far from their homes to earn a living in the brickkilns of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana in the south and Uttar Pradesh in the north.

Backbreaking toil in inhumane conditions led Mr Majhi to give up the kilns, and his life has taken a turn for the better ever since. Thanks to a Tata Trusts initiative, he now cultivates a variety of vegetables on his 2.5-acre patch of land. The hardworking Mr Majhi earned a good ₹75,000 last year without leaving home.

Livelihood interventions under the Trusts’ Odisha migration programme have been the key in transforming the lives of Mr Majhi and thousands like him, people driven by desperation in their search for employment. They are part of the target group the Trusts had in mind when they began working on migration as an issue in 2006. In the years since, the initiative has grown to cover economically stressed states such as Rajasthan, Odisha and Uttar Pradesh, which account for a disproportionately large number of migrants.

Odisha is a focus area for the Trusts, and with good reason. It ranks among the poorest states of India, has a monthly per capita income of ₹4,976 against the national average of ₹6,426 in 2012-13 agriculture year as per the survey of the National Sample Survey Organisation. With agriculture, mainly rain-fed paddy cultivation, becoming unprofitable and other means of livelihood limited or nonexistent, the rural population is forced to find work outside their state.

**Stark numbers**

Migration numbers among Odisha’s rural population have been increasing steadily over the years, with landless labourers constituting the bulk of these unfortunates. The problem has deepened down the years, with 11 of the state’s 30 districts now classified as migration-prone. The worst of these are Balangir and Nuapada: a 2016 survey mapping 38,000 households across 30 gram panchayats (village councils) in the two districts revealed that about 36% of the population left Odisha in search of work.

Government figures do not capture the complete picture. In 2015, only about 146,000 people officially migrated out of Odisha, a three-fold increase over the 55,000 who left in 2007. The actual numbers could be much higher. “Individuals who wish to migrate are required to register themselves with the state government to qualify for the government’s welfare schemes,” explains Poma Tudu, the district collector of Nuapada. “However, there is widespread belief among the rural populace that if they register the government will forcibly bring them back.”

Such misconceptions and fears about governmental interventions to prevent distress migration are common. As a result, thousands of families are unable to access government welfare schemes set up specifically to help migrants. “The workers, along with their families, often migrate for paltry gains,” says Arindam Dakua, the collector of Balangir. “What is perplexing is the fact that these people migrate in spite of the state providing for their primary needs.”

It’s no secret that the lot of migrant labour is terrible. In addition to working long hours in conditions bordering on bondage, these workers are often cheated out of what are their rightful dues. Many are forced into debt and even...
Displaced and going nowhere

146,000 migrated out of Odisha in 2015 (55,000 in 2007) | 300,000+ the number of Odiyas migrating annually | 11 Odisha districts prone to distress migration

1,200 Odiyas rescued from bonded labour between 2010 and 2014 | 45,000 people who migrated from one district (Balangir) alone in 2016

Ebbing the flow

- The Odisha migration project aims to prevent distress migration and improve the quality of life of vulnerable families
- The Trusts launched a pilot programme in 2007 in 30 village councils of Balangir and Nuapada
- The programme has reached 100,000 people in Balangir and Nuapada

The highlights

- **39,000 linkages** across 32 schemes and services facilitated between November 2017 and November 2018
- Model contracts signed between workers and brickkiln owners; **32 families benefitted**
- Improving worksite conditions, raising the quality of life and preventing exploitation; **2,909 migrant families benefitted**
- **61 village resource centres** set up to coordinate between locals and government agencies
- **Helpline and help desks** started in 2017
more dire straits. “We had to live in huts at the worksites and the conditions were filthy,” says Goura Bariah from Karla Khutna village in Balangir. “Each one of us had to make 1,500 bricks daily. I managed to earn just ₹5000 a month for all the hard labour.”

The migration programme kicked off with the Trusts signing an agreement with the state government in April 2017, the objective being to reduce migration from 30 villages of Balangir and Nuapada. Crucial to the success of the initiative is reducing distress migration, where people are forced to move due to poverty, lack of employment opportunities, food insecurity or environmental degradation.

The programme is also aimed at ensuring that migrant labour have safer working conditions and that they are not exploited. Additionally, alternate livelihood means are provided to prevent distress migration. “Our interventions are aimed at improving the quality of life of migrant families – in both the source and destination states – through the elimination of unsafe conditions and the implementation of mechanisms to remove bondage,” says Mary Surin, area manager with the Tata Trusts. “We support them in emergencies and help them fight for their rights.”

There are a host of factors at play in the initiative, from ensuring that government entitlements reach the workers to running livelihood, education and skill-development programmes. ‘Gram panchayat resource centres’ (GPRCs), a pilot project started in partnership with the state government in Nuapada, serves as the fulcrum of the initiative.

“The government provides monetary and other help under 31 different government sponsored social security entitlements and schemes such as scholarships for students, pensions for widows, assistance for people with disabilities and money for funeral expenses, but these benefits often fail to reach those they are intended for,” says Srikanta Kumar Routa, a senior manager with the Trusts. “The primary objective of the GPRCs is to ensure that government entitlements reach the last-mile beneficiaries, the migrant workers and those looking to travel out of the state for work.”

**The change blueprint**

The GPRCs — there are 45 of them in Nuapada — are located within the respective gram panchayat offices. Each of them has a village-appointed facilitator to coordinate between the locals and the government agencies. The GPRCs are equipped with computers and the facilitators are trained to identify needs and the needy in their areas. The centres educate the villagers about alternate livelihood models available and the do’s and don’ts for safe migration. They serve as a repository of information for the rural poor. Between November 2017 and November 2018, about 39,000 linkages across 32 schemes and services have been facilitated by the GPRCs, which have been extended across Kalahandi and Rayagada, taking their total number to 61. Some success is already visible. “While the numbers are still small, we see that some families which used to migrate every year have stopped going out of the state for work,” says Mr Routa.

The Trusts have helped the Odisha government start a toll-free helpline which can be accessed from anywhere in India. Meanwhile, help desks for migrant labour have begun functioning in Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Delhi. “The helpline and the help desks play a critical role in reaching out to migrant workers during emergencies in coordination with destination state government,” says Dr Tudu.

Realising the limitations of current livelihood interventions and the inevitability of migration, the Trusts are directing their efforts towards ensuring a humanitarian cycle of migration. In addition to the interventions to check migration in source states, the Trusts have launched initiatives at the destination states where the migrants travel for work.

One example of this is the Trusts’ attempt to develop ‘model contracts’ between the workers and brickkiln owners in Telangana. About 32 families, comprising 100 adult labourers and 50 children from Nuapada and Balangir, were sent as part of the pilot project launched in November 2017. “The idea was to demonstrate a prototype of alternate financing to prevent bondage and ensure transparency in wage payment,” says Ms Surin. “The migrant workers were provided advances against their wages — a prerequisite
The Dhanora upper primary school in Nuapada district, situated about 440 km west of Odisha’s capital Bhubaneswar, does not have any benches or desks for its students. Instead, the children have to make do with iron cots. Reason: the school functions as a seasonal hostel between November and June, when a sizeable number of Nuapada’s population migrates out of the state for work.

These seasonal hostels, which cater to children aged 6 to 14, have been set up to prevent the kids from migrating along with their families and dropping out of school. The seasonal hostels were conceived and implemented by the state government.

However, the ‘gram panchayat resource centres’ (GPRCs), set up as part of the Odisha migration initiative, have played a major role in strengthening the system.

The GPRCs have zeroed in on children eligible for stay at the hostels, identified new schools for setting up hostels and ensured that they started functioning in time for the migration season. About 75 new seasonal hostels have been opened by the state government in Nuapada alone and about 7,000 students have sought admission to the hostels.

The Tata Trusts have also partnered the state government to set up model seasonal hostels in 11 schools to showcase the best in infrastructure. “Due to lack of information or misconceptions, migrant families are often reluctant to leave their children at the hostels,” says Mary Surin, area manager, Tata Trusts. “By improving the infrastructure and functioning of these hostels, we want to convince them about the advantages of leaving their children at the hostels.”

The hostels are totally free as the government provides for all the essential needs. The Trusts, on their part, have provisioned for solar-powered lights, inverters, safe drinking water, and play and study material. The Trusts have even appointed remedial teachers for the children at the hostels.

For the families of migrant labourers, securing admission in the model schools means a fair chance to change their destinies and break free from the vicious cycle of poverty and indignity. The Trusts have tied up with two state-run industrial training institutes (ITIs) to facilitate skill-training of youth from the underserved communities. A testimony to the success of this initiative is that 11 youngsters from migrant workers’ families in Nuapada have secured admission to the ITIs.
Farming help in staying put

Till about a year ago, Rupdhar Bhoi, a 55-year-old from Karla Khutna in Odisha’s Balangir district, used to migrate to work in brickkilns. Months of dreary toil at the kiln by him and his three family members earned them a meagre ₹50,000. “We worked from early morning to late in the night and made about 2,000 bricks daily. We lived in pitiable conditions and subsisted on meagre allowances,” says Mr Bhoi.

While Mr Bhoi hopes to transform his life by setting up a goat-rearing unit in his village, 45-year-old Bachulal Naik of Bhoirwadi in Nuapada district is harvesting the benefits of informed choice facilitated by the Tata Trusts.

Farming in drought-prone Nuapada was difficult and for want of options Mr Naik and his family went to work in brickkilns. Now, thanks to the agricultural know-how, seeds and fertilisers provided by the Trusts, he has earned welcome money by growing vegetables and other crops on his 1.5-acre plot.

The Trusts’ livelihood interventions also take in on landless villagers, who form the bulk of the migrant population. A pilot initiative, launched in Mahurandi village in Balangir, has brought together farmers who work on leased land to cultivate on a crop-sharing basis. Several financial models are being tested under this pilot initiative.

“Getting lump sum cash in advance is a psychological need and established cash-flow pattern of the migrant labourers over the years,” says Mary Surin, area manager, Tata Trusts. “Just as they get an advance before going to the kilns, the sharecroppers are also provided cash in advance. In addition, they are also paid weekly for the labour they contribute in the fields. Various models are being tested to select the one that addresses the needs and requirements of the villagers optimally.”

As part of another farming-based intervention, this one in Bhoirwadi in Nuapada, about 100 families across eight villages are reaping the benefits of what is known as the ‘50 cent model’. Marginal farmers with half-an-acre have been provided seeds, fertilisers and pesticides to cultivate their small parcels of land and reap the benefits.

Crops with short growing seasons, such as chillies, are the mainstay of the livelihood interventions in the migration project.
for the migrant workers — by a micro-finance company and the wages were credited to the migrants’ bank accounts weekly.”

Improving worksite conditions, raising the quality of life of migrants and preventing their exploitation are key responsibilities in the programme. “We worked with 51 brickkilns in Telangana and engaged with 2,909 migrant families in the November season,” adds Ms Surin. The initiative was launched in Karimnagar in November 2017 and currently planned to be expanded to five other districts in the state.

**A leg up for children**

In Telangana, the programme provides primary education for the young kids who accompany their parents. Brickkiln owners were persuaded to come together to fund schools and crèches for the children. About 310 children across 21 kiln clusters were targeted as part of the pilot project during the last season and crèches for children below the age of six were also opened.

Rajasthan is another focus area as it sees a sizeable inflow of migrant workers, mainly from Uttar Pradesh. Most of these migrants to Rajasthan come along with their family members and work in the kilns for about eight months. And they are not covered under any government scheme.

The Trusts have established migration resource centres in Ajmer, Bhilwara, Rajsamund, Pali, Sri Ganganagar and Nagaur. Like the GPRCs in the villages, the centres facilitate linkages to government entitlements and schemes, legal assistance in wage and worksite-accident cases, and linkages to skill training, employment opportunities and banking services.

It costs about ₹1.5 million annually to run one such centre in Rajasthan. A membership-based model, where each migrant worker pays an annual fee of ₹100, ensures coverage for all members of migrant families. The Trusts have also set up a model brickkiln initiative in partnership with brickkiln owners and the Rajasthan government. These function as multipurpose service delivery centres for labour welfare and include preschool education, primary healthcare and public services.

The sustained interventions launched by the Tata Trusts to check migration and ensure livelihood options for migrant workers have succeeded in making a big difference in the lives of the beneficiaries. The success of the efforts offers a beacon of hope for underserved communities in the western districts of Odisha and other parts of the country. Mr Majhi sums up what the intervention has meant for him: “I have regained my paradise.”

---

**By Samod Sarngan**
Not many people in the country would be familiar with what the National Institution for Transforming India is about but its acronym, NITI Aayog, has become well-known in the short and eventful duration of its existence. Established in early 2015, and created to replace the erstwhile Planning Commission, the Aayog has been much more than the Indian government’s premier economic policymaking body. The deviation from what its predecessor represented is amplified by the range of initiatives that the organisation is occupied with, from agricultural reforms and the digitisation drive to nutrition, skills development and improving medical education.

Overseeing NITI Aayog’s increasingly heavy load of functions and responsibilities is veteran economist Rajiv Kumar, who took over as its vice chairman in 2017. An alumnus of Lucknow University and Oxford University, he has had a stellar career, within government as well as outside, while also being a prolific writer on India’s politics and economics and the confluence of the two. The 67-year-old Dr Kumar speaks here to Christabelle Noronha about NITI Aayog, its priorities and accomplishments. Excerpts from the interview:

How has the journey been thus for NITI Aayog?
NITI Aayog’s very formation was a departure from the composition of its predecessor, the Planning Commission, and despite our teething problems in terms of structure, design, etc the Aayog has emerged as a credible organisation. We are committed to our role in nation-building.

The Aayog’s role is to catalyse and facilitate the expansion of policy frontiers and thereby expedite India’s transformation. We provide significant inputs to the government for policymaking and are being recognised as a strong development partner for all of India’s states.

While the relationship of the Planning Commission with India’s states
was more in the nature of principal-client, we have a collaborative and constructive relationship with them. This is being executed in two key ways. One, instead of the ‘five-year plan’ approach, we are working with the states and helping them develop region-specific blueprints for development. Secondly, we are engaging with several states to foster the spirit of competitive federalism and we are developing a ranking system across sectors to redefine the benchmarks of development.

We are also supporting the states on improving efficiencies in the delivery of public services and governance. NITI Aayog has also broken new ground in several other areas. For example, we are in the process of forming regional councils that will bring states that are geographically close into a single grouping so that they can collectively address common concerns and tap opportunities.

How is NITI Aayog enabling a culture of innovation in India?
One of our key objectives is to establish a new innovation ecosystem. We already have more than 2,000 ‘tinkering labs’ across India and it will increase to 5,000 by March 2019. As many as 30 incubation centres are operational and these will expand to 50 in the months to come.

We are also in the process of setting up ‘small business innovation research’ programmes in six states. An immediate challenge is to encourage the adoption of science and technology in the public sector. Additionally, we are breaking away from the conventional module of government recruitment to attract fresh talent. For instance, we have a senior resource from Tata Consultancy Services on deputation with us and we recently inducted 60-70 bright young people on contract, which is unheard of in the government system. The objective is to ignite a culture of innovation and rejuvenate the whole system.
The Aayog has set itself up to become a repository of knowledge on good governance and best practices. Are you satisfied with the progress made on this front?

Besides facilitating key policy initiatives, NITI Aayog has brought out a large number of reports cutting across different themes, covering governance issues and identifying best practices in specific areas, schemes and programmes. We are in the process of developing a knowledge portal that is aimed at showcasing the best practices of states and other stakeholders in different spheres. A ‘samavesh’ initiative has been launched wherein agreements have been signed with 35 top knowledge and research institutions to extend and deepen the institutional capabilities necessary for an ecosystem of evidence-based policy research.

We are using our expertise and knowledge to monitor outcomes and evaluate the performances of the government ministries and departments through real-time data collection. Our development monitoring offices have live dashboards for key portfolios and major ministries. The prime minister relies on our data and evaluation reports to monitor the performance of his ministries and to affix accountability.

The enabling of ‘cooperative federalism’ in India has been an avowed goal of the organisation. How has this part of NITI Aayog’s agenda gone?

The NITI Aayog’s general council, chaired by the prime minister and
comprising cabinet ministers and all the chief ministers, jointly pursues the goal of cooperative federalism. It does this even as it sets the agenda for the Aayog. We are constantly in touch with the state governments — I have visited 23 states in the past year — to ensure that we are partners in development and not merely an organisation to whom they can appeal for funds and grants. This approach furthers the goal of cooperative federalism. Then we have regional groups for focused development, such as the ‘NITI forum for the Northeast’, where all the eight states there are members.

**Nutrition is a challenge for the NITI Aayog and also a big piece of the partnership that you have forged with the Tata Trusts. How is the battle against malnutrition shaping up?**

Nutrition is one of the focus areas and as chairman of the National Nutrition Mission, I am personally invested in ensuring that we succeed in meeting our nutrition goals for the country. Some of our chief ministers are members of this mission and we are taking proactive steps to tackle the issue and to ensure adequate nutrition for disadvantaged groups.

We designated September 2018 as ‘nutrition month’ and sought the cooperation of all states, multiple ministries of the Government of India and other development partners and philanthropies. We highlighted the importance of nutrition, especially in early childhood and we have tried to ensure that the drive against malnutrition becomes a people’s movement.

We are glad to have on our side a resourceful and reliable partner like the Tata Trusts in our battle against malnutrition. When 38% of the young children in the country are stunted, there’s a huge task ahead of us and committed partners like the Trusts can bring their expertise to the fore.

Our target is to reduce malnourishment by 2% annually, but we have managed to cut it only by 1%. We rely on organisations like the Trusts and the Piramal Foundation who have worked effectively in this field for years to provide effective solutions to help curb malnutrition. The Trusts are helping us with artificial intelligence and GIS [geographic information systems] tools for analysis of data at the district as well as beneficiary levels.

**What kind of role can foundations and NGOs play in improving India’s social development indices?**

NGOs can play a vital role as partners in government initiatives. We are engaging them and industry to pursue the agenda of specific development. We have got some terrific ideas from civil society representatives; in fact, they have been key contributors for our vision documents.

Having worked in the NGO space, I am aware of the synergies they can bring for the successful implementation of government programmes. What we need is to develop trust on both sides, for NGOs to feel that the government is serious about its plans and allocation of resources, and for the government to have confidence that an NGO is credible and committed to the cause.

“We are constantly in touch with the state governments ... to ensure that we are partners in development and not merely an organisation to whom they can appeal for funds and grants.”
On the sustainable development goals, everybody agrees that India needs to increase its spending on education and health but this seems to be easier said than done. What’s holding us back? To begin with, resources. Besides lack of proper design, there is also the fear of putting good money into bad projects because there is no accountability in the system. The delivery of public services has not been efficient so far. But now the ‘Aayushman Bharat’ initiative will be a game changer for public health, impacting the lives of 500 million people. For education, our prime minister has just announced a major plan to revitalise the entire system.

You had experience of working in government before you became NITI Aayog’s vice chairman. How much of a help has that been in navigating the bureaucracy and its ways of working? My experience with the government is hugely handy now. My stint with ADB [the Asian Development Bank, in Manila from 1995 to 2005] gives me the comfort to work with different stakeholders. And then, my meditation practice helps me keep my calm and navigate my way.

You have been a prolific writer for long. Do you get enough time for writing these days? I have this huge feeling of gratitude that I got this opportunity to do something for the country, and I am totally immersed in my work. But yes, I do make time to write for the two books that I have in the pipeline.
Crafting a better future

The handicrafts sector, and handloom weavers in particular, are at the centre of a project that aims to uplift artisans and their creative traditions.

Mansukh Vankar (22) is typical and atypical, at the same time, of the more than 4.3 million handloom weavers in India. Like the majority of those trying to make a living from what is a difficult vocation, the 22-year-old from Kotay village in Gujarat’s Kutch district needs grit, creativity and a capacity for hard work to get by. Unlike most of them, he has the tools — not least the technology — the opportunity and the backing to maximise his chances of finding sustained success.

Be it with fashion trends or showcasing his work to a wider audience, Mr Vankar has the bit between his teeth as he sets about improving his lot. He has, for instance, been able to tap new customers from Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru through his Instagram handle, enabling him to double the money he made till about a year back. “I want to weave my very own unique pieces and I want to continue my family trade,” he says.

Mr Vankar is one among scores of traditional artisans across the country who can dream of leading a better life thanks to projects run by the Tata Trusts in the handicrafts sector. From Dhokra metalsmiths in Odisha and Kauna artisans in Manipur to weavers spread across seven Indian states, these projects are equipping artisans with the skills and the confidence to continue with their hereditary trade.

The craft sector is the single largest source of employment in India after agriculture. It employs more than 7 million families, with the numbers largest in
handloom weaving and allied activities. The handloom segment is largely decentralised and weavers tend to hail from vulnerable and weaker sections of society. Notably, women form a sizeable chunk of the weaver community, especially in India’s Northeastern region.

The large number of people involved and the hardscrabble existence that is the reality for many of them were the twin motivators for the Trusts’ to lend a hand to Indian handicrafts. Another potent reason is the strong potential for remunerative livelihood that the sector offers to artisans.

There is a history to it as well. The Trusts have been supporting art and craft since the days of Dorab Tata, the illustrious late chairman of the Tata group.

Art and culture have been a thematic sphere for the Trusts since 1995, with ‘institution building in the arts’ the overriding focus. In 2011-12, the Trusts put in place an ‘arts, crafts and culture’ portfolio. The mandate here is to protect and enhance the livelihoods and quality of living for artists, artisans and craftsmen and, by doing so, sustain India’s countless art and craft traditions.

Handloom products are crucial in the Indian context. India accounts for 95% of the global production of handwoven fabrics. In addition to high employment generation, handloom products are a significant source of foreign exchange earnings, pulling in export revenues of $356 million in 2017-18.

**Tough business**

Appeal and potential notwithstanding, the handloom segment faces a host of challenges. Low productivity, low wages, low literacy levels, rapacious middlemen and minimal formal financing have turned handloom weaving into a tough, even unprofitable, business. Over the years, economic factors and market demands have transformed the handicrafts sector. The handloom sector has switched from...
Learning to change

“If I had received the training [in entrepreneurship development] earlier, I would have thought twice about getting married.” Such a statement is bound to invite raised eyebrows, especially if it comes from a 38-year-old woman based in rural India. Jyotsna Golita realises this as soon as her friends burst into laughter.

Ms Golita is one among 32 students in the first batch at the incubation and Design centre (iDc) in the Kamrup cluster of Assam. The iDcs are at the core of the Tata Trusts’ direct intervention programme to support traditional Indian crafts and the people keeping it alive.

Located in clusters close to where the weavers live, the centres are primed to take a holistic approach towards the trade as a whole, and the course syllabus has been designed to help participants become weaver-entrepreneurs and weaver-designers.

The teaching covers production, supply chain management, marketing and social media exposure, basic accounting, design and business communication. There is more than all this for Ms Golita and her friends, who are just as excited by the opportunity to use computers and learn about the world outside. “It is important to understand computers,” says Kabita Kalita (42), a participant.

Bringing about attitudinal change tops the programme’s agenda. Each cluster will have design professionals from the National Institute of Design or the National Institute of Fashion Technology. Unlike earlier initiatives in the handloom space, the Trusts have restricted their role to that of a facilitator. “Our objective is to help the weavers find sustainable livelihoods for themselves by enabling them and exposing them to the slow fashion market,” says Sharda Gautam, who heads the crafts initiative at the Trusts.
The Handloom School in Maheshwar in Madhya Pradesh is yet another initiative supported by the Trusts. Conceptualised by Women Weave, a nonprofit, it provides training in traditional and modern handloom weaving techniques to help artisans gain a broader perspective.

The idea is to help handloom artisans become weaver-entrepreneurs and engage independently with customers. Mr Vankar, who completed his residential learning course at the Handloom School in 2015, is an example. He used to earn ₹200 for weaving a 2.5mt-long shawl and could barely feed his family. Today, his monthly income has doubled to ₹15,000. Of the 80 students who have passed out from the Handloom School till date, 12 have launched their own business.

Handloom projects have previously focused separately on different actors in the value chain such as dyers, weavers and post-loom services. This approach has often been the main reason behind the failure of such interventions. “Each weaver has at least eight people dependent on him,” says Sharda Gautam, who heads the crafts portfolio at the Trusts. “Unless a holistic approach is adopted, it will not work. That’s why we will be looking at the entire value chain.”

Support for NGOs
Direct interventions aside, the Trusts are also backing organisations such as Dastkar Andhra, which works with pre-loom workers in the Krishna and Guntur districts of Andhra Pradesh, and the Srijani Foundation, which is operational in the Siwan, Samastipur and Nalanda districts of Bihar. These two initiatives have benefitted nearly 800 people.

The Tata Trusts also support the conservation of weaving and embroidery techniques, especially those in danger of disappearing. Preservation of dying crafts is done through in-depth documentation of various aspects of the crafts. The Trusts supported the nonprofit, Shrujan, to document and disseminate the embroidery traditions of Kutch through a moving library in Bhuj in Gujarat.

The Trusts also support Kauna craftspeople in the Thoubal district of Manipur. Kauna is a water reed that is ideal to create baskets, mats and other products (see Basketful of progress on page 21). The story is similar with the Dhokra craft form, which is a 4,000-year-old metal-casting skill famous for its enchanting folk motifs and primitive simplicity.

The message behind these and other efforts of the Trusts in this sphere is very simple: artisans and their talent can thrive if the circumstances are right.

By Samod Sarngan
Cancer is a disease dreaded more than others, not just because it is life threatening but also because fighting it can be exhausting as well as expensive. Is it possible to change this terrifying equation? That’s the question the Tata Trusts are looking to answer through a novel cancer care initiative currently being rolled out in Assam and one that could be replicated across other states in the future.

The attempt is to change the landscape and the timeline on how cancer is detected and treated in India. The Trusts are working to reduce the bogey aspect of the disease by increasing the number of cancer

Standing up to cancer by spreading the net

A radical new approach in the battle against the Big C aims to create multiple institutions that can deliver high quality and affordable care to patients across India

In the crosshairs

The Tata Trusts’ effort to help India better equip itself against cancer includes...

Launching...
- a digital platform to support the cancer networks
- screening programmes in Rajasthan, Punjab, Assam and Andhra Pradesh
- a cancer registry to build a database of patients
- palliative and hospice-care facilities

Training...
- hundreds of doctors, through six-month courses, in cancer treatment protocols

Building...
- cancer research and treatment centres in Varanasi, Tirupati, Bhubaneshwar, Ranchi, Allahabad, Mangalore
- state-wide cancer control programmes in Assam, Odisha, Jharkhand, Telangana and Nagaland

Partnering...
- the state governments of Maharashtra, Karnataka and Kerala in an advisory capacity
- charitable and private hospitals to build cancer centres
- the National Cancer Grid to assure quality of care across all facilities
- the Bloomberg School of Public Health, Johns Hopkins University, USA, for clinical training and research
care facilities and clinicians by
promoting better screening processes. The
objective is to catch cancer early and treat it
with the best of care.

The crying need is for a radical
approach to cancer care and treatment, and
the model the Trusts are working on has
been termed ‘distributed care’. Simply put,
this translates into splitting up the
detection, diagnosis and treatment stages of
the disease.

What happens now is that the majority
of cancer cases in India are not detected
early. When it is finally found out, the
patient has to, typically, leave home, travel
hundreds of kilometres to a good hospital,
and stay there for weeks or months until
the chemotherapy or radiation treatment is
completed. Jobs and livelihoods get affected
and there is a huge burden that gets added
to the treatment cost.

“We wanted to change the journey of
the cancer patient,” says Prakash Nataraj,
who leads operations in the initiative. The
vision is to reduce the number of stage 3
and 4 patients — those with advanced
cancer conditions — who account for 70%
of Indians coping with the disease. “We
hope to bring this figure down to 30% over
the next five years.”

The need for more

Mr Nataraj cites the Tata Memorial
Hospital (TMH) in Mumbai and the Tata
Medical Center in Kolkata to explain why
such institutions, outstanding as they
are, will not suffice for India’s numerous
cancer patients. “A few thousand beds and
oncologists will not be able to handle the
large numbers,” he points out.

In the distributed care framework,
cancer care and treatment are
‘disaggregated’ through the setting up of a
network of level 1, 2 and 3 facilities. A level
1 facility is a specialised cancer hospital on
the lines of TMH or the Regional Cancer
Centre in Thiruvananthapuram, where the
mandate is research and education and the
handling of complicated cases.

What happens now is that the majority

The Assam model

The Tata Trusts are partnering the Assam
government to create a 19-hospital,
state-wide cancer grid by mid-2019

The three-level network to ‘disaggregate’
cancer care:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 1</th>
<th>Apex cancer research centres (brownfield projects)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assam Medical College, Dibrugarh (will be upgraded to a research centre)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>State Cancer Institute, Guwahati (will be expanded to a 500-bed institution)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 2</th>
<th>Treatment centres (greenfield projects)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facilities for diagnosis and treatment of cancer at 12 government medical colleges (Barpeta, Dhubri, Diphu, Jorhat, Karimganj, Kokrajhar, Lakhimpur, Nagaon, Nalbari, Silchar, Tezpur and Tinsukia)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LEVEL 3</th>
<th>Daycare centres (greenfield projects)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>5 facilities for diagnostics and chemotherapy (at Darrang, Goalpara, Golaghat, Haflong and Sivasagar)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Varanasi gets specialty cancer care

The Tata Trusts have established two apex cancer care and treatment centres in Varanasi, the historical city best known as one of Hinduism’s holiest centres. These two ‘level-1 hospitals’ will serve as centres of excellence in cancer care for Uttar Pradesh, the state where Varanasi is located.

One of the two institutions is the Homi Bhabha Cancer Hospital, earlier known as the Indian Railways Cancer Institute. Developed as a brownfield project, the Trusts took about eight months to upgrade the existing structure into a 180-bed hospital. It reopened in May 2018.

The second is a greenfield cancer-care facility built by the Trusts in the Banaras Hindu University campus. Named the Mahamana Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya Cancer Center, the 352-bed hospital, inaugurated on February 8, 2019, was built in 10 months, record time for such a facility.

The 586,000-sq ft centre will offer medical, surgical and radiation oncology treatments, including nuclear medicine. It will be the biggest cancer facility in the region, with a wide range of equipment. The Trusts have been closely involved in the design, funding and building of the two hospitals, both of which will be staffed and operated by the Tata Memorial Hospital, Mumbai.

provide the appropriate treatment.

"More than 90% of cancer cases will be handled at level 2 and 3 facilities," says Anurag Gupta, who heads projects in the Cancer initiative. “Patients can get a diagnosis and treatment plan at the district level, without having to uproot their lives and travel long distances. Only complex cases should go to a level 1 centre.” The Trusts hope that this approach will bring down the cost of treatment, for a majority of patients, to a fraction of what it is at present.

An important component of the distributed care model is that cancer sufferers need not travel long distances to access quality care. TMH in Mumbai, for example, sees an influx of some 60,000 patients every year, of which a third come from afar.

In Assam, the distributed care model will have 19 modern facilities spread across several districts. The Trusts have, in partnership with the Assam government, established the Assam Cancer Care Foundation to manage this set up, under which 17 new centres (of the 19) will come up. Screening protocols for early detection and promoting community awareness of government support schemes for patients are part of the agenda here.

The Assam network — the first of its kind in the world — is coming up in a staggered manner and will start functioning from mid-2019. The model has already sparked plenty of interest from other states. Odisha, Nagaland, Telangana, Jharkhand and Bihar are in talks with the Trusts to replicate the framework, while Kerala, Maharashtra and Karnataka have roped them in to play an advisory role.
The distributed care model is a vital piece in the Tata Trusts’ cancer treatment thrust, and there’s more on their plate. In Tirupati in Andhra Pradesh, the Trusts have started work on a 300-bed cancer-care facility in partnership with the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams. The Trusts are also planning to build 250-bed level 1 centres in Bhubaneswar, Ranchi and Hyderabad.

Besides these initiatives, the Trusts are in talks with private and charitable hospitals in Navsari, Allahabad, Mangalore, Mathura and many other Indian cities to extend India’s cancer treatment reach. “We are engaging differently with each partner, depending upon what support they are looking for,” says Mr Gupta.

Common to all these centres will be the assurance of quality standards for cancer care. They will follow protocols set down by the National Cancer Grid, a network of cancer centres, research institutes, patient groups and charitable institutions where the Tata Trusts play an advocacy role.

The task of setting up large networks of new cancer facilities across the country is huge and challenging. “We are sailing in uncharted waters; this has never been attempted before,” says Mr Nataraj. One of the bigger challenges is the shortage of trained clinicians in India to handle the heavy load of cases.

**Training gains traction**

To tackle this load, the Trusts are putting together a cadre of well-trained medical personnel. The Trusts are driving a training programme that provides intensive training to postgraduate-level clinicians. These doctors will be able to detect and treat the first wave of patients. “The intent is to reduce the load and waiting period at level 1 facilities today, as well as to give patients a better shot at early treatment,” says Mr Gupta.

A distributed cancer care model requires strong technology support. There will be a ‘national command centre’ to deliver call centre support to patients and diagnostic consultancy to the cancer centres. Tata Consultancy Services’ ‘digital nerve centre’ will be harnessed to enable the command structure. The command centre will also generate a huge amount of data that can help India in its battle against cancer.

Cancer screening is another crucial bit in the Tata Trusts approach. To this end, the Trusts are driving cancer screening processes in several Indian states through a variety of programmes. They are active as well at the other end of the cancer care spectrum: palliative care and family counselling services are a component of the Trusts’ cancer care model.

It seems an onerous responsibility for a single institution to take on all of this. But that’s how the challenges posed by the disease show up and the Trusts certainly have the commitment to last the course.

---

By Gayatri Kamath
For 11-year-old Kiran Babu, story time is the best time of the day. Walking into the school library, she picks up her favourite book: *Hosa Sweater* (meaning ‘new sweater’ in Kannada). It is the story of a ragpicker who dreams of buying a sweater, and how she finally saves enough money to get one.

Kiran and her friends attend the Venkatesh Nagar Higher Primary School, a government school in the Yadgir district of Karnataka. The library here is one of 100 set up by Kalike, an associate organisation of the Tata Trusts. Kalike, which translates into ‘learning’ in Kannada, drives several education programmes for the Trusts.

The library programme has been conceived and developed by Parag, a separate Tata Trusts initiative. Its effort is directed at using the transformative power of reading to ensure that children across India can appreciate and enjoy reading, especially in diverse vernacular languages. Parag’s three-pronged model of sourcing, publishing and disseminating children’s literature is at the heart of the Parag library programme.

The programme’s aim is to inspire children to read for pleasure and encourage them to learn and reflect through contextual, multilingual and age-appropriate books. The libraries cater to children studying in government schools, the majority of whom register low on reading because they lack access to good books and libraries.

“Government initiatives have succeeded in ensuring children go to schools, but many of them struggle to read,” says Swaha Sahoo, who heads Parag. One reason is that they do not enjoy reading what’s prescribed. Many of them are first-generation school...
Reading more, learning better

**KARNATAKA**
April 2016 - September 2018

- 5,097 Students enrolled in the schools
- 3,314 Average school attendance during the period
- 54,812 Books borrowed during the period
- 16.5 Average borrowing per child

**RAJASTHAN**
July 2017 - September 2018

- 5,465 Students enrolled in the schools
- 4,844 Average school attendance during the period
- 74,982 Books borrowed during the period
- 15.5 Average borrowing per child

**Libraries coverage**

- Gujarat
- Jharkhand
- Karnataka
- Madhya Pradesh
- Odisha
- Rajasthan
- Uttarakhand
- Uttar Pradesh
- Maharashtra

- 834 libraries
- 97,380 student beneficiaries
- 212,675 books distributed

goers with little incentive to take their reading beyond the mandatory textbooks.

This is the challenge Parag has taken on by introducing curated and diverse children’s literature through its libraries.

“Our libraries give them space for conversations, creativity and critical thinking,” adds Ms Sahoo.

While Parag has been technically supporting other nonprofits and schools to set up and run children’s libraries, it got into directly implementing a library programme with a pilot in Yadgir before extending it to Rajasthan. After a successful run over the past 30 months, the initiative is now being rolled out in 259 schools in Uttar Pradesh. Parag also supports libraries across Jharkhand, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Yadgir, where Parag works with 100 schools, was the laboratory for the project. The first step was to convince the headmasters of the schools to allocate a room for setting up a library, and then to
incorporate weekly library classes in the students’ study schedules.

“They gave us their worst rooms initially,” says Gajendra Raut, a programme manager with the Trusts. Kalike converted the dank and often dingy rooms into usable spaces. To ensure children’s participation and ownership, Parag invested in collaborative art. An artist was invited to paint one wall of a library and involve children, teachers and library facilitators in the process. Child-friendly furniture and open book shelves provide easy access to the books.

Everyone’s invited
The libraries are spaces for children who can read as well as those who cannot. “Story books are for everyone and even when children do not know how to read the text, they can read the pictures,” Ms Sahoo explains.

Plenty of emphasis is placed on discussions. For instance, before a ‘read aloud’ session, children are encouraged to share personal experiences related to aspects in any given story.

Making the library programme sustainable has been another important goal. In all 100 schools Parag has ensured that library classes become a part of school timetables. “This is vital because no fixed classes mean no accountability,” says Girish Harakamani, programme director, Kalike.

In 40 schools, Parag has given dedicated library facilitators. These facilitators will eventually hand over the library management to the teachers. In another 60 schools, the library teacher in charge has been trained to manage the library, the borrowing and lending, and conduct reading sessions with students.

Parag is ensuring that the school library is a place where children come to read, share and discuss stories, participate in activities and generally enjoy the learning process. Children have been reading books more frequently, which has led to improved communication skills, better comprehension and an overall rise in interest in the world around them.

The government school in Venkatesh Nagar is an example of the influence of a vibrant library. Chosen to be part of the library programme in October 2016, it has 112 students, most of them first-generation school goers from the Lambani tribal community. Only about 30% of the children used to complete their homework previously but that has changed.

“The children didn’t do their homework because they have to help with chores in the fields, cooking or tending to babies in the house,” says headmaster Kanakappa H Dasar. Their parents needed convincing, and more, to get them to send their wards to school. “We sometimes had to threaten them with police action to ensure that their children came to school.”

Nagaratna G, a 35-year-old library teacher, says that at first the students were reluctant to attend the ‘extra’ library periods. “They said they already had too much homework; now they compete

Books have brought smiles to the faces of these students at the government girls school in Beda in Rajasthan’s Pali district
What’s truly remarkable is that, inspired by the impact the school libraries have had on the children, the communities they belong to have been coming forward to open libraries in their villages. The first such public library, funded entirely by the locals, has opened in Chintakunta village.

Rajasthan is another state where Parag has implemented the library programme. In Pali district, the Parag team has been at work for two years — along with local partners Centre for Microfinance (CmF) and Bodh Shiksha Samiti — to establish libraries in 50 schools. This programme has a literacy component as well, which helps inculcate the reading habit in children from an early age.

The poverty challenge
Poverty is the biggest challenge in Pali. The villages here are populated by people of the Garasia tribe and they often migrate with their children in search of work (school attendance is 50-60%). With the literacy rate in the region under 50%, getting qualified teachers is difficult.

“Almost all of the children are first-generation school goers,” says Vijay Singh, general manager of CmF. “We struggled to persuade school headmasters of the usefulness of the libraries.” Then there was resistance from teachers who believed that issuing books to the kids was a risk as they would damage or not return them. “We said we would take responsibility for that.”

The success of the libraries demonstrates how classrooms and textbooks can be supported and supplemented through children’s literature and a habit of reading. The libraries open new avenues of learning and thinking and are enabling children to read their way to an educated and improved future.

By Vikas Kumar
The biggest bang for every buck

The India Consensus project employs rigorous cost-benefit analyses to help state governments pinpoint the most effective social development interventions

All governments have to balance resource allocation and budgetary limitations in their quest to secure social development dividends. That’s simple enough, but there are complexities hidden within the folds.

The people running these governments often focus their attention on development issues that are politically and socially popular. More often, the decisions they take do not benefit from a comparative analysis of the on-ground impact of the programmes being rolled out. It becomes difficult, or worse, then for governments to get the most bang for the public buck.

This has been the challenge in making optimal use of the state’s funds, leading to questions about how governments should prioritise issues to derive the greatest social impact. For instance, should education budgets focus on primary, tertiary or skill-based education? Should nutrition initiatives spend more on micronutrients for pregnant women or therapeutic foods for children?

Such questions are critical, and tricky, when a country’s resources are limited and its development needs aplenty. The choices that can be made have to be informed and that’s where India Consensus — a
partnership between the Tata Trusts and the Copenhagen Consensus Center (CCC)—plays a crucial role.

CCC is, in its own words, a think tank that researches the smartest solutions for the world’s biggest problems, advising policymakers and philanthropists on how to spend their money most effectively. The Center has global experience in partnering governments to provide rigorous cost-benefit analyses of the potential impact of public spending.

“When governments and decision makers are empowered with information about how much more good they can achieve with every dollar or rupee, they are incredibly excited,” says Bjorn Lomborg, the president of CCC.

Drawing on its global partner’s experience and expertise, India Consensus follows the same systematic, analytical process in the Indian context. This to help answer that most complex of questions: where should an investment be directed to generate the most social benefit?

The India Consensus approach complements the government’s top-down policy planning model. True to its name, the Consensus brings together a wide range of stakeholders, among them governments, nonprofits, public intellectuals, businesses and the general public, to identify the most urgent issues for a particular state. What follows is a meticulous approach in examining each proposed intervention and its larger, long-term impact.

State governments on board
The India Consensus programme was introduced in June 2017, and it began with the signing of agreements with the state governments of Rajasthan and Andhra Pradesh. “The larger plan for India Consensus is to positively influence the additional annual budget across all 29 states,” says Shireen Vakil Miller, head of policy and advocacy at the Tata Trusts.

In Rajasthan and Andhra, the Consensus started out by identifying the priority issues. In Rajasthan, more than 1,200 people from the government, NGOs, academia, think tanks and business identified some 1,000 projects. From these, 79 of the most promising solutions were identified by a panel, which examined more than 1,000 pages of research findings. In Andhra, 77 interventions were shortlisted out of an initial list of 600 issues. The results have helped bring a new level of clarity in policy and decision making to these states.

The Andhra impact research, for instance, shows that improving the teacher-pupil ratio in the state would return `5 worth of social and economic benefits on every rupee invested. On the other hand, computer-assisted learning—the highest

Khyati Taye, a farmer from Assam’s Dhemaji district; farmers stand to benefit more through increased market access than loan waivers
Getting better at doing good

A side effect of democracy is that decisions on social development spending are — instead of being grounded on rational impact assessment — often based on which issues will get the most attention, political push or emotional traction.

Bjorn Lomborg, president of the Copenhagen Consensus Center (CCC), has been on a relentless mission to change this through improved research and analysis about the costs and benefits of any given solution, thereby ensuring that public funding is prioritised through hard evidence and facts. He speaks here about India Consensus and its work in maximising the impact of spending on social development. Edited excerpts from the interview:

How did the CCC come about, and what were the key triggers for this to happen?
[CCC] was conceived to address a fundamental but overlooked topic in international development: in a world with limited budgets and attention spans, we need to find effective ways to do the most good for the most people.

We first looked at global problems, working with Nobel laureate economists to study and rank development solutions and partnering the Economist news magazine. We continue to look at global challenges but we recognised a need to also work at the national and state levels to help governments, donors and decision makers get better evidence about how to spend wisely.

What is the impact that you hope to see with the Consensus model in the long term?
Our evidence has been used by governments to shape the way billions of dollars have been spent. Our evidence has informed smarter spending across a wide range of areas, from HIV/Aids and malaria through to nutrition and fortification and to government procurement and land digitisation. These impacts have been incredibly powerful and have, literally, improved the welfare of the world, generating value worth billions of dollars.

My vision for what we could achieve is that economic evidence becomes part of every government and organisation’s ‘doing good’ decision-making process.

When we analysed the ‘sustainable development goals’, we established that by following the CCC approach (of focusing on the most phenomenal interventions) the world’s aid budget could achieve four times more good. That’s the same as quadrupling what is spent.

Which are the key areas and locations that CCC is working on? How has the experience been in Bangladesh and Haiti?
We have worked at a global level for 14 years and, more recently, we have taken a deep dive to work at the national level. Haiti is a country with many, many challenges – but also with great potential. Our nutrition research there was taken up by donors and the government. In Bangladesh, we have helped influence smarter spending.

Why and how did the partnership with Tata Trusts for the India Consensus project come about? The Tata Trusts are integral to India Consensus; they have helped guide and shape the process. CCC brings economic methodology and rich experience in applying this elsewhere. The Trusts help ensure that everything we do here fits the Indian context.
The India Consensus approach

In Andhra Pradesh...

24 teams of Indian and international economists researched the costs and benefits of each solution. The resulting analyses were presented and discussed at seminars and in the media across the state and elsewhere.

More than 500 people from government, NGOs, academia, think tanks, and business identified.

77 of the most promising development solutions (from the 600 ideas generated).

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Shifting just 1% of the state’s spending towards the pinpointed ideas could generate benefits worth ₹480 billion annually.

In Rajasthan...

24 teams of Indian and international economists researched the costs and benefits of each solution. The resulting analyses were presented and discussed at seminars and in the media across the state and elsewhere.

More than 800 people from government, NGOs, academia, think tanks, and business identified.

79 of the most promising development solutions (from the 900 ideas generated).

POTENTIAL IMPACT

Shifting just 1% of the state’s spending towards the pinpointed ideas could generate benefits worth ₹500 billion annually.

priority solution that emerged — would yield a return of ₹74 for every rupee spent.

In Rajasthan, the findings were similarly enlightening. Improving private sector tuberculosis care would yield benefits worth ₹179 for each rupee invested. In agriculture, introducing e-mandis (electronic agricultural markets) would deliver a return of ₹65 on each rupee spent, whereas farm loan waivers would return less than a rupee.

Looking ahead

Going forward, the India Consensus team is looking to concentrate on two states a year. Andhra and Rajasthan aside, the governments of Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh have shown interest in the India Consensus approach. NITI Aayog, the central government’s policy think tank, invited the Consensus to conduct a seminar where planning secretaries from all of India’s 29 states were encouraged to adopt the programme’s research-driven system.

Employing the analysis-based approach can have a huge impact, especially in India. Here’s a rough example of how the statistics pan out. Estimates for efficiency gains from priority initiatives under the India Consensus umbrella is ₹25 for every rupee spent. The combined additional budgetary allocation for 2018-19 for India’s states is about ₹3,200 billion. If 1% of this were to be utilised a year based on cost-benefit analysis — ₹32 billion — it could lead to a 25-fold gain in efficiencies, generating impact worth more than ₹800 billion in effective public policies. Over a five-year term, that works out to ₹4,000 billion in social impact.

Those are big numbers. Getting the maths right on this is critical for India and its development ambitions.

By Vikas Kumar
An ongoing transformation of Nagpur’s urban primary health centres has made affordable medical care more accessible to people.

The patients sitting in the freshly painted waiting room have Amitabh Bachchan for company, even if it’s only a video of the movie star — with a message on measles vaccination — playing out on a television screen behind the reception desk. Red signboards provide an attractive pop of colour amidst the off-white walls. The well-appointed space could be part of a private hospital ... except that it is not. It is the new look of a government-run urban primary health centre (UPHC) in Nagpur that has undergone a radical upgrade.

Two together for all
The vastly improved centre is the outcome of a partnership between the Nagpur Municipal Corporation (NMC) and the Tata Trusts to overhaul 26 UPHCs across the city. Initiated in December 2017, the partnership targets a widely felt need in what is one of the fastest-growing urban centres in Maharashtra. And it is a need that resonates strongest with Nagpur’s poor, a huge number of whom live in slums.

The ‘model UPHC project’ demonstrates an ecosystem-based approach to providing better healthcare services to the urban poor and is aligned with the central government’s flagship National Urban Health Mission (NUHM). “The project supplements efforts undertaken by the municipal corporation and NUHM through the use of effective tools for public health care management, tools that can bridge the gap between policy and action,” says Amar Nawkar, a programme officer with the Trusts.

The transformation of Nagpur’s
UPHCs began with a determining of service gaps in the existing facilities to understand why the centres were not much liked, to put it mildly, by those most dependent on them. The big factors were poor infrastructure, shortcomings in services and a lack of awareness of what was available at the centres.

These and other factors were worked on in the redesign of the model UPHCs, which are based on health system frameworks endorsed by the World Health Organisation and the central government. It was clear that essential components needed improvement to provide comprehensive health services to the public. The Trusts drew up a blueprint that laid out the issues plaguing the UPHCs, as well as what could be done to cure the system of its ills. The proposed partnership spelled out the roles of the partners and the areas of cooperation between different departments.

**Comprehensive coverage**

Six areas for attention were identified for a three-year programme that was divided into three phases, over which 26 UPHCs would be covered. A governing council was set up and this had members from NMC and the Trusts and an independent public health consultant as well. The council monitors the programme’s progress and steps in, when necessary, to eliminate bottlenecks.

An 11-member team from the Trusts was put together to work on the project. Being based in the NMC headquarters has helped the team — and the initiative — maximise operational efficiencies, as has become evident through the first and second phases of the project, which took in 17 UPHCs.

The 17 centres were repaired and repainted by the municipal corporation before the Trusts team began upgrading infrastructure. In order to improve patient experience, new furniture, air conditioners, televisions and CCTV cameras were installed. Staff rooms were built and furnished and the design of the interiors of the centres were standardised, from the colour schemes to the signage.

Bringing in new technology was a key element and this has enabled the UPHCs to follow globally recognised medical protocols. Computers and webcams were procured to have a system with electronic health records. “A patient’s medical record is captured when he or she registers at a UPHC,” explains Mr Nawkar. “This makes it easier to improve efficiency and the
Patient experience has been an important aspect of the makeover, the intent being to ensure that visits to the centre go as smoothly as possible. The resultant streamlining has simplified the process. Patients register, sit in the waiting area and then go for their consultation. The doctor provides a print of the prescription, which the patient can use to collect medicines from the UPHC pharmacy.

The changes have taken account of the staff, too. Clinical and non-clinical personnel at the centres have undergone training for capacity building. Along with technical skilling, experts were roped in from the Institute of Hotel Management in Aurangabad to conduct workshops on motivational training, soft skills, communication, etc.

In essence, primary care is incomplete without adequate diagnostic competence. The city had three designated laboratories but using their services was a cumbersome task for patients. That explains why the provision of clinical and biochemistry diagnostics was made an integral part of the model, and in innovative ways.

“We found that people were spending money in private establishments for basic laboratory investigations,” says Mr Nawkar. “Since the municipal health system already had doctors who could suggest investigations, staff to collect samples and space to conduct tests, we decided to set up a state-of-the-art centralised laboratory where spending would be kept to a bare minimum.”

After plenty of hard work, the first phase of the model UPHC programme was completed in June 2018 (and the second in January 2019). Staff training was an issue but that has been ironed out. “We have provided support not just during the training phase but even after operations have begun,” says Mr Nawkar. “All UPHCs have our people handholding the staff and ensuring process compliance.”

**Evidence in the numbers**

Up until now some 38,000 patients have been registered under the project. The consultation process has become more organised. The soft skill training has helped change the way the staff interact with patients. And the availability of drugs is being regularly updated so that supply is not interrupted.

The centralised pathology centre offers 49 diagnostic tests at a nominal rate that can be done through the UPHCs. Blood samples are collected at the centre and

---

**What the model UPHC project covers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process realignment</th>
<th>IT platform for electronic health records</th>
<th>Reorganisation of supply chain management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure upgrades</td>
<td>Centralised laboratory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

proficiency of treatment.”

**What the model UPHC project covers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process realignment</th>
<th>IT platform for electronic health records</th>
<th>Reorganisation of supply chain management</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure upgrades</td>
<td>Centralised laboratory</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capacity building</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

**Evidence in the numbers**

Up until now some 38,000 patients have been registered under the project. The consultation process has become more organised. The soft skill training has helped change the way the staff interact with patients. And the availability of drugs is being regularly updated so that supply is not interrupted.

The centralised pathology centre offers 49 diagnostic tests at a nominal rate that can be done through the UPHCs. Blood samples are collected at the centre and
unique codes are tagged with the patient’s name. The samples are tested at the centralised laboratory and the reports get dispatched to the UPHC, where the patient can collect it.

For the first time, the UPHCs are delivering crucial demographic data to the state health administration. “The electronic records help determine the footfalls at the UPHC, they indicate the gender and age of the patients, and the disease distribution,” says Mr Nawkar. “For example, if diarrhoea cases increase in a particular area, the administration will be alerted and they can take steps to control the situation. The digitisation of patient records is bringing in better data analytics and near real-time reports, leading to focused action plans and informed policy decisions.”

Staff at the UPHCs are upbeat about the new systems and processes. “The provision of diagnostic facilities and medicines has led to an increase in patients visiting our centre,” says Renuka Yawalkar, a doctor at the Futala UPHC. Sarika Mankar, a lab technician at the Indora UPHC, says, “The furniture provided by the Trusts has helped us organise our equipment and supplies more efficiently.”

NMC officials are highly appreciative of what the partnership with the Tata Trusts has delivered. “Collaborations such as these help raise the standard of medical health,” says additional municipal commissioner Ram Joshi. “We have technocrats and qualified medical staff, but the Trusts have management experts who can help with the scale of managing all these factors.” On its part, the corporation has stepped up efforts to create a more productive environment.

**Plethora of positives**

The Nagpur UPHC programme has secured many positives and it has admirers in the medical care ecosystem, but there is much left to be done. Work on the third phase of the project is set to commence and new facilities such as a tele-medicine unit are being planned.

The UPHCs will be linked to medical colleges so that the medical officer at the centre can, if and when required, consult an expert or specialist for advice. Another plan is to use a mobile medicine unit to connect doctors working in slum areas with those at the centres. “This unit will help provide people with specialist care at their doorstep,” adds Mr Nawkar.

Meanwhile, nationally recognised medical institutions are extending their support by conducting regular clinical audits of the centres to ensure quality of service.

What all of this adds up to is a vital reality — the Nagpur Municipal Corporation has succeeded to a significant extent in its aim to provide high-quality primary healthcare to its populace especially those who cannot afford expensive private care.

By Priyanka Hasangadi

Enhancing patient experience alongside infrastructure and technological improvements is at the core of the UPHC programme
Chandrakant S Pandav has made the linking of science, statesmanship and society his very own life mission. It is the fuel that has helped the good doctor devote long years of exemplary service to a noble and critical cause: the elimination of iodine deficiency disorders in India and South Asia.

Dr Pandav did his medical studies at the All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS), New Delhi, and McMaster University, Canada, before embarking on what has been a distinguished career in community medicine. During this time, he served as head of the Centre for Community Medicine at AIIMS, New Delhi, and in a variety of responsibilities with national and global organisations.

A prolific writer, a cinephile and closely involved currently with India’s ambitious National Nutrition Mission, Dr Pandav speaks here to Christabelle Noronha. Excerpts from the interview:

You have been involved in India’s fight against iodine deficiency for several years. How has the country fared in this fight and what have those at the frontlines learned from it?

India was one of the first countries in the world to start a public health programme based on salt iodisation to address iodine deficiency disorders. Iodine deficiency is a public health emergency that affects roughly 36 million people across the country -- that’s about 23% of the population. The government has been proactive in implementing the National Iodine Deficiency Disorders Control Programme (NIDDCP), which aims to provide iodine to everyone through the fortification of salt and food, public awareness campaigns and health services.

Dr Pandav, you’ve been in the forefront of eliminating iodine deficiency disorders. How has the country fared and what lessons have those at the frontlines learned from this journey?

“I would strongly suggest that our medical students spend at least three months in India’s villages in what we call the village immersion course.”

“Our doctors need to be taught the skill of listening”
The ‘iodine deficiency disorders [IDDs] control programme’ in India is a public health success story. According to the ‘national iodine and salt intake survey’ of 2014-15, 78% of households in India consume salt that is adequately iodised and 14% consume some amount of iodine (the balance 8% do not have access). However, those of us at the frontlines have learned that our success in eliminating the most common and visible manifestation of iodine deficiency — goitre and cretinism — has proved to be our bane. Endemic goitre and endemic cretinism are only the tip of the iceberg. We need to focus on the invisible manifestations of IDDs. What is not painful and not seen is not considered a priority. The real challenge now is to address issues related to brain development.

Why has public healthcare in India been such a disaster? What are the biggest challenges here and how can they be overcome?
We in this country have had the practice, historically, of following the Indian system of medicine, which is about the preservation of health. Today it is all about curative care. We are losing our age-old heritage and our cultural and social way of life. In the context, the decision by the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare to convert sub-centres into health and wellness centres is a new beginning. But if you look at the budget distribution, only 9-10% of the total health budget is spent on public health.

Your involvement with the nutrition push that’s gathering force in India has been considerable. What’s the thinking on nutrition at the policy level and what are the obstacles that have to be dealt with on the ground?
Being a member of the National Nutritional Council, I was involved with the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), launched by the honourable Prime Minister [Narendra Modi] in March 2018. At the policy level the Mission is a visionary initiative to address the nutritional challenges India faces. It seeks to bring about a convergence among various ministries to work in a coordinated manner so that malnutrition can be quickly and progressively reduced.

The key features of this programme are the mobilisation and participation of communities across the country in addressing various aspects of the nutrition challenge. NNM’s goals are to improve the nutritional status of children from 0-6 years, adolescent girls, pregnant women and lactating mothers in a time-bound manner for the next three years. All ministries need to unite under NNM to achieve these goals.

To quote [the late jurist and economist] Nani Palkhivala, “We Indians are excellent solo players but we make a very poor orchestra.” The prime minister’s commitment has been able to work as an invisible hand in conducting this orchestra and, today, 13 ministries have come together on a common platform to address the malnutrition issue.
Achieving the Mission’s goals in such a short time frame is difficult. Most issues related to poor nutrition are intergenerational. Apart from that, social determinants such as water, sanitation, immunisation and, most importantly, behavioural change take time to address.

Nutrition would certainly benefit from the kind of backing that the Swachh Bharat Mission has garnered. Do you see that happening anytime soon?

Like the Swachh Bharat Mission, NNM is also expected to result in significant social, economic and health benefits. The Swachh Bharat Mission was backed by strong political will and inspiring leadership, with the prime minister championing the cause nationally and internationally. Both the missions have found constant reference in his addresses and public speeches, which encourage the masses to be a part of this jan andolan [people’s revolution]. It is critical to maintain progress to achieve goals.

Collaborations between governments and civil society organisations, including philanthropies and nonprofits, have been known to produce some good results in healthcare. Where and how do such collaborations work best, and what do you have to watch out for?

---

**Down with malnutrition**

The National Nutrition Mission (NNM) India’s flagship programme, aims to improve nutritional outcomes for children, adolescents, pregnant women and lactating mothers

**100 million+**

people to benefit

By **2022** NNM targets reduction of...

- anaemia among young children, women and adolescent girls by **3%**
- stunting by **2%**
- under-nutrition by **2%**
- low birth weight by **2%**
I always advocate the importance of partnerships between government agencies and civil society, international and bilateral agencies, NGOs, academics and universities, and the private sector. I call it the ‘panchsheel of partnership’. This is the principle on which the National Coalition for Sustained and Optimal Iodine Intake works. The Coalition has been instrumental in ensuring greater coordination and synergy among different stakeholders. Its most significant contribution has been to act as a high-level advocacy channel and to provide a platform for regular dialogue.

**As a former professor of community medicine, what do you make of the current state of medical education in India? What’s the panacea you would recommend to heal what seems to be a broken-down system?**

The Medical Council of India has gone through several avatars of transformation. When I entered medical school, the first thing I encountered was a dead body; you could say I started my career of saving lives with a dead body. I think there has to be a dramatic shift in terms of this particular orientation, and it is vital in the early phase of medical education.

I would strongly suggest that our medical students spend at least three months in India’s villages in what we call the village immersion course. They should interact with people on the ground to understand the dimensions of the healthcare challenge this country faces. A second point

An anaemia prevention campaign in Uttar Pradesh; India needs to choose health preservation over the curing of diseases
is about ethics, which has been a challenge for the medical profession in today’s environment. Finally, there’s communication. Effective communication skills have to be taught to physicians. We seem to excel in the practice of all medical disciplines, be it allopathy, naturopathy or homeopathy, but our physicians conspicuously lack sympathy and empathy — and that is a critical necessity.

There’s another issue. The first interaction between patient and physician typically sees the doctor talking for 80% of the time. We need to have physicians listening to what a patient has to say. Our doctors need to be taught the skill of listening.

The perennial problem remains of research and development resources being scarce for conditions that plague poor countries.

What, in your opinion, is the way out?

The major challenges that research and development faces are the failure to invest money, poor governance and poor implementation. To address the issue of the developing world’s lack of progress in research and development, it is necessary to train a new generation of policy and programme managers, people from diverse backgrounds. Multidisciplinary work needs to be supported and encouraged at universities and other academic institutions.

It appears that you are busier in your retirement years than when you were earlier. What is it that most interests you, as a professional and a technocrat and at a personal level?

I would like to quote Swami Vivekanada: “Take up one idea. Make that one idea your life — think of it, dream of it, live on that idea. Let the brain, muscles, nerves, every part of your body be full of that idea, and just leave every other idea alone. This is the way to success.” For me that one idea and interest is achieving the sustainable elimination of IDDs and ensuring that every mother and child receives optimal nutrition.

My passion has always been to serve for the greater good of humanity. Maybe that’s why, as a young medical graduate at AIIMS in New Delhi, I left neurosurgery and joined community medicine. I have been blessed with amazing mentors such as Professor Vulimiri Ramalingaswami and Dr Basil Hetzel in my journey and they have moulded me into the person I am. There’s support, of course, from family and colleagues who drive me to achieve even more.

In the field of nutrition, as in politics, the task is to do what is possible without forgetting to do what is necessary. For control of micronutrient deficiency, it is necessary to focus our attention on public health measures, dietary diversification, supplementation and fortification. Believing is seeing. Only when we truly believe that it is possible to do something that we begin to look for ways to do it. Food fortification is possible. As the maxim has it: “If not now, when? If not here, where? If not we, who?”

“The major challenges that research and development faces are the failure to invest money, poor governance and poor implementation.”
‘Action with quality on time’ is the need

That’s the never-fail formula to secure social development outcomes of consequence for people and communities — and the effort will speak for itself.

I am on the threshold of a new chapter. I began my journey in the development sector in the late 1980s after almost a decade in advertising and have recently retired after about two decades of being closely engaged with the work of the Tata Trusts. This is an opportunity for deep reflection on the changing dynamics of the sector as well as what remains unchanged.

I transitioned from the corporate sector with no formal training in rural development or a degree in social work. The leaders, professionals and communities I have worked with have been my teachers and the field has been my classroom.

My first experience of the sector came while I was still in Lintas, and it was fuelled and shaped by my then chief executive, Alyque Padamsee. A true son of India, Alyque was fearless in his demand for justice and peace during times like the 1992 Mumbai riots; he was committed to giving back to society.

The cell he started for public service advertising — which he gave me the chance to lead and develop during its initial years — is still in existence. Alyque brought all the discipline and high expectations demanded by the highly competitive advertising world to bear on the work we set out to do. The planner that each of us was given had our names embossed on it along with the acronym AQT — ‘action with quality on time’.

The public service cell was working with clients as diverse as the Maharashtra government’s public health department and a private developer-architect partnership that wanted to run a campaign promoting a coastal road in Mumbai. Alyque was inflexible when it came to quality and insisted that our communication work be informed by activists and research, even if it conflicted with the intent of the client.

**Required: moral courage**

The private developer-architect team did a quick retreat when it realised that the campaign would ask the public to vote after putting across the pros and cons. It is with some sadness that I observe what looks like the genesis of a coastal road now emerging in front of my house in Worli in Mumbai. The newspapers occasionally cite environmental damage and the objections of fisherfolk to this and similar projects, but who is listening? And where is the kind of moral courage that Alyque showed?

My next lesson came from another unconventional development stalwart, Rippan Kapur. Once an airline purser and the founder of CRY (a nonprofit that works for child rights), Rippan had a simple theory, one that I hope I have been able to put into practice: let your work be defined by the communities you serve.

The needs of people, not donors or nonprofits, should define social
development interventions. This requires the ability to observe and listen, to resist being pulled into flavour-of-the-day issues, to avoid parroting catch phrases that don’t mean much. Above all, you have to be participatory and invisible in the process. You have to actually live the term 'development partner'.

In my years with the Tata Trusts, there has been ample opportunity to put the participatory approach into practice and to tread new ground. My ‘guru’ and predecessor at the Trusts, Suresh Suratwala, followed this philosophy during the 35 years he worked with the institution, and on the ground in Devapur, a drought-prone village in Maharashtra’s Satara district.

Between 1958-59 and 1971-72, Devapur’s per capita income went up by 236% and its agricultural output by 270%. Russi M Lala wrote of Devapur in his book, *The Heartbeat of a Trust*: “The first lesson was that without the active participation of the people the process of development would be both lopsided and short-lived. What was achieved was possible even against great odds because, unlike at present, a [Tata Institute of Social Sciences] graduate devoted his whole working life of 35 years to those villagers, knowing each one by name and their problems.”

**Give it your all**

The graduate referred to is Mr Suratwala, a quiet and reflective person who did much to define the work of the Trusts. He inspired new entrants like me to learn from the field, think deeply, research and plan carefully, to give our all.

The participatory philosophy was the forerunner of the integrated, multi-thematic development interventions that the Tata Trusts have initiated in specific geographies over the last decade. And it is the core of the efforts being undertaken by the Trusts and their associate organisations today.

What the development sector needs now more than ever are clones of...
Mr Suratwala — in government, donor agencies, among NGOs and on the ground. The Trusts are fortunate to have many such individuals, dedicated professionals with the commitment and the knowledge to do good work.

There is a message here, too, for new entrants in the sector. There are no shortcuts when working with communities and learning from them, no alternative to spending time in the field, no option but to seek guidance from experienced practitioners and technical experts, no business plan or formula that will automatically realise objectives. We need people who are proficient in both theory and practice, with experience, with technical knowhow and, above all, with integrity of purpose.

Had I had formal training in rural development or social work, I could possibly have done more, and better. But I was fortunate to have some of the best faculty in the world to learn from.

For scale and sustainability, you need to work with the government, its agencies and its people. Working with government needs three things that are crucial to success: finding a champion within the system who is like-minded — there are many — being uncompromisingly rigorous in planning and execution, and making certain every stakeholder is accountable.

The best government-nonprofit partnerships are forged when government resources are tapped and the partner focuses on areas outside of the state’s ambit and on technical support. The courage to question is essential in this context.

Problems galore but...
Many of the social development problems India faces have been with us forever. There is a growing agrarian crisis. Much of our country remains without access to sanitation, electricity and connectivity. Many of our children are still out of school and some of those who are in school do not demonstrate the requisite learning levels. The list is endless but there is sufficient success and experience on the ground to tell us what needs to be done and how.

So what are the answers to the demands of the day? The blueprint is before us in what the founders of the Tata Trusts and many exemplary development workers have demonstrated and accomplished. The need is for ‘action’ (not just talk or ideas) with ‘quality’ (carefully planned after drawing from participatory research, data and technical expertise) on ‘time’ (without shortcuts and in a time-bound fashion). On the visibility front, the work will speak for itself.

Nayantara Sabavala retired in October 2018 from the Tata Trusts.

1The public service cell of Lowe-Lintas is now known as SOMAC — social marketing and communication unit.
