

Midterm Assessment of LAHI – Axis Bank Foundation

Background:

According to Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), there are 31 million people without gainful employment in India. One of the reasons for unemployment, especially among the rural youth, is the disconnect between education, skill development, and available livelihood opportunities, both in urban and rural areas. High dropout rates, especially after Class VIII, add to the lack of employment opportunities for the youth.

The Indian government has identified skill development as a critical area contributing to the growth of India with an identified aim of skilling 500 million individuals by 2022. Realisation of the mandate outlined in the National Policy of Skill Development and the Prime Minister's vision of 'Make in India' will require commitment from the private as well as the social sector in providing skills to the workforce.

About the Project:

Axis Bank Foundation's (ABF) overarching aim is to provide 'Sustainable Livelihood' to the socio-economically weaker sections of society by supporting education, vocational skills training, and strengthening opportunities of livelihood for people, both in urban and rural areas. ABF partnered with Lend-A-Hand India (LAHI) for the implementation of Project Swadheen to address the gaps between the education imparted in schools and the skills needed in real life and in the labour market.

Project Swadheen, a flagship project of LAHI, was implemented in Satara, Sangli, Solapur and Pune districts of Maharashtra. It is the outcome of years of experience in implementing job and life skills training module – Multi Skills Foundation Course (MSFC) in over 50 secondary schools in Maharashtra covering 8,000 students in collaboration with Vigyan Ashram, Pabal. The primary objectives of the program are to increase enrolment to technical education, promote self-employment/entrepreneurial ventures, revenue generation at school level, and improvement in class attendance. Several years of advocacy efforts with the Government of Maharashtra, Directorate of Vocational Education and Training, and Maharashtra state Board of Secondary and Higher Secondary Education has resulted in making MSFC curriculum, methods, and tools available to the secondary schools in Maharashtra and thereby impacting the quality of education and making it relevant for life and careers.

Axis Bank Foundation commissioned Change Alliance to do a mid-line impact assessment to understand the impact of the program on its direct beneficiaries, its efficiency especially in planning/selection criteria and implementation, and to examine its sustainability parameters as well.

Processes Undertaken:

The assessment was conducted in 10 schools where Swadheen was implemented and two schools where it was not introduced. 450 students from the intervention group and 170 students from the non-intervention group were selected as samples. The evaluation design used was a 'quasi-experimental design' to measure the attribution of the project's initiatives on key impact and outcome indicators. The study used mixed methods including quantitative and qualitative. While the quantitative components presented a factual picture on various parameters outlined earlier, the qualitative components provided an insight into the causes/reasons for the findings of the quantitative components.

The quantitative methods used questionnaire surveys with the selected students while the qualitative methods included focussed group discussions (FGDs), group discussion (GDs), case studies, classroom observations through observation checklists, and key informant in-depth Interviews (IDIs). Sample was selected from class 9th and 10th students only though class 8th students' perspectives were documented through FGDs in some of the schools.

The assessment process included a desk research, tools development, and a sampling and field plan. Data collection process covered all primary stakeholders of the project such as students, Head Master, Coordinator, Trainer and school authority, LAHI team and parents. Students were selected by following a random method depending on their seating arrangement and selecting right hand student in the odd bench to ensure selection of equal number of girls and boys. Individual interviews were conducted with all available trainers, Head Masters and MSFC coordinator.

About Change Alliance:

Change Alliance is a for-profit organisation providing CSR consultancy and other development sector services to both companies and civil society organisations. Our services include end-to-end CSR strategy, design, implementation and management of large programs, in-depth research, baselines and end-term impact assessments, mid-term evaluations, and training and capacity building across sectors and industries. We have expertise and a successful track-record in conducting large-scale research, monitoring and evaluations, trainings, and implementing campaigns especially in education, gender, livelihoods, and climate change. And our 60 years legacy of developmental work, engaging with civil societies across the globe, and working with over 300 partner organisations in India has helped clients reach the remotest corners of the country.

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