IKEA Foundation

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UNDP

Disha

END TERM REPORT

Part A: Implementation Phase

disha
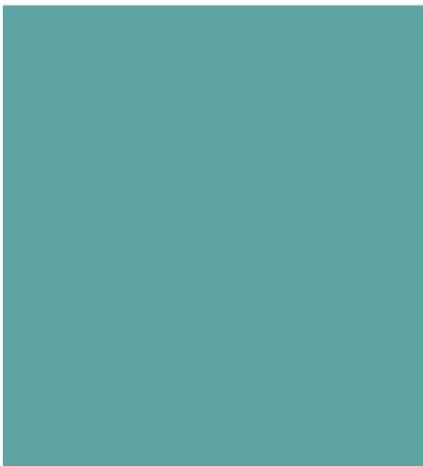
Final Report
(31-May-2021)
Status

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General Information

Organisation:	United Nations Development Program, India
Project Title:	Creating Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Women in India
Grant Number:	G-103
Total Grant Amount:	€12,902,929.00
Portfolio:	Employment and Entrepreneurship
Programme Manager:	Vandana Verma
Project Controller:	Surrani Kali
Reporting Period from:	1 January 2015
Reporting Period to:	31 December 2020

Overall Summary of Completion

A. **Implementation Period:** 1-Jan-2015 to 31st December 2019

B. **Communication and Dissemination Period:** 1-Jan-2020 to 31st December 2020

Part A (Implementation Phase: 01/01/2015 – 31/12/2019)

In general terms, did you achieve what you set out to accomplish? Why or why not?

Disha project was launched in 2015 in partnership with the United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), Xynteo, and India Development Foundation supported by IKEA Foundation. The project aimed to address the emerging paradox between India's high growth rates and abysmally low and declining female labor force participation rate (FLFPR). It explored the needs and aspirations of highly challenged socio-economic sections of women and girls. Disha was rolled out across five major states of India – Delhi, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana through 2015-2019 in a 'proof of concept' mode. Its ambitious scope included:

1. Provision of One Million women with marketable skills and livelihood opportunities
2. Develop innovative and scalable public-private partnership models
3. Establish a continuum connecting education to skills, jobs, and growth.

Its learnings can be categorised into the following four themes or models: Model 1 – Education to Work Transition; Model 2 – Employment Marketplace; Model 3 – Fostering Women-Entrepreneurship through the Community Mentorship and Model 4 – Enhancing Gender Equality in Value Chains.

By the end of 2019, Disha supported the economic empowerment of 1,023,020 women from marginalized communities across five partner states, thereby meeting its ambitious target of One Million women. Disha was able to create a convergence between the Ministry of Skills, Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI), and UNDP and constituted a task force to create a policy-level document on education to work transition and promotion of career guidance and counselling. Disha also promoted gender transformation in value chains in three critical ways:

1. by engaging women in traditionally male-dominated market-facing roles;
2. mitigating the effects of restricted mobility by bringing markets closer to women through locally centered aggregation centers and
3. by strengthening organic farming.

Disha, along the way, also led to exciting innovations that could work at scale towards inclusion and empowerment of women from the marginalised sections. For example use of technology for access to information starting with IT- a platform like Pankh Portal, Skill Sakhis for mobilization in rural areas with low institutional access, Youth Employability Services (YES) Centre design, Engendered Training module rich in psycho-social elements, Concept of local mentors or Biz Sakhis, Mini-MBA or 6-month Business Leadership Development Programme and Women Sourcing Managers (WSM) to name a few.

Disha enabled breaking new grounds in Women's Economic Empowerment. Disha Dialogues or the dissemination workshops underway in quarters 2 and 3 of 2020 when the world was reeling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, provided clinching evidence on the relevance of learnings and solutions under Disha to the livelihood reconstruction agenda and on the potential in women to lead it. Yet, it is just the start of a long journey. UNDP considers it critical to pursue and further strengthen this journey, particularly as it has important implications in the post-pandemic scenario.

1. What and Why?

1.1 Looking back on the full period of your support, what were the most significant achievements made and what factors influenced your success?

The programme **'Creating Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Women in India'** has received branding as **'Disha'** which symbolizes informed and inspired direction in life. This is on account of the human-centric or demand-side agenda that Disha articulated and demonstrated in a skilling ecosystem dominated by supply-side preoccupations such as on training capacity and target-driven skilling where women tend to lag. Disha worked on solutions in a proof-of-concept mode for key segments of women from the marginalized sections viz., students in government schools, women in smaller towns looking for local employment, women farmers and artisans struggling at the bottom of their value chain, and women from a highly challenged socio-economic background (rural, low-education levels and from landless families) looking to surmount numerous barriers to access income-earning opportunities. The report also takes a close look at the impact evaluation report by Dalberg to present the innovations and proof-of-concept advanced by Disha and their implications for the women's economic empowerment (WEE) agenda.

Key phases or progression in Disha programming are presented below to place the main achievements of the project in context.

Programme evolution and phasing

The Disha partnership between IKEA Foundation (IKF), United Nation Development Programme (UNDP), Xynteo and India Development Foundation (IDF)[1] was born in early 2015 in response to the emerging paradox between India's high growth rates and abysmally low and declining female labor force participation rates (FLFPR). The National Sample Survey (NSS) data indicated that between 1987 and 2011, FLFPR for women aged 25-54 had declined from 57% to 44% in rural areas and stagnated at around 26% to 28% in urban areas. A related concern was the soaring youth unemployment in the face of many growth sectors reporting of shortage in the availability of a skilled workforce.

Disha was rolled out in a 'proof-of-concept' mode across five partner states (namely, Delhi NCR, Haryana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, and Telangana) over 2015-19[2] with the following programme objectives:
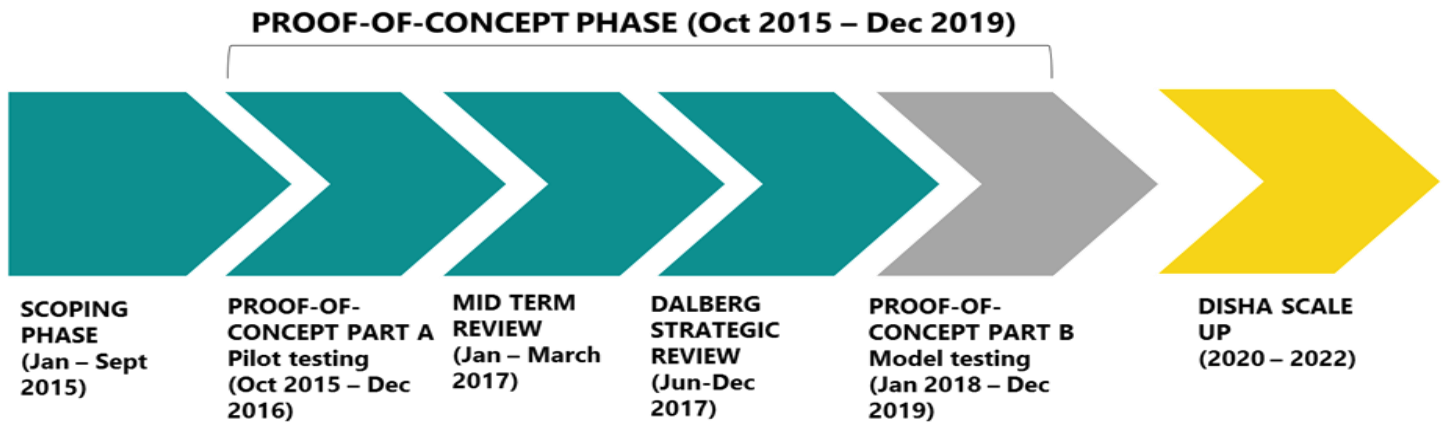1. Provide 1 million women marketable skills and livelihood opportunities,
2. Develop innovative and scalable public-private partnerships,
3. Establish a continuum that connects education to skills, jobs, and growth.

Disha incorporated three important innovations in program management. One was the inclusion of Xynteo, a boutique Norway-based private sector advisory firm with a global footprint to support robust private sector partnerships. The second was the design of a unique arrangement for concurrent monitoring, learning and management information system (MIS). These key functions were secured by embedding IDF, a Gurgaon-based development think tank within the partnership team. The third was phasing of implementation, starting with the 'Scoping Phase' (Jan-Sept 2015). This was followed by the 'Proof-of-Concept Phase' (October 2015-December 2017, later extended up to December 2019). As per the programme cycle requirements, an in-depth Mid-Term Review was carried out in early 2017. Additionally, an external Strategic Review was organized by the funder, IKF through Dalberg during the last 2 quarters of 2017. Disha is concluding in December 2020 with a year-long results dissemination phase.

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[1] Xynteo is a boutique Norway-based private sector advisory firm with global footprint. India Development Foundation or IDF is a Gurgaon-based development think tank.

[2] The initial programme period was 2015-17. This was extended by 2 years, i.e. upto 2019 based on the recommendations in the MTR. The programme was further extended by one year, i.e. upto Dec. 2020 for a year- long results dissemination drive.

PROOF-OF-CONCEPT PHASE (Oct 2015 – Dec 2019)

| SCOPING PHASE (Jan – Sept 2015) | PROOF-OF-CONCEPT PART A Pilot testing (Oct 2015 – Dec 2016) | MID TERM REVIEW (Jan – March 2017) | DALBERG STRATEGIC REVIEW (Jun-Dec 2017) | PROOF-OF-CONCEPT PART B Model testing (Jan 2018 – Dec 2019) | DISHA SCALE UP (2020 – 2022) |

Scoping Phase (Jan-Sept 2015)

The investment, by way of the Scoping Phase, led to an evidence-based agenda setting. A field survey carried out with support from Ernst and Young across the five partner states brought into sharp focus, the impact of severe information gap on the aspirations of women and on low access to the means for meeting such aspirations i.e., the government programmes on skill development, employment, and enterprise development.

Key highlights of the UNDP Voices Report: Barriers to Economic Empowerment of Women in NCR
- Lack of information on trainings as a barrier in NCR -73.5 % of the respondents
- Lack of information on employment opportunities as a barrier in NCR-79.5%
- Lack of information on entrepreneurship opportunities as a barrier in NCR- 89.2%
- Cost of training as a barrier in NCR-75.3%
- Physical access to training as a barrier-57.2%
- Lack of availability of suitability opportunities as a barrier-74.7%
- Physical access to employment opportunities as a barrier – 62%
- Limited access to finance as a barrier to setting up a business-75.3%

(Source: Women's Voices-Employment and Entrepreneurship in India, UNDP India, 2015 https://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/library/poverty/women-s-voices--employment-and-entrepreneurship-in-india.html)

The Scoping phase also enabled in-depth consultations with leading private sector players and secured their buy-in to the programme. Similarly, Memorandum of Understanding with partner State Governments prepared the ground for a seamless start of the implementation process.

Proof of Concept Phase (October 2015-Dec 2019)

Based on the comprehensive groundwork as outlined above, Disha set out to test programme strategies across three verticals: *Bridging the information gap (BIG), Skilling for Jobs and Enterprise Development*. As a conscious design towards promoting innovation and rolling out proof-of-concept, over 50 pilots were rolled out to fit the kaleidoscope of local and sector-specific issues.

The programme strategy evolved rapidly based on learnings from the initial pilots and strengthening of partnership with the State Governments. Yet, despite its tremendous promise, the progress in the vertical on *skilling for jobs* through private sector partnership was quite low. The reason for the low progress was the combination of performance and design issues. As discussed in more depth in the ensuing sub-section, Xynteo, responsible for this programme vertical, transitioned out of the project by the end of 2017. From the start of 2018, UNDP assumed this responsibility with a significantly lower budget than what was allocated to Xynteo for this programme vertical.

Mid Term Review (MTR) (Jan-Feb 2018)

In-depth stakeholder consultations under the MTR process led to a reaffirmation of Disha's programme agenda and strategy. It also brought out clarity in terms of the structuring of elements under various pilots into the following four programming models:

➢ **Model 1**: **Education to work transition** with career guidance and counselling framework for government schools and colleges to enable girls from the under-privileged sections to make and pursue inspired career choices.
➢ **Model 2: Employment marketplace** in unserved smaller towns and semi-urban areas, given the preference of women for local jobs.
➢ **Model 3: Fostering Micro-enterprise** in rural areas and self-employment in urban areas responding to the preference of women with domestic responsibilities for local sources of livelihood.
➢ **Model 4: Value chain strengthening** through linkages with the organized sector in areas such as agri-produce, handlooms, and artisanal products - areas that are the mainstay of livelihood for women in the non-formal sector.

The MTR process also enabled an in-depth examination into the factors responsible for the performance gap in the skilling for jobs vertical led by Xynteo despite tremendous potential offered by the private sector in India in terms of skilling and jobs for women. It became clear that the strategy of engaging individual enterprises through CEO level connect which Xynteo had deployed could not be sustained given the time frame and resources under Disha. It was agreed that strong, consistent, and cost-effective programme strategies required hosting of the capacity for private sector engagement in the country-based partner i.e. UNDP. Thus, as mentioned above, Xynteo transitioned out of the project by the end-2017.

Strategic review by Dalberg (in 2017) and transition phase to set the foundation for the 'Scale-up Phase'

To respond in an organized manner to such a fundamental change in programme arrangements, IKF engaged Dalberg to guide towards a comprehensive plan covering both programmatic and accountability issues. Dalberg, while re-affirming the efficacy of the demand side strategy that Disha had embarked upon, gave some guidance on programmatic and accountability issues towards significant results. This gave confidence to programme managers and partners to implement the project in a systematic manner to maximise the impact of the program on the ground.

The key recommendations from the strategic review were:

• Disha needs greater focus to achieve significant results (rationalize portfolio, integrate portfolio and develop segment-specific offerings)
• Support the project by a more effective execution and accountability framework (evolve a theory of change, update governance structure and strengthen monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL))
• Better communication to support both internal alignments and build the external brand (engage with stakeholders and amplify voice as a thought leader)

Main Achievements

The following discussion on the main achievements of Disha is couched at a strategic level, while detailed discussions on Key Performance Indicators is set in Section 3 below.

a. **Opening-up a new line of human-centric theory of change into the problem of low and declining FLFPR:**

Disha was able to go beyond the popular but narrow skilling and micro-credit type solutions to look at the barriers and needs on the demand side arising from a multitude of gender-based social and economic factors. Extracts from the UNDP videos/ voices from the field referred to above provide a glimpse into these challenges.

The **model-based approach emerging from the MTR led to an in-depth foray into the theory and practice of demand-side interventions for respective stakeholder groups**. The above line of enquiry across models and stakeholder groups such as girl students, women farmers, artisans, waste workers, etc. led to rich cross-learning, consistency and robustness in the understanding of gender dimensions and solutions at a more fundamental or core level. (see *Annexure 1* on Disha solutions and following sections on innovation and learning). In other words, the Disha experience has led to the articulation of a certain theory of change for economic and social empowerment of women from the marginalized sections rather than just narrow solutions for specific stakeholder groups. Disha has been able to build-up capacity for combining different elements of learning into large-scale policy solutions. Such capacity is well recognized, securing for Disha a seat on high policy tables across the central and state governments as well as in other fora.

The development implications of the above approach should be clear from the fact that **Disha was the first initiative in India to prioritize the issues of career guidance and counseling for education to work transition and to work on proof-of-concept at a significant scale**. This has since grown into a national level movement with Disha joining hands with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) to draw up a national task force report on career guidance and counseling. The National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) is now incorporating career guidance and counseling in all its programs. Similarly, UNICEF has adopted career guidance and counseling as a core agenda under its ambitious Yuwaah initiative. The impact evaluation report duly acknowledges the work done by Disha in this area. However, considering the ramifications of this agenda which serves as the Google map between education, skilling and employment, significant resourcing and long-term engagement is required for Disha to anchor and advance it as it unfolds across India.

Similar new ground was covered, and innovative products developed across models as may be seen in the following sub-sections. The demand-side based theory of change is not only a significant achievement for the project but a significant breakthrough in the WEE domain as such. This is well acknowledged and the Disha brand name has brought good recognition for itself as well as for its proponents.

b. **Valuable policy insights for the inclusion-oriented reforms in the skilling ecosystem through steadfast focus on the marginalized sections and rural areas:**

Despite low per unit resources and limited timeframe to the KPI of one million, Disha maintained a steadfast focus on women from underprivileged sections, particularly in rural locations. About 70% of those covered under the enterprise vertical belonged to rural locations. In the BIG vertical, the rural share was 53 %. In the skills to jobs vertical, which was confined to some specific industries, however, the rural share was only 8%.

More than 50% of the beneficiaries across the three verticals belonged to the below poverty line (BPL) population. Another significant share was that of other backward castes (OBCs). In terms of the age distribution, 81.8% of those reached through the BIG vertical were under 25 years of age. For the enterprise vertical, the shares of age groups 18-25, 25-30 and 30-45 were 30%, 14.1% and 38.2% respectively. Under the job vertical, those in the age group of 18-25
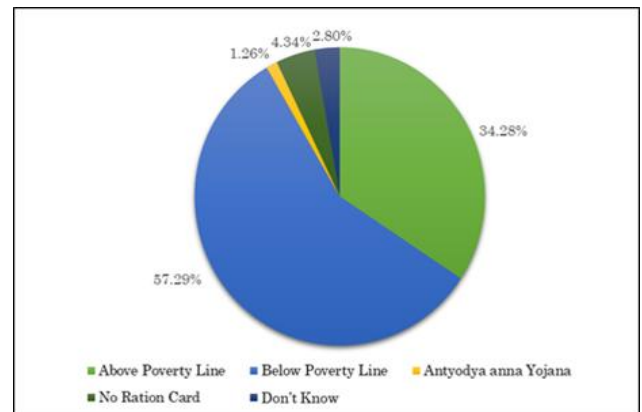
accounted for 58.7 % of the total. The BIG vertical being the backbone of Disha, the prime focus is on solutions for youth/girls from the underprivileged sections. This is the burning development challenge in India.

Figure 1: Socio-economic profile of Disha participants

Caste status of Disha beneficiaries (all models)
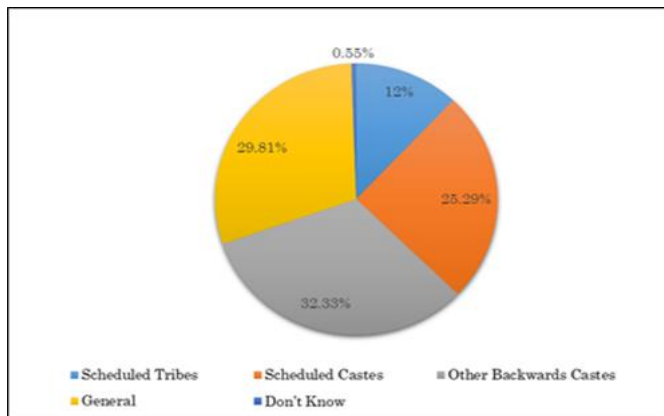
Ration card status of beneficiaries (all models)

Work with the above stakeholder composition led to new insights on the weaknesses in the current skill ecosystem and about solutions for inclusion. For example, it became clear that the skilling ecosystem in India was highly skewed against the rural needs and opportunities and largely targeted at mobilizing rural youth for low skill urban jobs. Conversely, for the educated next generation from the families in traditional livelihood trades, very little thought has been given to opening-up opportunities for aspirational jobs in these trades. These lacunae have led to very poor response to skilling opportunities being provided by the government even free of charge. In other words, the traditional livelihood trades such as agriculture, animal husbandry, a host of processing activities, artisanal activities etc. have remained unserved in terms of skilling and aspirational vocational livelihood opportunities. This baseline needs to change, particularly in the context of the post-COVID-19 scenario where much greater reliance will be on rural areas for livelihood generation including for the educated youth and women. Disha has been engaging in such dialogues even before the COVID-19 pandemic and has since intensified the same. These insights and solutions are extremely valuable and must be considered a major achievement of Disha.

c. **Strong brand equity, partnership base and place on the policy table:**

Disha has emerged as a leading brand in the domain of Women Economic Empowerment. The above discussions show that this has been the result of a combination of theory and practice. There has been some noteworthy development in the policy dimension for Model 1 - Career Guidance and Career Counselling (CGCC) at the national and state level, wherein UNDP played a significant role.

At the national level, UNDP in partnership with FICCI and MSDE set up the National Taskforce for Career Guidance and Career Counseling; and similarly, in Maharashtra, a State Level Working Group (WG) on Career Guidance and Counselling in partnership with the Department of Skill & Entrepreneurship Development, Government of Maharashtra has been set up. This WG is mandated to prepare a CGCC blueprint complementing digital interventions and the institutional and implementation roadmap for CGCC in the State. In Karnataka, UNDP provided support to the State Government to prepare the State Skill Development Policy (2017 – 2030); and in Telangana, the Tribal Welfare Department has adopted the Disha CGCC models and partnered with UNDP to implement the project in all its Girls Ashram schools & degree colleges and the Commissionerate of Collegiate & Technical Education. Besides this, Government of Telangana introduced and integrated life & soft skills in Telangana Skills and Knowledge Centres (TSKCs) of Government degree colleges and attached credits to the activities of TSKCs for students across the state. The Commissionerate has made internship mandatory for the degree students and is keen to adopt the National framework on "Education to Work Transition" developed under Disha; the process for forming the state level Taskforce to finalize & operationalize the framework has been initiated.

Such brand equity, outreach and advocacy capacity have considerable value in terms of programming and resource mobilization opportunities. The Impact Evaluation report (by Dalberg) provides examples of resource leverage, most of these being parallel co-financing. But equally, the ground reality is quite complex and harnessing the brand value of Disha for scale-up and institutionalization will require continued investment by leading international donors and expectations of full resource independence is difficult to be met in short to medium term.

Disha has been able to show pathbreaking achievements in line with the expectations regarding innovation and proof-of-concept approach into new solutions. This has also been acknowledged in the impact evaluation done by Dalberg. However, the achievements with large scale implications to women economic empowerment belonging to the marginalized socio-economic background have been undermined due to a narrow income-based definition of economic empowerment used by Dalberg in its impact evaluation methodology. There was an urgent need for the key project proponents (namely IKF, UNDP and IDF) to deliberate upon the evaluation report findings including the methodology adopted. However, the same could never take place on account of the disruptions caused by COVID-19.

Indeed, there was an expectation on UNDP to work towards sustaining the gains made through Disha. This is in order. Yet, considering the depth and scale of the development agenda being addressed, there has been the expectation of the Scale-up Phase to backstop such transition. This has been the trend in many other partnerships. For example, the Axis Bank Foundation has a very long-term perspective on complex issues such as water and their partnerships continue over decades. The same is true with DFID's Poorest Area Civil Society (PACS) programme.

To conclude, the end of the project report has also been designed to support consultations between project proponents towards action to benefit from the rich equity generated over the last five years.

1.2   Did your funded work lead to any significant breakthroughs to help children and families advance out of poverty? What were these?

Disha was designed explicitly based on globally relevant evidence that the socio-economic empowerment of women contributes directly to the welfare of the household and children. The Impact Evaluation report observes that the women who have gone through Disha and started a job, enterprise, or selling produce under the value chain have seen an increase in income relative to what they would have earned in the absence of Disha or other similar programmes. The women who were placed in employment for the first time though earned an average monthly income of 9000 INR. This average needs to be contextualized for women who engaged with Disha, both in terms of age and their relatively marginalized socio-economic background. The profitability of enterprises (with existence from less than 6 months to over a year) ranged from 8-13%. Similarly, women in the value chain have seen an increase of 8-30% in their profits as a result of Disha. They have been trained and exposed to market-facing roles which have traditionally been male dominated. More than 90% of the women farmers/craftswomen are currently selling their produce, proving that the interventions have been sustainable in their impact.

Various national and international studies show that women are much more efficient and judicious in using the resources in their hands. Disha's work ensured that the money earned by women went directly into their hands/ bank accounts thus enabling them to gain control over their income. Disha's target group was girls and women from the marginalized socio-economic background with most of them and their families being at the survival stage. Thus, to spend the income earned by women on basic household needs and education of the children held priority over other needs. Voices from the field demonstrate that almost all the women across models ensured that their children or siblings continue their education with some investing in sending their children to low-cost private schools. Some of the young women who started jobs have also enrolled in higher education or professional courses through distance learning.

Anecdotal evidence reveals that as women's income increased over the project period, they invested part of their income in building household assets such as renovation /upgrading their house from semi pucca to pucca, building a toilet, buying small gold jewelry pieces, buying a two-wheeler for self and /or family for enhanced mobility, etc. A few young women have also started investing in taking family holidays (for example women placed in the retail sector in Telangana).
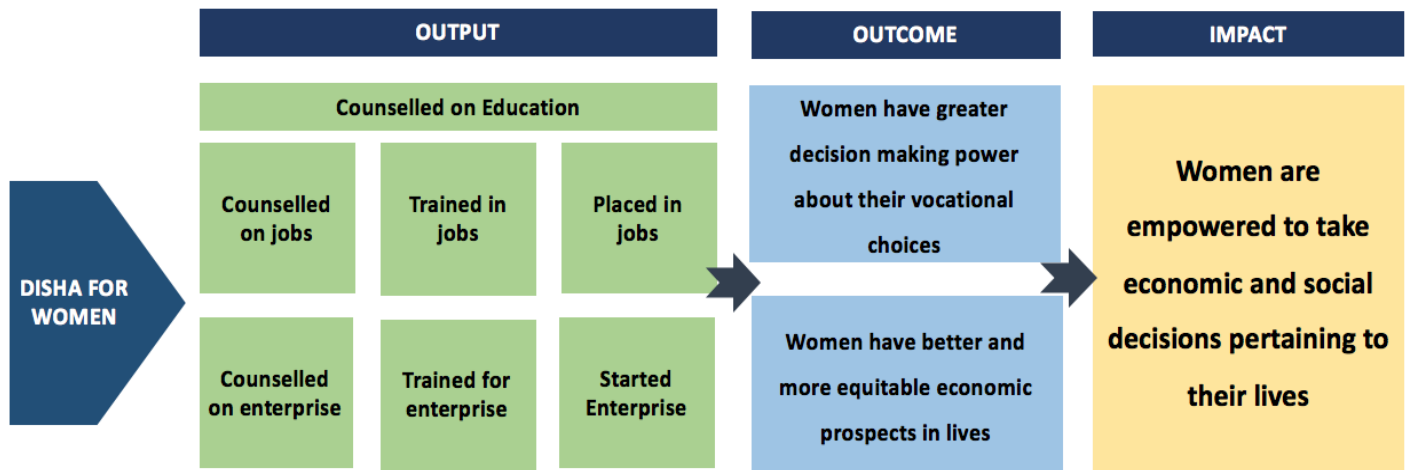
The Impact Evaluation report confirms that Disha has been successfully able to achieve very positive outcomes for women who have undergone the last stage of the intervention and wherever intensive engagement was there, whether counselling or starting an income-generating activity led to an increase in income – expenditure. According to the report, 97% of women feel more confident about undertaking their economic activity after taking part in the program, and 88% have expressed increased agency in making household decisions such as large purchases, visiting the doctor, spending personal income and so on.

Disha pilots design and interventions also positively improved the health seeking behaviour of women for self & family. For example, women who took up jobs received social security benefits and health insurance cover for self, and many extended it to their family members as well. The value chain model also promoted better health and well-being. The organic farming as well as agro-processing of millets, etc., supported better health and nutrition for the women, their children and family as well as their customers. Education of artisans on natural raw material and natural dyes supported better health and personal safety. Similarly, the training of women waste pickers in scientific methods of the waste segregation in a waste value chain had a direct positive impact on their health and safety and education initiatives for their children prevented them from entering the hazardous occupation. The report mentions that Disha has been able to take a gender transformative lens to its investment, currently only 0.1% of investments in agricultural projects in India focus on reducing gender gaps. Disha has strengthened organic farming, which had higher uptake among women who hold primary responsibility for the family's nutritional needs.

1.3 Looking back, how was your theory of change instrumental to the outcomes you achieved?
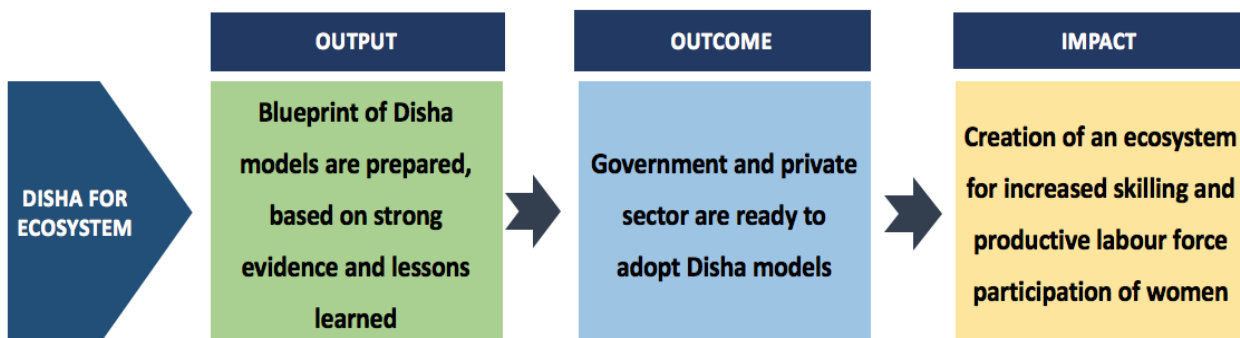
As mentioned above, the context of Disha was low and falling FLFPR despite increasing growth rates and expansion in education and skilling opportunities overall. This meant that the usual solutions deployed for economic empowerment such as skilling and micro-credit were not working. Thus, Disha evolved a theory of change (TOC) that prioritized the demand side to address a multitude of barriers that women have confronted over generations. This theory of change for Disha emerged from the field survey referred to above. Looking at it in more depth, it emanated out of the global body of work of UNDP in capacity building and its inclusion agenda. In other words, this TOC was not incidental but a reflection of UNDP's work in the area of human development and capacity building as well as its understanding of human-centric design in general.

Figure 2: Theory of Change for pathway 1 (women level ToC)

OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT

DISHA FOR WOMEN

Counselled on Education

Counselled on jobs	Trained in jobs	Placed in jobs
Counselled on enterprise	Trained for enterprise	Started Enterprise

Women have greater decision making power about their vocational choices

Women have better and more equitable economic prospects in lives

Women are empowered to take economic and social decisions pertaining to their lives

OUTCOME INDICATORS

Access to Education and Skilling Opportunities	Clarity towards personal vocational choices.
Financial literacy	Increase in income
Digital literacy	Increased labour force participation

Figure 3: Theory of Change for pathway 2 (Ecosystem level ToC)

OUTPUT	OUTCOME	IMPACT

DISHA FOR ECOSYSTEM

Blueprint of Disha models are prepared, based on strong evidence and lessons learned

Government and private sector are ready to adopt Disha models

Creation of an ecosystem for increased skilling and productive labour force participation of women

OUTCOME INDICATORS

Press Coverage	Disha emerges as a thought leader
Number of private sector actors per model	Fund mobilisation
Number of government requests for technical assistance	

From the above TOC, the vision of empowerment under Disha was holistic and aimed not just at economic betterment but on deeper solutions that addressed the capacity of women from the marginalized sections to take economic and social decisions about their lives. The sub-section below on innovations elucidates this in some depth.

1.4   Tell us what innovations you were responsible for as a result of the funded work? How have they influenced your organisation, the sector, or other sectors? What evidence backs your claim?

As discussed above, the TOC of Disha was based essentially on innovations in demand-side solutions. This also led to a range of exciting innovations in programming instruments. But it is important to note here that the focus of such innovations was not on development of some novel solution or products, but to delineate in a proof-of-concept mode, mechanisms that could work on scale towards inclusion and empowerment of women from the marginalized sections. This is also clear from the decision in MTR to proceed in terms of models.

The table on Disha solutions at *Annexure-1* provides the context, but the specific innovations are elaborated below model-wise:

Models	Innovation in programme strategy	Innovations in programme instruments
Model 1 - Education to work transition (Girls from weak socio-economic background in government schools and colleges, particularly in tier 2-5 towns)	Need for an organized education to work transition approach as against stand-alone skill development programmes	- CGCC in govt schools and colleges - Use of technology for access to information starting with IT- platform initiated under Disha. - Skill Sakhis for mobilization in rural areas with low institutional access. (also documented in the NITI Aayog's publication)
Model 2 - Employment marketplace (Girls outside the education system and institutions in skilling and employment ecosystem)	Concept of local collaborative platforms towards a range of youth employability support services rather than just job sourcing/matching Focus on hyper-local jobs Sector specific industry led skills training	- Youth Employability Services (YES) Centre design - Outreach to community (e.g. Panchayats) and the family - 360-degree coalitions as a bridge for focused solutions to provide hyper local jobs
Model 3 - Micro-entrepreneurship (Uneducated or semi-educated women from landless families)	Provision of psycho-social support to nurture such aspirations in women and confront the barriers inherent in their family and social milieu	- Engendered Training module rich in psycho-social elements - Concept of local mentors or Biz Sakhis
Model 4 - Value chain (Women farmers and artisans languishing at the bottom of their value chains)	Need for aspirational job roles for women, particularly for their educated next generation to boost the capacity in their traditional value chains endogenously	- Mini-MBA or 6-month Business Leadership Development Programme. - Women Sourcing Managers (WSM) - Local procurement centers - Use of environmentally safe inputs and practices such as bio-fertilizers and natural dyes

These above-mentioned innovations were designed to provide solutions for scale and considerable investments have been made towards institutionalization. The table below provides an overview for the same.

Table 1: Overview of institutionalization of models

Model	Examples of Institutionalization
Model 1: Education to work transition	Report of National Level Task Force with MSDE, FICCI and UNDP as core members. Adoption and roll out of CGCC technology platform by the UNICEF in 13 states. Adoption of elements of the model – soft/life skills, student internship and conferring

	credits to student's performance in government degree colleges by Commissionerate of Collegiate Education in Telangana
Model 2: Employment marketplace	Karnataka government continuing to run district employment exchanges as Youth Employability Services (YES) centers.
Model 3: Entrepreneurship Development	Comprehensive guidelines on the Biz Sakhi model duly issued by MSDE and adoption of the same by leading national level institutions such as the National Institute of Rural Development (NIRD) and NIESBUD.
Model 4: Value Chain	Considerable interest in apex level institutions such as MANAGE and Cooperative Training Institute of the Department of Agriculture for replication of the Mini-MBA program and the WSM module. Also, ongoing replication at the field level under State Rural Livelihood Missions and by NGOs.

As mentioned above, the TOC and programme innovations emanating from it were based on UNDP's global work in capacity building and inclusion, and generally the human-centric design. Yet, it is also true that the Disha experience has advanced the understanding and application of such concepts in the domain of the economic empowerment of women. Most importantly, there has been a multiplier effect in terms of understanding of broader development issues. An example is the women-led livelihood reconstruction agenda referred to above. These ideas and policy prescriptions have been well received in UNDP and by partner government department said institutions. It is in this context that the Impact Evaluation report also flags the urgency and necessity of the scale-up phase.

1.5   Were there any adjustments to your initial or revised target geographies? How did these changes affect the roll off the project performance overall?

NA

1.6   Can you detail the ways in which women and/or children specifically benefitted under the funded activity?

Disha's sole focus is on girls and women and as already explained in the earlier sections, programmatic approaches and solutions were designed to cater to the needs and aspirations of girls and women from the marginalized section. The project reached out to young girls and women in the age group of 18-35 years for skilling, employability and entrepreneurship opportunities.

1.7   Taking stock, how did your interventions or operations genuinely minimize the impacts of climate change?

Though the project was not designed per se to address climate change, nonetheless the project had minimal climate footprint. Some of the pilots tested under the entrepreneurship and value chain models in the agriculture and non-agriculture sector did promote some of the 'green' practices like promoting the 'sustainably managed' vegetables and food products (promoting organic farming in Siddipet with Tanager Telangana; 'Farm to fork' with Future Green-Karnataka; organic dyes in the textiles). Similarly, in the handloom value chain interventions, artisans were educated and trained to use environment-friendly raw material and natural dyes to enhance the environmental and personal safety of the artisans and their families. The project also has the potential to create a cadre of 'Women Managers' to roll out climate-friendly/smart strategies going forward.

1.8 At this stage of work, how many direct beneficiaries have you reached?

Boys (0-18): -- NA-
**Girls (0-18):** 225064 (22%)
Men (18+): -NA-
Women (18+): 797955 (78%)

Were these numbers in line with your expectations? Why or why not? It is indeed a matter of concern
The project focused on young girls and women across the four models, and though young boys and men benefitted in the CGCC activities in the schools and colleges, their details/data was not captured in the MIS. Hence, it will not be possible to report on the indirect beneficiary accurately.

The graph below provides a percentage of young girls and women reached out to during the project life cycle:

**Graph 2: Age distribution of beneficiaries by**
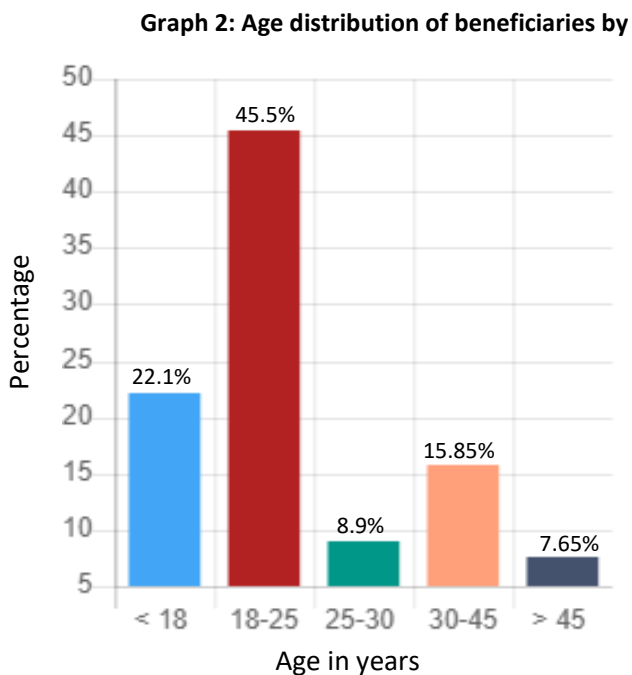
The average age of the Disha beneficiary is 32 years. Understandably, the sample mostly comprises of younger women with 86% of the beneficiaries below the age of 45 and about 32% below the age of 25. The graph below gives the age distribution by model.

Following the strategic review, each of the Disha models has been designed for a different segment of the target population. Models M1 and M2 are targeted towards younger women who are looking for regular employment. While M3 and M4 are targeted towards an older population who are looking for some work that can be managed along with their household duties. As the graph below shows this segmentation has been achieved by the project.

In model M1 (Career Guidance and Counseling in schools and colleges), about 92.6 % of the population is in the 12–24 years age category while this number is 79.1% for M2 (Employment Marketplace). On the other hand, most women in models M3 (Entrepreneurship development) and M4 (Value Chain) come from the age groups 24 – 44 years.

Figure 4: Age distribution of beneficiaries by model
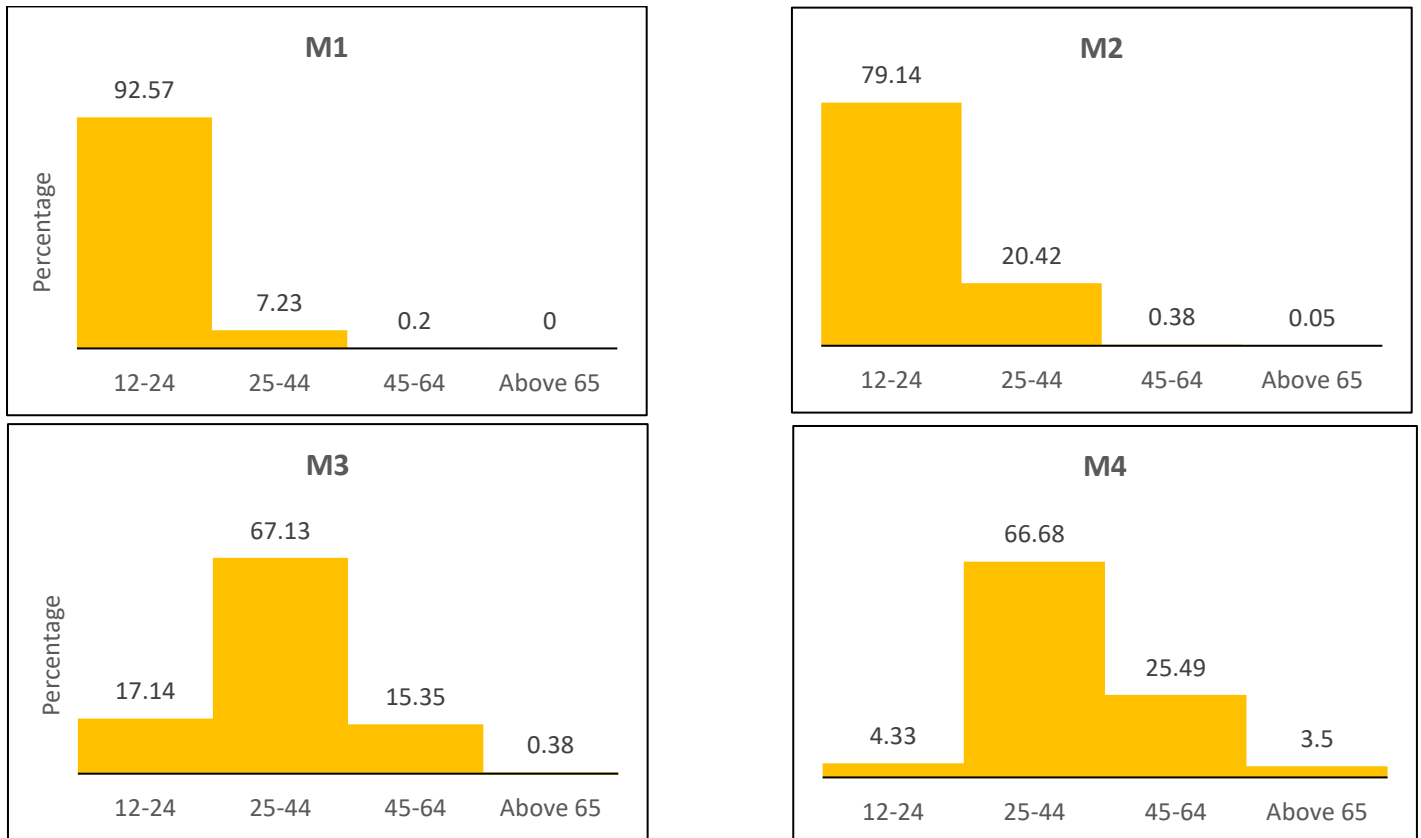
2. How?

2.1   Describe the most interesting way that human-centered-design factored into your activity. How did involving beneficiaries improve project processes and/or outcomes? Were there any barriers or lessons along the way?

As discussed above, human-centric design was at the very core of Disha. This translated into demand-side strategies in an era where the popular mode was quick action towards skilling and job linkages even when these were not found to be sustainable beyond a short reference period.

Firstly, this departure from the above popular modus operandi made the task much more exciting but also quite challenging. Straightforward programming had to give way to experimental design with large number of pilots to map a range of possible baseline and potential solutions. Considering that Disha was working in five states and across three verticals, the number of initial pilots went beyond 50. This led to a lot of workload on formulation, partnership building and implementation. Nonetheless, the rewards in terms of nuanced learnings were equally enriching. Yet, the point remains that adequate time must be allocated for process-rich and human-centric approaches. With Disha tasked to achieve a KPI of one million over 3 years initially, this was an area of risk. This led to timeline extensions, but in a fragmented manner thereby affecting to some extent the results.

Secondly, opting for an approach that has rigorous processes rather than one that delivers quick and tangible results in terms of number of people trained or placed requires a lot of innovation and conviction. It calls for firm ownership of the initiative by all partners and the resolve to stand by each other in terms of success or failure. This was indeed the spirit and ethos since the very beginning of Disha. However, it was difficult to sustain, especially with the exit of Xynteo in 2017. As noted below, in retrospect, UNDP as the main country level agency and the lead implementation

partner ought to have played a more energetic role in keeping the partnership strong. Perhaps various mechanisms for programme management such as the Project Steering Committee ought to have been utilized much more energetically. Similarly, deeper engagement involving field level staff and experts was called for.

Finally, in process-led and human-centric projects, special care should be taken to agree on the results framework following from the theory of change. To closely measure such results, including the qualitative aspects rather than putting a high premium on the income generation objective vis-à-vis other objectives even if the latter were by design, can have crucial systemic implications. Disha attempted to do this with the help of IDF, an agency dedicated to MEL.

2.2 If the funded project did not represent the full lifespan of activity needed to achieve the proposed solution, what must still occur to get there? Do you see that as your role, or are other parties better positioned to achieve the ultimate goals of this work?

Keeping in view the depth of the development agenda taken-up, and the consensus on the need for evolution and testing of new solutions (instead of the application of existing solutions), the original design of Disha envisaged a carefully worked out phasing structure. As noted in Section 1, the project was to commence with a 'scoping phase', moving into the 'proof-of-concept phase' and finally into a 'scale-up phase'. The 'proof of the concept phase' again had 2 sub-phase – (i) pilot testing phase (ii) model testing phase. Such phasing was a unique feature under Disha, and it must be taken forward to the conclusion stage for the full benefits of this ambitious partnership to be fully redeemed.
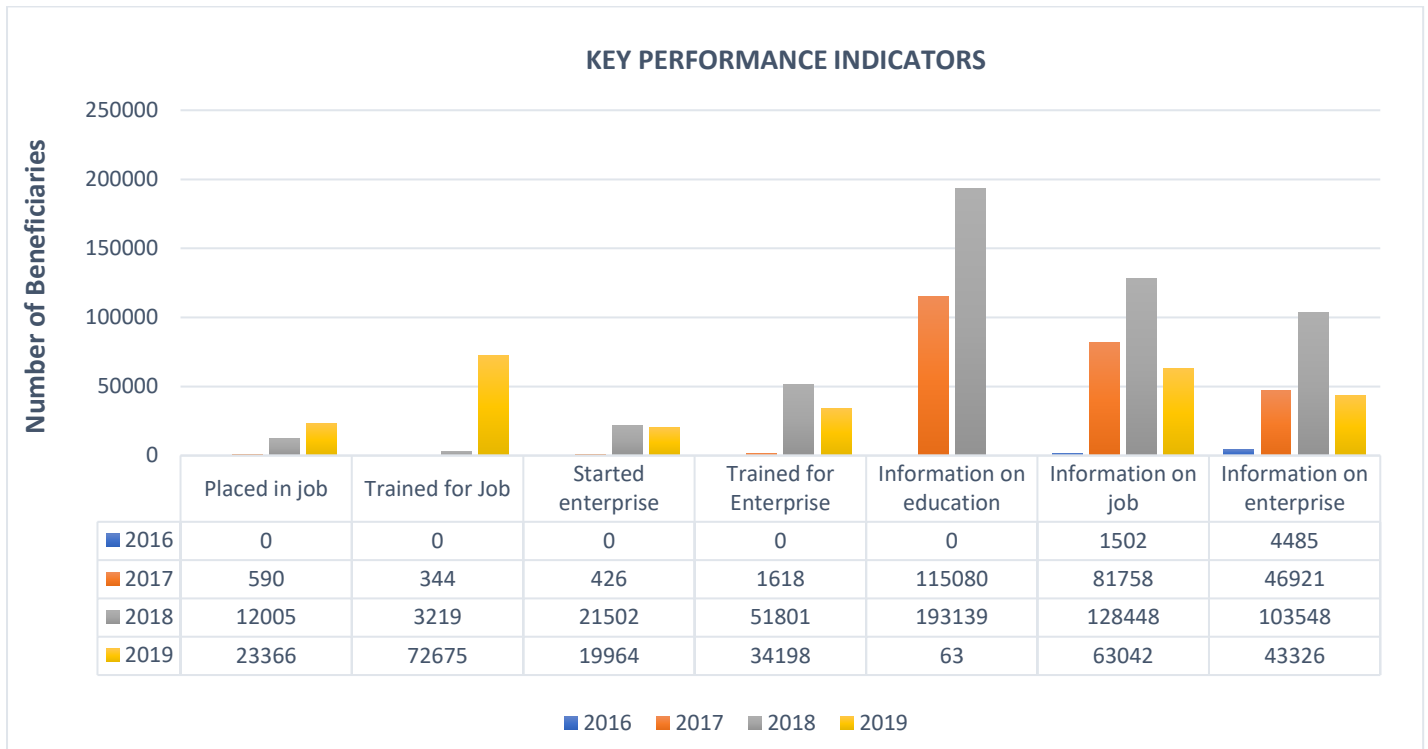
The goals for the end point of the proof-of-concept phase have been largely met with the availability of robust solutions for a range of key stakeholder groups. The Dalberg evaluation report duly affirms this. Thus, the time is ripe for an ambitious scale-up phase, keeping in view the relevance of Disha solutions for the livelihood reconstruction agenda in the post COVID-19 scenario. UNDP with its rich experience, trust and strong convening power is in the best position to carry on the scale-up and institutionalization agenda as originally conceptualized in Disha.

2.3 Did you experience a tipping point in terms of achieving results, and if so how and when did it occur?

A tipping point seemed to materialize by mid-2018 and the section below on KPI trends brings this out clearly. This was also a crucial juncture in terms of understanding of the implications of Disha's results for the broader WEE agenda as also the overall youth inclusion agenda in India. The decision to articulate four models in 2017 helped in aligning evidence and thinking and contributed a great deal to this process. As indicated above, an understanding of the development processes from the point of view of women and results at the ground level have contributed to evolving policy prescriptions that are particularly important for the post COVID livelihood reconstruction.

However, no sooner had Disha reached the tipping point that time-intensive processes towards project closure including evaluation set in. In retrospect, the programme cycle under the proof-of-concept phase should have been aligned better to the level of ambition in terms of results. Timeline extensions and additional resources were granted along the way, but the underlying processes tended to affect the programme momentum and staff morale.

Graph 1: KPIs reached over the years

KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

	Placed in job	Trained for Job	Started enterprise	Trained for Enterprise	Information on education	Information on job	Information on enterprise
2016	0	0	0	0	0	1502	4485
2017	590	344	426	1618	115080	81758	46921
2018	12005	3219	21502	51801	193139	128448	103548
2019	23366	72675	19964	34198	63	63042	43326

Under the year-long results dissemination phase, knowledge-sharing and advocacy activities have been underway in full earnestness. However, these are not enough for institutionalization which invariably calls for a project mode of system thinking with resources and activities. As mentioned above, a seamless transition into the Scale-up Phase was a part of the program design but this has been affected due to the pandemic.

Considering the interest that Disha has generated in UNDP regionally and globally and in the UN System, programming under the Scale-up Phase will be broader and deeper. The agenda of livelihood reconstruction through the empowerment of women in a myriad of new roles including management positions has been referred to above. Such a vision could be realized only through robust partnerships.

2.4   What steps have you taken to ensure that the achieved objectives of the project will be maintained? We are asking you to document the sustainability plan, including measures by you or others to adopt, replicate and scale your solution.

As mentioned above, a year-long knowledge-sharing and institutionalization-support phase was underway in 2020. There is evidence of considerable interest in partner state governments and in other institutions including private sector associations and partners to take forward the Disha solutions. Although, considering the development agenda being addressed, most of these solutions are like large institutional efforts that will require deep handholding. In other words, scaling-up is not a matter of adoption of a standard approach. It is well known that different state governments have their specific governance and public and administration mechanisms. Thus, to be effective and sustainable, a range of issues from policy to implementation to capacity building will be required in the specific circumstances of each partner state government for the seamless integration of the Disha solution. The way forward recommendations in the evaluation report are inadequate and minimalistic in nature.

There is a need for key project proponents to meet to take a view on the level of ambition in the Scale-up Phase and commensurate efforts and modalities. As mentioned above, there is an unprecedented need and opportunity to be addressed based on the experience of Disha.

2.5 Reflecting on the risks that you as well as IKEA Foundation first identified (if applicable) would you have changed anything in the way the project was carried out?

Achieving the target of one million KPIs, particularly in the context of the original three-year duration of the project was a matter of risk in the eyes of both IKF and UNDP. The search for innovative solutions and the proof-of-concept design also had an element of uncertainty and risks. To UNDP, the per KPI budget of around Euro 12 was also a matter of risk. However, most of the above risks were at the core of the proof-of-concept design stage of Disha. They provide energy and ambition, and by and large paid rich dividends in terms of innovative solutions. As mentioned earlier, the bulwark against such risks was the spirit of partnership among project partners and co-ownership of risks. This encouraged exploration of new solutions on the demand side.

2.6 What significantly resulted from your collaboration with other organizations, such as government partners or the private sector? What role did this play in achieving or furthering your objectives?

Extensive partnership building has been central to the ambitious agenda that Disha has been able to pursue. The section above lists strong brand equity, partnership base and place on the policy table as one of the main achievements of this initiative, and one that could be instrumental in seamless transition into the Scale-up Phase or for any linked programming in the current pandemic context.

State governments

This was the foundation on which state level programs were built through MOUs with suitable focal points in the state government signed at the end of the scoping phase itself. These partnerships enabled anchoring of the major pilots in mainstream government programs which was critical for proof-of-concept of relevance for public policy. Some examples are as follows:

Model	Government institutions/progs leveraged
M1	✓ Delhi-Senior secondary schools of the Delhi Government with student coverage of over 0.2 million. ✓ Telangana-Colleges under Commissionerate of College Education. ✓ Karnataka- Schools under Pre-University Board.
M2	✓ Karnataka-32 district employment exchanges to be modeled as YES centers. ✓ Maharashtra- 3 district employment exchanges to be modeled as YES centers. ✓ Haryana- 5 ITIs to be modeled as YES centers.
M3	✓ MSDE/NIESBUD-Preparation of the Biz-Saakhi training module. ✓ Maharashtra-Partnership with the Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) for the roll out of the Biz-Saakhi program in two districts.
M4	✓ Maharashtra-Roll out of Women Sourcing Manager (WSM) module under the State Rural Livelihood Mission ✓ Telangana-Women's Vegetable Value Chain in Sidhipet District

These relationships are still active and need to be further strengthened in pursuit of the endemic challenges of low FLFPR, and particularly the needs arising from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Private sector partnership

One of the core tenets of Disha during its proof-of-concept phase was to develop innovative and scalable public-private partnership models, to enhance the interest of the private sector in the women's economic empowerment space, and to leverage available resources. During 2015-2017, Xynteo had the lead responsibility for private-sector engagement. While one pilot with Jindal Stainless broke new grounds in opening new job opportunities for women, this enterprise-specific approach could not be upscaled. After 2017, UNDP took up the management responsibility of private sector engagement. During the last 2 years of the proof-of-concept phase (2018-2019), Disha designed and tested a variety of modalities across its interventions to optimally engage with the private sector.

Industry - Institution Partnership (IIP) for education to work transition

To enable education to work transition, Disha focused on developing partnership modalities between public sector institutions (school, colleges, vocational institutions etc.) and private sector entities (small and large enterprises). The IIP mechanisms were facilitated through collaboration with Industry Chambers such as Confederation of Indian Industry (CII), Employer Associations, sector-based associations, and sector-skill councils to offer industry immersion experiences, internship/apprenticeship opportunities, guest lectures, soft skill training, corporate volunteerism, mentorship and counselling for girls in educational and vocational institutions. For example, in Telangana, more than 40 companies such as Genpact, Café Coffee Day, Aditya Solutions, Apollo-Insurance, Just Dial etc. were onboarded to provide young students with exposure to work, mentorships, guest lectures, internships and placement opportunity.

The National Task Force on career guidance with MSDE, FICCI and UNDP has been cited above. This initiative also ensured participation of more than a dozen private-sector organizations such as LinkedIn, DELL, Apollo, Samsung etc. as well as UN agencies such as UNICEF and ILO.

Collaborative platform for employment marketplace

Led by CII, the state and district level industry task forces for improved private sector engagement with the employment exchange (YES Kendra) were set up in Karnataka. State-level industrial associations such as Electronic City Industries Association (ELCIA) and Karnataka Small Scale Industries Association (KASSIA) also participated actively. Leading companies such as ICICI, Uber, Aegis, Future Group, Loreal, Mothercare, Tata Group, TCS, Hero Group, Shahi exports started systematic and continuous engagement with YES Centers.

Work in other Disha partner states enabled partnership with leading agencies such as Teamlease to develop key principles of business models of offering employability and job match making services in smaller towns by the private sector in a public-private partnership (PPP) model. The Employment Exchange Program in Aurangabad helped in testing a 'phygital model' in partnership with Mindtree, a leading software firm and Magic Bus, a leading NGO.

The Bridge to Livelihood pilot with NSDC explored a coalition model for the promotion of apprenticeships and for jobs. This pilot has been able to raise funds from CITI Foundation for continuation beyond Disha. Disha also demonstrated the power of industry-led skilling and employment through two important pilots. As mentioned above, the first one was with Jindal Stainless in Haryana. This was followed by a pilot with IKEA Retail in Hyderabad. The former was covered in the best practices' manual brought out by NITI Ayog.

The above discussion makes it clear that while the original targets for skilling and jobs could not be met exhaustively, primarily on account of the constraints in terms of resources and time, Disha has been able to create a wealth of partnerships and learnings in the area of skilling and employment of women. This can be considered as an asset for future initiatives in this domain.

Supply-chain and market linkages

Structuring effective market linkages with organized buyers has been a critical part of enhancing gender equality in value chain and Disha embedded private sector partnerships through multiple innovative and strategic collaborations

in both farm and non-farm value chains. The section above on KPIs outlines this aspect of partnership in some depth. The key point to note is that leading private sector agencies such as the Future Group, IKEA Retail and Arya Collateral participated actively to develop the institutional framework in this domain and in its capacity building initiatives.

3. Impact Unpacked

3.1 What specific outcomes did you achieve for target communities and persons?

This section shows that the five-year long journey of the Disha project (2015-2019, extended to 2020) has delivered in a substantive and substantial measure on its three main objectives mentioned above and on the KPIs agreed upon.

Objective 1: Providing one million women with marketable skills and livelihood opportunities

Overview of progress in KPIs (2015-19)

By end-2019, Disha supported economic empowerment of 1,023,020 women from marginalized communities across five partner states, thereby meeting its ambitious target of one million women. Specific targets for all the five KPIs originally assigned to UNDP have also been fully met, and in some cases exceeded. Substantial progress has also been made in the two KPIs ('trained for jobs' and 'placed in jobs').

Table 2: Performance on KPIs (2015-2019)

| Key performance indicators	Targets	Achievement across Models				Total	Percentage
		M1	M2	M3	M4		
Placed in job	65000	9428	26533	0	0	35961	55.3
Trained for Job	85000	0	75586	85	567	76238	89.7
Started enterprise	30000	2068	248	9156	31004	42476	141.6
Trained for Enterprise	50000	58	1267	15131	71161	87617	175.2
Information on education	220000	309721	0	63	0	309784	140.8
Information on job	300000	132072	115733	29760	168	277733	92.6
Information on enterprise	250000	53010	418	125377	15044	193849	77.5
Total	1000000	506357	219785	179572	117944	1023658	102.4

Source: Disha MIS (thedisha.org)

The programme strategy based on the MTR and the recommendations of the Strategic Review rolled out in 2018 bore fruits in terms of the total KPI, the balance of KPIs between the four models, and the quality and coherence in programme strategy and implementation. The following chart prepared by IDF shows a robust upward trend in performance over the project life. This is particularly evident in the two most resource and time intensive KPIs i.e. 'trained

for jobs' and 'placed in jobs'. This progressive trend was the result of deep investment in programme cycle management towards stocktaking, learning, and course correction.

IDF's Annual Progress Report 2019 highlights that a total of 2,56,638 KPIs were achieved in 2019. This constituted about 25% of the cumulative KPIs till December 2019. In 2019, 49% of the total KPIs came from M2. M1, M3 and M4 together contributed 1,31,062 KPIs accounting for 51% of the total KPIs achieved.
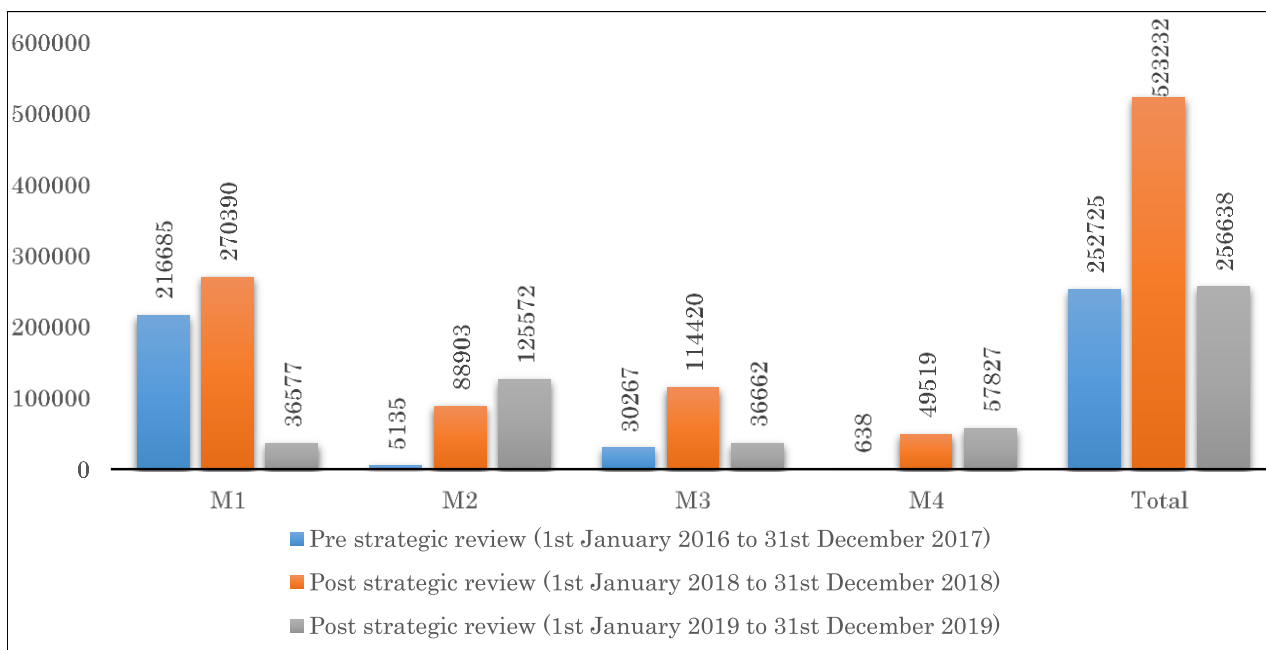
Chart 1: KPI progress in pre and post strategic review
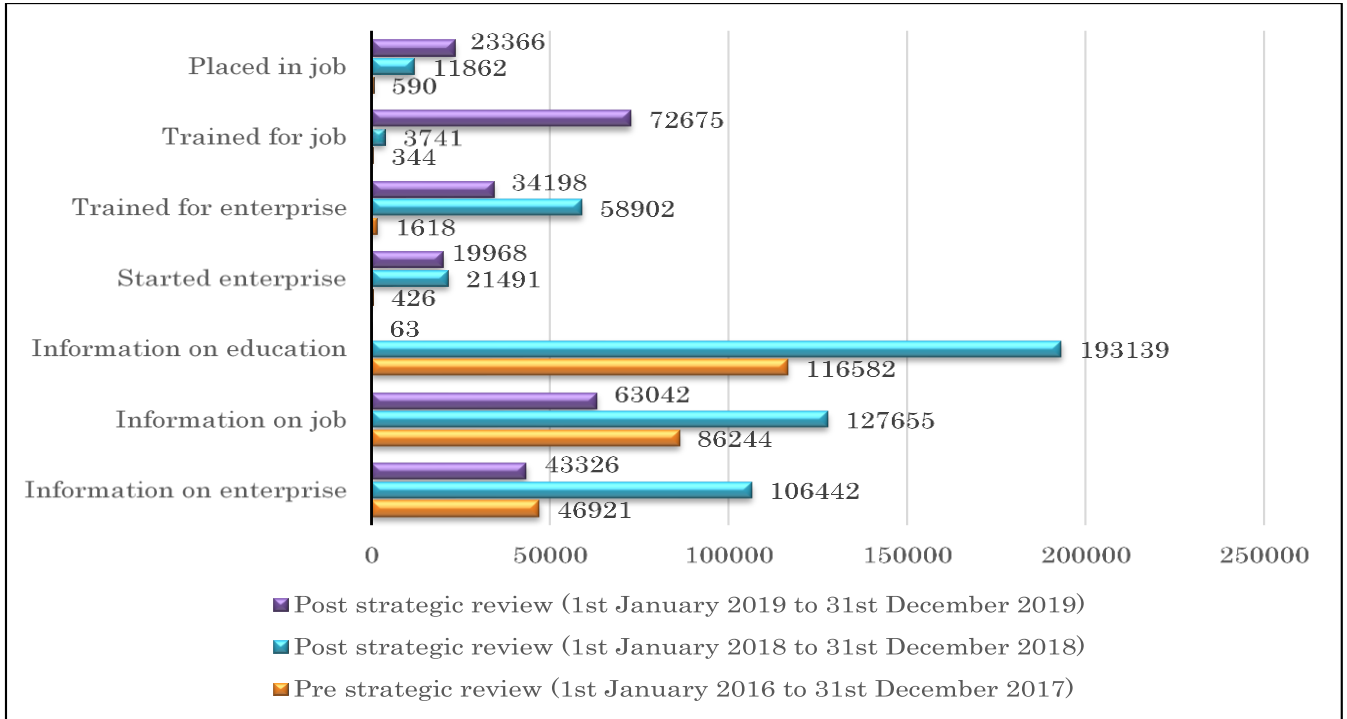
(Source: IDF's APR, 2019 based on MIS data on 31st December 2019.

The same information has been presented below model-wise.

Chart 2: Model-wise KPI before and after strategic review

Based on feedback from stakeholder surveys, in-depth interviews and focused group discussions, the Impact Evaluation report concludes that KPIs where intensive efforts were made succeeded in generating a highly positive impact on the beneficiaries and on the skill and employment ecosystem.

Disha being a pioneering 'proof of concept project' in the highly challenging domain of economic empowerment of girls and women from the marginalized sections, laid equal emphasis on various nodes of the economic empowerment pathway/journey. These nodes, as stated above were dictated by the KPIs in the project document. It is important to flag that Disha went beyond the KPIs and created a portfolio that enabled it to explore and experiment with a range of issues that were important. The above strategy has paid rich dividends in terms of results and their implications for the policy landscape in India.

It is important to acknowledge that the large total of the KPI in relation to the project budget (Euro 12,902, 929 million for a KPI of 1 million) necessitated a good degree of balancing of activities in terms of intensity and costs. But again, such balancing was guided by the programmatic priority to create a portfolio facilitating exploration and experimentation with a range of issues that were important. Thus, some activities that may appear as light touch in terms of the number of hours of training etc. may be quite important in terms of the institutional/ pedagogical design.

Objective 2: Developing innovative and scalable public-private partnership models

M1 - Career guidance and counselling for orderly education to work transition:

This model under Disha has been a pioneering effort and shown highest level of success around the counselling ecosystem. Disha tested M1 at scale since the very beginning of 2018 and used the rest of the time to further streamline the processes based on internal assessments. A recent assessment done by IDF suggests improved implementation with the discernible impact of counselling on student's life.

Prior to Disha's career counselling programme, such activities were not mainstreamed, particularly in government schools and colleges (or in any educational institution). Due to Disha's extensive persuasion with concerned government departments with suitable evidence, it is now a part of the government system in Delhi and Karnataka. In Telangana, individual Universities and government's Tribal Welfare Department have adopted CGCC programme in their degree colleges and girls' tribal schools respectively. Moreover, UNICEF has started counselling programme with younger cohort across 13 states using the platform developed under Disha. At the central level, a Task Force with Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), NITI Aayog, UNDP and FICCI have been set up to look at issues of standardization and institutionalization as well as the role of private sector. Mindful of the reality that the government education system will not be able to allocate large financial resources, a highly cost-effective approach has been adopted for the above journey, even if this means not being able to track all the relevant parameters. **In a nutshell, M1 is mature enough to be considered as 'Proof of Concept'.**

The impact evaluation report by Dalberg gathered evidence on the impact of activities under various models through a field survey. For M1, the report notes as follows:
- Across pilots, 90% of the respondents feel confident about making career/higher education choices after taking part in the program. A high proportion of girls could visualize where they wanted to be after 5 years and became aware about key areas to develop for their professional growth.
- Also, equally high proportion of the beneficiaries feel that their say has increased in their household regarding their career/higher education choices. This shows that Disha's methodology could also address the underlying social dynamics of gender empowerment.

- Over 90% of schools in India do not have a professional counsellor onboard resulting in an overall deficit of 1.2 million counsellors in the country. Disha's work combining the use of technology and leveraging of existing faculty and counsellors where available has demonstrated the way forward.
- Pilots that have deployed a web portal that is deeply embedded in the intervention have seen higher success. Pilots that have multiple touch points with increased face time with the beneficiaries at different stages of the intervention fair better.

The impact evaluation report concludes:

- Disha's biggest contribution to the education and skills ecosystem has been creating a convergence between the Ministry of skills, NITI Aayog, FICCI and UNDP and constitution of a task force to create a policy level document on education to work transition and promotion of career guidance and counselling. Disha (UNDP) has played the critical role of a convener while providing technical assistance in the taskforce.
- The education to work transition model under Disha has emerged high on replicability and scalability, given the adoption of the counselling framework by MSDE and a tried and tested technology product. Also, the model has been successful in generating buy-in at the state level. The model is considered high on ease of execution as it only requires blueprint completion and knowledge sharing.

M2- Skills to jobs in the private sector or 'Employment Marketplace' in under-served smaller towns and semi-urban areas

This model has been transformed from the erstwhile Jjob vertical. In addition to the robust trend in KPIs over the last 2 years as seen in graph 2 below, there has been a leap in conceptual understanding through adoption of the 'Employment Marketplace' paradigm.

Graph 3: Placed in Jobs
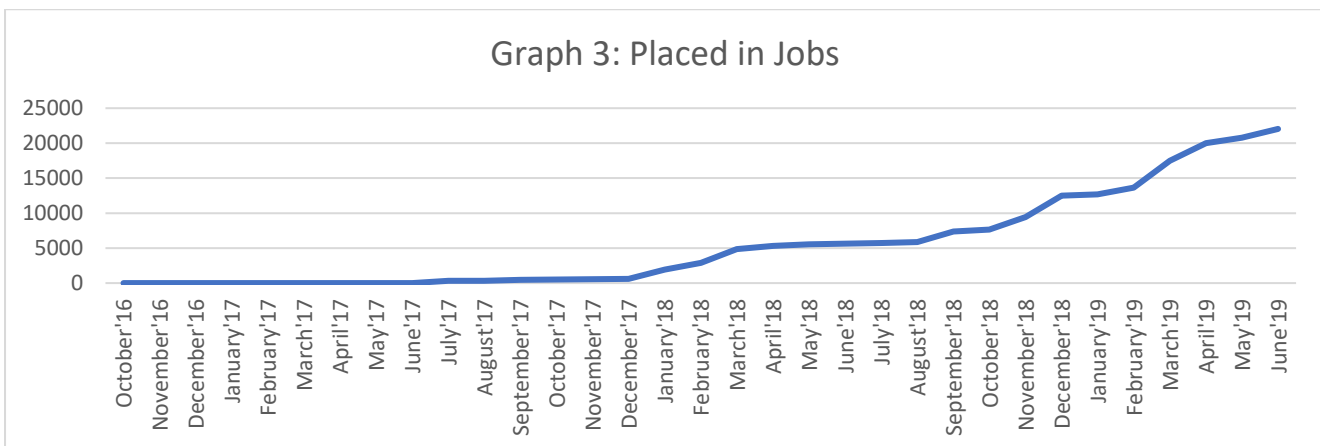
The concept of 'Employment Marketplace' that could build a bridge between the needs and aspirations of women from underprivileged sections and the human resources needs of employers, including small and medium-size local firms have been tested in several settings ranging from government employment exchanges to Youth Employability Services (YES Centres) in smaller towns in a PPP mode, coalition modality between supply-side players (educational institutions, NGOs etc.) and demand-side players (employers and aggregators for apprenticeships etc.) to the use of technology. An important development as a part of the project was the launch of a YES Centre in Nagpur managed by UNDP to work out the SOP for YES centres. Dalberg sees this as an important result.

Partnership has been established with leading private-sector agencies such as IKEA Retail (in both Telangana and Maharashtra), Reliance, Titan, Lifestyle, Big Bazaar, Tanishq, Puma, Lifestyle, Bisleri, Shahi Exports, Nava Bharath Fertilize, Prerana Motors, ICICI, Uber, Aegis and state level industrial associations. Similar progress was made in terms of local employers. The time of 2 years available for M2 however, has been too short to finetune such partnerships into a steady, long-term collaboration .

UNDP is of the view that while Disha may not excel in the test for a commercial or technical skill development and employment support agency. It has gathered very rich learnings that will be valuable for the development strategies aimed at inclusion of girls and women from the marginalised sections in skill development and employment initiatives, both public and private. However, there is a need to carry forward some of the important initiatives and needs to transfer the learnings into action.

The Evaluation Report provides the following insights from the study:
- As high as 97% of the women respondents felt more confident about their jobs after taking part in the program indicating increased level of confidence and agency of the beneficiaries.
- Girls who participated in Disha have reported they had access to higher quality jobs due to the program.

The evaluation report concludes that Disha's biggest contribution to the ecosystem has been creating strong convergences. For instance, setting up the Youth Employability Services (YES) Centre in Nagpur, Maharashtra, which has been able to create a network of partners to support employment linkages for women.

M3-Fostering entrepreneurship in rural areas and self-employment in urban areas:
This model is a perfect example of learning/innovation under Disha leading to maturation to a proof-of-concept stage. The initial pilots under M3 followed standard micro-enterprise pedagogy. The efforts to learn from these early pilots led to a new understanding of the contributory factors. Specifically, Disha learnt from its early pilots that women with no land, married and aged more than 30-35 years are more likely to start tiny enterprises to boost their low livelihood base. Besides support in terms of courage and self-confidence to take steps in this direction, women also need support to confront possible resistance from the family and community. Towards this, Disha worked on the modality of local Biz Sakhis as mentors duly equipped with an understanding of psycho-social support. Apex national institutions such as the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBD) became partners in this pioneering work of developing a robust pedagogy.
This pedagogy has been tested on ground under the Google-supported Internet Saathi programme. The National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRDPR) has since started using this methodology in some leading national programmes. Thus, this model can be considered as a *unique contribution of Disha* that has potential for mass-scale replication.

The Evaluation Report provides the following insights from the study-:
- Over 90% of the respondents reported satisfaction with capacities and abilities to run their enterprises. These included aspects such as skills and knowledge of the business, decision-making and the ability to foresee potential risks.
- As high as 97% of the respondents reported that they were confident of running their enterprises. More than 90% reported an increased role in household decision making. As high as 99.5% were satisfied with the programme and 96% affirmed that it had contributed positively to their life.

The Evaluation Report concludes:
- Disha's greatest achievement in the micro-entrepreneurship ecosystem has been the robust designing of the Biz-Saakhi curriculum through an extensive consultative process in partnership with NIESBUD and TISS.
- Stakeholders see strong value in the curriculum. Most other curriculums are largely gender agnostic, and only focus on core enterprise skills and this is one of the reasons why the Biz Sakhi curriculum is the most effective for women. It addresses specific barriers for rural women. Biz Sakhi Module has the potential for a multiplier effect wherein mentors can generate income from supporting other entrepreneurs. There is potential to expand this model to reach urban women-led enterprises.
- Beyond income and enterprise related skills, Model 3 interventions have been successful in increasing agency, confidence and decision-making skills for rural women.

- Disha has established strong convergences in the ecosystem and enabled meaningful partnerships Most significant examples include bringing together women networks through MAVIM, knowledge partners like ILO and banks to drive the Biz Sakhi model for enterprise training.
- The entrepreneurship model has a ready curriculum that can be adopted. RoI is high, in the range of 3.3-5X.

M4 Capacity building of women's collectives

Model 4 focuses on enhancing the role of women producers situated at the lower end of the value chain, particularly in market facing and managerial roles from which they have been remained excluded. In this regard, this model developed two new job roles-that of Women Sourcing Manger and Women Mini-MBA. Both these have shown efficacy at the ground level leading to spontaneous adoption.

Examples of such adoption/scale-up include:
- Partnership with the Government in Maharashtra and Uttarakhand in initiatives involving 30,000 women. Similar initiatives are being designed with the state governments in Odisha and Uttar Pradesh.
- Partnership with HSBC in creating a sustainable supply chains for natural fibres in the North East.
- Partnership with L&T reaching out to 34750 households including 120 Warli artisans in Maharashtra.

In the value chain model, more than 50 private sector organisations have been engaged by the project teams and implementation partners.

Table 3: Private Sector Partnership for Market Linkage

Future Consumer Ltd	NeML/ NCDEX	Greeneries Agro Pvt. Ltd	Garcia
Star Bazaar	Walmart	Fruitfal	Ikea
Spar Hypermarket	Safe harvest	Jubilant Foodworks Ltd.	Fab India
Metro Cash n carry	Kasat Dal mills	Shrinivasa farms	Radiant Fashion
Big basket	Reliance Fresh	Suguna foods pvt ltd.	EcoFemme
My Greenmart	Tumkur Organic Society	Wynfarms	UCB
Kisan sathi	Heritage	Exotic fruits	Kalanjali Crafts
Go4Fresh	Clover organic	S.L Veggis	Clayroots
Farmfolksagro Pvt Ltd.	ABO Foods	Kamatan Farm Tech	Swara.in
Yogesh Agro	Ninja Cart	Seasons (retail)	Taneira

NITI Aayog, which is working on a strategy for rural revival, has shown a lot of interest in this model of Disha. There are enormous possibilities as implementation of the Government of India'ss rural revival vision may create scope for about 100,000 women managers.

The Evaluation Report provides the following insights from the study:

- The value chain interventions under Disha covering more than a lakh farmers and artisans yielded clear evidence on gains not only in terms economic parameters but also in empowerment and agency. The new and existing sellers saw an increase of 8 to 30% in their profits, with 94% still selling their produce. As high as 99% of the women respondents who did start or improve their sales reported very high levels of satisfaction. Almost 90% of women have experienced greater agency over personal and family decisions.

- WSMs report that Disha helped them understand the market dynamics. Thus, they can independently understand the technical operations now.. Once the women collectives engaged with buyers deeply, they made considerable efforts to adhere to their requirements and product standards, thereby acquiring repeat orders and forging long term links. Similarly, 97% of women respondents said that they have modified their practices based on the guidance provided by the women sourcing/business managers.

The Evaluation Report concludes:

- Disha has promoted gender transformation in value chains in three critical ways i.e. by engaging women in traditionally male dominated market facing roles, mitigating the effects of restricted mobility by bringing markets closer to women through locally centred aggregation centers and by strengthening organic farming. Disha's focus on reducing gender gaps in power and agency in value chains makes it a unique initiative as only 0.1% of agricultural projects address these, while over 70% focus on creating market linkages.

- The value chain model takes an aspirational approach to helping women move to managerial roles within farm activities and is unique in its design. Also, the intervention is highly sustainable as the trained women managers are absorbed within collectives where they intern.

- The Women Sourcing Manger concept has been a huge success. No large-scale project attempted to build these capacities up till now. These cadres have allowed value chain players to reach many more women effectively.

- The value chain model has large potential for scale, given a large network of FPOs that lend themselves well to integrating WSMs and WBMs and there is a curriculum available. This model also has economies of scale.

Objective 3: Establishing a continuum connecting education to skills, jobs and growth

The missing continuum between education, skills, jobs, and growth particularly for women is one of the most critical development challenges in India. Disha gained and advocated remarkable insights into the same. The section above on achievements covers this issue adequately. Extensive consultations under the Disha Dialogues in quarter 3 and quarter 4 of 2020 show the power and appeal of these solutions.

As discussed above, these insights have become even more relevant given the severe disruptions caused by the pandemic at various points in the above continuum. Nevertheless, the Disha journey gives hope and points to solutions that are beyond the routine prescriptions being advanced. This hope is also based on the evidence on the role that women can and are playing in livelihood reconstruction in rural value chains.

3.2   Were there outcomes you were not able to achieve? Why?

As outlined above, there were three main objectives of Disha. It could be concluded that Disha was able to achieve all the above objectives or outcomes in line with the expectations of the proof-of-concept phase. However, getting into the second-order results in terms of KPIs, it could be said that more progress was expected in terms of scalable public-private-partnerships for jobs, especially in the role of the private-sector in skilling and employment of women. This is even though two specific experiments in this regard proved highly valuable and showed the inherent potential of PPP in this domain. These were partnerships with Jindal Stainless for skilling and placement of women in assembly level jobs in Haryana and with IKEA Retail for training and placement of girls in retail jobs. Yet as noted above, the KPI in

this vertical could not be achieved leading to the exit of Xynteo in 2017 along with a significant propotion of financial resources for this work.

One could identify several reasons for the less than satisfactory progress. First, while the above two pilots demonstrated the efficacy of this approach, they also brought home the need for deep and well-rounded groundwork from community level mobilization to creation of women-friendly infrastructure in enterprises to post-placement support. This called for intensive efforts in terms of time and financial resources which were not found feasible at scale in the context of Disha. Second, the policy framework in the area of skill development and employment is not conducive to PPP modality. Most of the government schemes on skill development work through accredited training agencies rather than through private sector employers. The pursuit of target often means neglect of women candidates where more intensive engagement will be necessary. Similarly, while some of the top employers have created internal mechanisms for training, again there may not be a propensity to invest time and resources in creating opportunities for women. To conclude, while there is considerable potential in PPP for skilling and employment of women, this work needs to be incubated with considerable efforts and over a significant time frame before it could find its own feet.

Another critical component that could not be achieved satisfactorily was the preparation of the Business Case for each of the models. This was because enough information was not available across the pilots and models to enable synthesis and propose suitable business case. More so as the pilots have a variance in per unit cost across geographies and trainings, and demonstrated risks also varies accordingly, that did not allow for standardization. Instead, the learning and case studies were documented in the form of Learnings and Way Forward for each of the models.

3.3   If final outcomes varied in other geographies where project implementation took place, please help us understand what differed and why.
NA

3.4   If you named additional key performance indicators, then please update us on progress made during the reporting period
NA

4. Learnings

Disha being an ambitious proof-of-concept initiative, the programming strategy was designed to create and capture learnings that could have large programmatic and policy significance in the domain of WEE. Besides, project specific assessments and tracking studies by IDF, systematic stocktaking of learnings were carried out through model-wise learning documents. These can be accessed from the Inclusive Growth's website[3].

The main learnings on programme strategy are presented below, model-wise.

M1-Education to work transition
Education to work transition is a specific model under Disha, but its basic principles permeate all other models of economic empowerment under the project. These principles symbolize the project name, Disha or informed and inspired vocational journey. This model accounts for more than 50% of the KPIs under the project. Some of the learnings outlined below have cross-cutting significance.

- There is a need for **evolution of an organized education to work transition paradigm** with robust career guidance and counselling mechanisms particularly in government schools and colleges which are the mainstay of the masses. This is particularly important for girls from the marginalized sections where the family and the community are not in a position to meet this need. Stand-alone skill development programmes cannot substitute for this vital pathway for informed and aspirational vocational journey. Numerous studies point to very high drop-out rates on account of this gap. Disha was a pioneer in articulating this aspect of education to work transition, establishing proof of concept on a reasonable scale and in multiple states, as also in creating a strong partnership with the state and central governments and private sector associations leading to mainstreaming of this agenda in the skill ecosystem in India. Today, the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) which is the apex skill development agency in the country fully owns this agenda. The evaluation report has acknowledged the contribution of Disha in establishing a national level task force, but could not fully present the ramifications of this development or to make suitable recommendations towards the role that Disha needs to continue playing as this agenda moves forward on a maturation curve.

  This agenda becomes particularly pressing in the context of the New Education Policy (NEP) announced by the Government of India in August 2020. Disha participated in the NEP process also and contributed to informing this critical policy document on key concerns on education to work transition, particularly the need for work exposure as a part of the educational journey.

- The **use of technology is vital for ensuring currency of information on courses and vocations in a cost-effective manner, and for counsellors to deliver guidance in such areas**. There has been enormous learning under Disha in this area starting with the design of the Pankh Portal and later under partnership with several social entrepreneurs. The success and institutionalization in this area should be clear from the fact that UNICEF under its Yuwaah program has contacted the agency originally engaged and nurtured by Disha under the Delhi Schools Program to provide support in 20 states. At the same time, Disha couched in a learning mode also realized the limitations of the digital mode on account of the limited access by the concerned stakeholder group to digital means, but also because of the psychosocial needs in the highly sensitive career making process. Thus, Disha also worked on several other human-centric modalities such as the Skill Saakhi. This was captured in the NITI Ayog's best practices manual.

- While most advanced countries have dedicated cadres for career guidance in schools and colleges, in India this may not be feasible in the short to medium term on account of cost and other institutional capacity considerations. Thus, Disha worked on a design for **leveraging the existing human resources in schools and colleges which could function with the support of a core of expert career mentors** duly enabled by technology. Students have a lot of faith in their teachers and this trust base could be harnessed suitably. There is need for further work in this area to find the right balance between the need for a teacher-led career guidance approach with the growing workload that teachers are confronted with as well as the design of suitable incentive structures for the same.

- The **importance of work exposure** has been referred to above. This calls for partnership with the business sector, large/organized but also collaborations at the local level. Several initiatives in this direction were taken up under Disha. As noted above, the New Education Policy accords considerable importance to this aspect. Thus, this is a critical agenda for the Scale-up phase of Disha to address. Indeed, with the rich experience and partnership with apex industry associations such as FICCI and CII as well as several associations of small and medium enterprises, Disha is well placed to play this role.

M2- Employment marketplace

This model originally conceived as skilling women in partnership with the private sector towards productive non-traditional employment, was at the heart of the initial Disha design. However, deeper enquiry in the scoping phase as also in the subsequent implementation phase showed that while the original model of employer-led training was indeed a sound mechanism, a range of issues beyond good quality skilling needed to be addressed to benefit the

masses. In other words, a broader solution was called for and required exploring a range of issues into the missing marketplace for women particularly in smaller towns and cities. Accordingly, the name of this model changed from 'skilling for jobs' to 'employment marketplace'. Dalberg has accorded lowest score to this model in terms of KPI achievement. But if one were to proceed beyond routine scorecard keeping looking at the development implications, one would find very important learnings from this model. Some of the main learnings are highlighted below.

- Several studies point to the benefits of a mixed workforce and to employment of women at various levels. However, translation of such understanding into reality calls for measures much beyond skilling. Informed mobilization creating confidence amongst families is the starting point. There are rich learnings under Disha on mobilization. As mentioned above, the 'Skill Saakhi Model' piloted in rural Maharashtra was covered in the best practices' manual brought out by NITI Ayog. Then there is the vital issue of job role where candidates, employers and skilling agencies need sensitization into new opportunities. Some painstaking work on this led to 100 women from the traditional Haryana community occupying assembly-line jobs in a steel finishing factory. The results have been dramatic as demonstrated by the satisfaction level of the employer and the high retention rates amongst the women employees. Related issues are those of women-friendly infrastructure, transport etc. In other words, while women workforce could fill the skill gap being faced by many industries, a robust solution will require action on several fronts to create an enabling marketplace for employment of women. This in-turn will require collaboration amongst various actors in the local skill ecosystem. This approach also holds the key to reinvigoration of institutions such as the government employment exchanges which have lost traction due to their narrow focus.

- One would expect a sound business model for employment marketplace considering that employers may be paying contractors for mobilizing workers. The picture is far more being simple. Many a time, the labour contractors take a cut out of the wages. Considering that the stakeholder group under consideration are women from the marginalized section, such financing options are ruled out. The rampant low skill premium and the overall baseline of government subsidizing fully the skilling activities make it difficult to create revenue models even when very reputed enterprises are involved. As such there is need for deeper experiments into business models for skilling people from the marginalized sections. This point is related to M1 and underscores the need for creating a bridge between educational institutions and the job market. Disha has gained considerable experience in this domain. These learnings are valuable for the implementation of the National Education Policy as well as the policy framework for skilling and employment.

- Again, as noted under M1 above, technology can play a useful role in employment matchmaking but mobilization and many other aspects of interface with women from the marginalized sections as also other actors call for human interaction interface. In other words, a *physital* solution is called for.

- The insight gained under this model combined with those through work on rural value chain (discussed in the following under M4) lead to the conclusion that the skill ecosystem in India is highly skewed and mainly oriented toward mobilizing rural youth for low skilled jobs in urban areas. Measures to correct this imbalance could open a wide range of rich aspirational opportunities even within the traditional livelihood trades. Learnings under Disha could inform a suitable strategy for the same. In the post COVID-19 era where rural areas are being called upon to deepen their livelihood potential, the above understanding could help turn a severe problem into an opportunity, particularly for work participation rates of women.

M3- Micro-entrepreneurship

This vertical responded to the need for income and identity for woman in highly stressed circumstances such as little or no access to land, low educational level and constraints such as on mobility and generally a social menu that is not supportive of independent economic activity by women. Most discussions on micro-entrepreneurship focus on the issue of access to credit or micro-credit. The journey of this vertical under Disha too started in a similar manner, but careful observation and reflection led to some highly interesting fresh insights as outlined below.

- The initial pilot with MAVIM in rural Maharashtra shed light on the systemic and socio-cultural challenges that women face in pursuing livelihood. It also showed that the VLCs and SHGs played a major role in promoting and sustaining women-led enterprises in villages through constant handholding support and peer-networking. These experiences led to Disha exploring in a systematic manner, the psychosocial aspects of entrepreneurship in women from the marginalized sections. An important part of this equation was the availability of local mentorship which Disha called the Biz Sakhi model. Comprehensive modules for the same were developed in partnership with the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and the National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD) under the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE). Many pilots have borne out the utility of this approach. They show that a psychosocial rich pedagogy helps in much better understanding of the barriers confronting women as also in creating entrepreneurial mindset.

- Continuous mentoring and family counselling were realized to be imperative for meeting the results of this pilot. It was found that such counselling was more important in the case of younger women who lacked agency within their families to convince the key decision makers about why they needed to train and why at all they wanted to start a business

- Linking entrepreneurs with existing programmes and schemes provides sustainability to the programme. Instead of implementing a short duration standalone project, evidence shows that linking with and leveraging the existing livelihood or entrepreneurship promotion programmes will make interventions more comprehensive and sustainable. These could be government programmes or schemes, like NRLM or MAVIM or existing programmes of NGOs or the private sector. Further government buy-in is a must for sustainability. To scale up the programme, training of district level staff is required through a dedicated training partner.

M4- Value chain

Considering that farming and artisanal activities are the mainstays of livelihood for women, this vertical was an area of intensive engagement for Disha. Thus, learnings of far-reaching significance emerged. These were duly converted into solutions and tested on scale. There is widespread interest in taking forward these learnings which have become even more critical in the context of the post COVID agenda of strengthening rural livelihoods.

The main learnings were:

- The current skilling ecosystem is highly skewed and mainly oriented towards mobilizing rural youth for low skill urban jobs. The skill ecosystem does not cater to the massive needs and opportunities in the rural value chains. This lacuna could be overcome by adopting a multi-generational approach to skilling. New aspirational job roles for the educated next generation which is moving away from their traditional livelihood trades could reverse this trend and help create a solid endogenous managerial for the value chains. This would be of special significance for women who face constraints in terms of mobility and migration. The mini-MBA module or the 'Business Enterprise Leadership and Management Program' piloted in rural Telangana and Maharashtra showed the power and potential of this new approach.

- Similarly, new job roles such as that of Women Sourcing Managers (WSM) could help reduce the transaction costs between rural value chains and organized marketplace and could play a vital role in enhancing income of farmers and artisans.

- There is a need for B2B partnership between social entrepreneurs and artisanal cooperatives. Accordingly, suitable institutional mechanisms need to be created for this sector to flower beyond the typical grant-supported projects implemented by NGOs.

The above insights and products of Disha aimed at boosting the endogenous capacity in FPOs and artisanal cooperatives could play a critical role in a rural reconstruction in the post COVID scenario. In particular, the potential

in rural women to assume such managerial roles is highly significant. Thus, the current scenario calls for a mutual mutually reinforcing strategy for rural reconstruction and reversing the declining FLFPR in rural areas.

Learnings on implementation strategy

The rich programmatic learnings have been presented above. Equally valuable lessons emerged with respect to the implementation strategy. Many of these have been presented in the sections above, but are presented below in a more cohesive manner:

- The program proponents, being alive to the complexity of the development agenda to be addressed, designed a long-term pathway for this ambitious initiative. The **programme phasing structure** viz. a six-month scoping phase followed by a proof-of-concept phase leading to a scale-up phase was a unique design and critical for enquiry and analysis that shaped the trajectory for this pioneering programme. There is a need to keep this original vision in mind while looking at the progression of Disha. Unfortunately, the evaluation report by projecting the milestones for the scale-up phase at the end of the proof-of-concept phase itself seems to have muddled up the original program logic and phasing structure. There is a need to correct the distortion on account of the evaluation report particularly as there is a tremendous need and opportunity for the application of Disha's learnings into post COVID-19 livelihood reconstruction challenge.

- Exploring deeper into the program logic referred to above, the Disha experience reconfirms that the program cycle of initiatives with inclusion objectives must provide adequate time for ground-level confidence building including with the community and the family. Conversely, an approach focused on quick results in terms of skilling and jobs or income generation could militate against the inclusion of the most marginalized. Evaluation studies on government sponsored skill development projects have cited this as the main reason for exclusion of girls. In other words, future programmes need to work out fully and explicitly the possible trade-off between the pace of economic results and the inclusion objective. This is important for precluding the scenario that has arisen out of the impact evaluation.

- There is need for a balance between program implementation and MEL activities. In Disha, the initial time frame of 3 years was interspersed with frequent reviews etc. (MTR in May- June 2017 just a year after the roll-out of the implementation phase, Dalberg Strategic Review in Sep-Dec 2017, the following negotiations on extension etc.). All these tended to affect the implementation momentum. The TOC must be cast sharply and its precise implications in terms of MEL worked out so that the need for course correction is met without resorting to costly and time-consuming review/evaluation processes.

- A lot of attention must be given to costing/phasing of KPIs and the underlying assumptions about partnerships and resource leverage. In Disha, the per KPI resource availability was around Euro 12. This is equivalent to just the mobilization costs under the Government of India's common cost norms for skilling.

- As indicated above, a complex and ambitious project such as Disha calls for very close coordination between project proponents and generally a strong sense of co-ownership. While the IKEA Foundation created such an enabling framework at the start of the project, UNDP as the lead country level institution and the lead implementing agency, ought to have played a more proactive role in keeping the partnership fully informed, alive and energetic. In this ambitious project, the interactions between partners should have deeper and included field staff and experts to create a far more insightful and interesting discourse. The Project Steering Committee mechanism ought to have focused on decision-making rather than information-sharing. Perhaps the above scenario arose of the high workload. But it seems to have affected the ambitious pathway designed for Disha even when results of far reaching significance have materialized.

4.1   In hindsight, were the KPIs you used the most helpful in measuring outcomes and impact of your project? Why or why not?

At the outset, it needs to be mentioned that the overall KPI target of one million was a highly ambitious number based on its appeal as a significant milestone rather than being derived from any firm programmatic or budgetary consideration. This should be clear from the fact that the per KPI allocation at Euro 12 was lower by a factor of 10 to 20 to the government's common cost norms which many consider too modest for any meaningful outcome. This was even when expectations from Disha in terms of outreach to the marginalized girls and women, to rural areas and in terms of results were much higher.

Having said this, the KPIs emerged from the programme logic and structure, and entailed a sense of hierarchy- the base being large in terms of mobilization through access to information leading up to training of a smaller set who came forward, and finally to more in-depth engagement in terms of training, placement, enterprise activities and income generation. This structure was also based on budgetary realities.

However, the impact evaluation report subjected this KPI structure to a different interpretation. It looked at each category in isolation in terms of its income generation results rather than as intermediate processes which, given the proof-of-concept approach of Disha, were of vital importance. As mentioned earlier, this conclusion conflicts with its highly positive conclusions regarding the development products under various models. This is also discussed in greater depth in the following section on evaluation.

From this experience, the learning for future programming is that the signed project document must fully explain and justify all KPIs in terms of the TOC and the budget to obviate the scope for differing interpretations ex-post. Also, these must be revisited in the MTR and signed-off again.

4.2 What did you find to be the most useful tools or methods in collecting data? Did the frequency or intervals used make a difference?

Data collection strategy evolved and achieved many milestones during the project span. Since the beginning of the project, every programmatic data was documented. Disha is perhaps the only large-scale programme where data collection began at the design level.

- The next level of administrative data is collected on MIS once an idea is fully materialized or a pilot is approved by UNDP and IDF.
- UNDP enters all programmatic actor's information and their responsibilities on the MIS, post finalization of the pilot
- Implementing partners (IP) enters the information on the participants at various stages from mobilisation to training to closing of the pilot on the MIS.

The most important data collected in this process is that related to the beneficiaries/participants. Each participant must be registered on Disha MIS to proceed further into the programme. Basic demographic and socio-economic information were obtained during registration and by design this needs to fill for each of the participant. The Registration format was changed post December 2018 taking cognizance from the field teams. By the end of the project, over 1 million data have been collected and stored in secure server.

All these activities were done in an extremely cost-effective way. The cost of collecting and maintaining such huge data base was less than INR 10/beneficiary/year. This amount is less than verifying Aadhar details with government portal. The MIS Framework and data collection protocol followed through MIS is presented in *Annexure 2*.

4.3 How did your data analysis inform vital course correction during this project? We are keen to understand and share this knowledge.

The data collected and analysed provided information across various parameters (like the beneficiaries, the approach and methodology) in conjunction with the KPI targets and the models. This enabled the project to re-focus and prioritise the areas of intervention where there was a shortfall and address challenges and risks that hindered progress. The data analysis and pilot tracking led to the formulation of the models and deepened the approach towards model testing in the later part of the project. These along with the monitoring reports provided enough data and information to support the mid-term evaluation and strategic evaluation held in 2017; and helped refocus and push for initiatives especially towards employment/jobs and entrepreneurship opportunities across other geographies, with implementing partners.

For instance: in early 2018, the targets under the BIG vertical (Information on education, Information on Jibs, Information on Entrepreneurship) were overachieved and hence it was decided and agreed at the project level (UNDP, IKF & IDF) to focus/ repurpose the initiatives towards employability and micro-entrepreneurship, which showed comparatively less achievement. Hence, data analysis supported the project to re-envision and steer it towards achieving results as proposed, and document achievements, risks and opportunities, and shortfalls (if any) with challenges.

4.4 Did you conduct a final project evaluation? If yes, please describe major findings and upload the report.

IKEA Foundation engaged Dalberg to conduct an impact evaluation for Disha in end of 2019 to cultivate an understanding of the program impact and decide on its future engagement with Disha/UNDP.

Key evaluation questions and indicators
The three key evaluation questions and their indicators developed by Dalberg were:

Key questions for evaluation	Primary metrics and long-term outcomes for evaluation
1. What are the economic empowerment impacts of Disha project on women in the project states?	- Women have better and more equitable economic prospects in life: increase in personal income - Women have greater decision-making power about their vocational choices: (i) increase in women's agency; and (ii) improvement in self-confidence
2. To what extent has Disha changed the ecosystems for school, skills and jobs and what changes has Disha contributed to?	- Disha has developed promising and scalable models; - Disha establishes itself as a thought leader in women's economic empowerment through advocacy and partnerships
3. How scalable and sustainable are the four models of Disha?	- Ease of replication and level of stakeholder adoption; - Financial sustainability: ROI potential, economies of scale

Dalberg adopted a mixed method approach to the evaluation that included a primary survey where 2350 women beneficiaries across 24 pilots from all four models were surveyed as a statistically valid sample. Beneficiary interviews were conducted with about 30 women along with focus group discussions with 70 women and semi-structured interviews with other program stakeholders/independent experts including 30 stakeholders from implementation partners, 20 large schools, buyers and employers, 10 senior government stakeholders and 8 experts.

Conclusions in the evaluation report
The conclusions of Dalberg are summarized in table below:

Subject	Conclusions
Overall conclusion	• The program has been unable to achieve economic empowerment impact at scale. Only 9% of the women (~58000 women) who should have been targeted for long-term income improvement, have secured an income generating opportunity. This was partly by design (original targets were disproportionately anchored towards information, our assessment suggests that the targets could have focused more on income generation) and partly a failure to meet the original targets (target was 13% women, Dalberg's findings suggest 9% women reached outcomes). • However, Disha has been successfully able to achieve very positive outcomes for women who have undergone the last stage of the intervention, whether counselling or starting an income generating activity. • A vast majority of the 9% beneficiaries who did start a job or an enterprise through Disha, have expressed high levels of satisfaction with the program. 96% women feel that the program has created a noticeable impact in their lives, and ~80% are completely satisfied with their decision to participate in the program. Most of these women also express increased confidence and agency after having gone through Disha. 97% of women also feel more confident about undertaking their economic activity after taking part in the program, and ~88% have expressed increased agency in making household decisions such as large purchases, visiting the doctor, spending personal income and so on.
Impact on ecosystems for school, skills and jobs	• The program has made initial progress on creating meaningful change in the skilling and employment ecosystem through a few promising proof-of-concepts, but greater buy-in and sustainable convergences are needed for wider ecosystem adoption. • Disha has developed a few promising models that are starting to see momentum: we find the value chains and school-to-work transition models to have the highest additionality and potential for scale. While the mentorship model is not new, DISHA has successfully created value through some unique components. However, the employment marketplace model has been so far unable to create a distinct blueprint or prove additionality in the ecosystem.
Remarks on individual models	Pl refer section C on KPIs
Contribution to the ecosystem	DISHA's biggest contribution has been creating strong convergences. DISHA has leveraged ~50 Crore INR of resources from the government and private sector to drive innovative partnership modalities across three dimensions: • Industry-led implementation PPPs through apprenticeships, employer led employability skill/enterprise training etc. • Knowledge and advocacy PPPs for fostering dialogue and collaboration around key issues; and • Demand-supply linkage PPPs for matching job seekers with opportunities, producers with buyers etc. However, some of the existing convergences are unlikely to sustain in the future, given nascency, IP dependence, and lack of alternate anchors.
Scalability and sustainable of the four models of Disha	The school-to-work transition and value chain models have the most potential for scale and sustainability.
Way forward	After considering various options, Dalberg suggested scaling up promising models/knowledge products through integration with existing institutional government structures: This would entail: (i) integrating the national counselling framework into the Ministry of Human Resource

Subject	Conclusions
	Development (MHRD) ecosystem via the National Education Policy and the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) through its skilling policy.; and (ii) integrate the Biz Sakhi curriculum into the Start- up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) ; and (iii) scale up the Women Business Manager/ Women Sourcing Manager using SVEP or the National Rural Livelihoods Mission (NRLM) as a vehicle.

UNDP's feedback on Dalberg's Impact Evaluation report

The discussion below attempts to clear the contradictions in the impact evaluation done by Dalberg.

As per the signed project agreement dated 11/09/2015, "the project aims to reach 1,000,000 women and girls by providing them with necessary skills and knowledge for employment or entrepreneurship. Through an integrated skilling and job placement/enterprise start up approach, the project will create linkages between education skills and employment and growth in India and support 1,000,000 women and girls progress towards economic empowerment."

The signed project document laid down the following KPI structure, thereby clearly defining the pathway to organizing "progress towards economic empowerment.

Key performance indicators	Target
Placed in job	65,000
Trained for Job	85,000
Started enterprise	30,000
Trained for Enterprise	50,000
Information on education	220,000
Information on job	300,000
Information on enterprise	250,000
Total	**1,000,000**

According to Dalberg, the KPI structure was dis-proportionately anchored towards information, and their assessment suggested that the targets could have focused more on income generation negating other components that define economic empowerment.

The concept and definition of economic empowerment that all Disha partners accepted and codified in the signed project document includes components of personal income, confidence and women's agency. This resonates with academic work in this area that underscores enhanced *access* (capacity to obtain economic resources like goods, services, networks and opportunities to improve economic position) and *agency* (that relates to the ability to control resources and make informed choices and decisions on their use). The report finds that Disha has done exceedingly well in terms of confidence and agency *(Refer slides # 21, 22, 26 - 90% beneficiary feels more confident and 85% beneficiary feel that their agency has increased, 84% beneficiaries feel that Disha has helped their ability to make career decisions).* All these are the first set of steps towards economic empowerment.

Seeing economic empowerment of women as a complex 'process' rather than as a discrete step of income generation was the unique proposition of Disha and distinguished it from most other target-oriented programmes that failed to trigger sustainable change. Taking a limited income-based definition of economic empowerment would have deprived Disha of its richness and many of the results with a potential to inform policies.

To conclude, on account of its methodologic position regarding the income generation target, the evaluation report outlined the limited impact on income of the target group but spotlighted the improvement in access and agency for

women and young girls. . UNDP's observations on the above lines about the evaluation report merited a meaningful dialogue between the Disha partners (namely IKF, IDF and UNDP) to draw learnings from the report and its recommendations. However, this could not materialize because of the onset of COVID-19 in March 2020.

The ongoing Disha Dialogues organized to disseminate the results of the project show that the project has critical implications for livelihood reconstruction in the post COVID-19 scenario. They show that Disha's work on women empowerment could play a critical role in such reconstruction. Thus, there is need to pick up the threads through digital means as soon as practicable.

4.5   How have you documented and shared your learning from this project with others in the community?
Detailed out in Part B of the report.

4.6   What opportunities did you seize to influence your sector in meaningful ways as a result of this project?
Detailed out in Part B of the report.

5. Risk Assessment

5.1   We want you to share observations on the way you addressed risks throughout the project period.

Risk assessment is done regularly throughout the project wherein the project risk matrix is updated as part of the internal UNDP mechanism and is conducted at 2 levels: (i) overall project level (ii) implementing partners. At the overall project level, any changes in the ecosystem are mapped and mitigation measures are defined. This is logged in the UNDP system in the project pathways report/ATLAS and duly discussed at the Project Steering Committee meetings, the Project Management committees depending on the intensity of the risk. At the partnership level, the due diligence process is followed at the start of the contracting process, to minimize risks and ensure that the partner agency is equipped to roll-out the project. Further spot-checks and financial audits help check for misappropriation and ensure processes are in place.

6. Reflection and Feedback

6.1   Reflecting on the full duration of the project, is there anything else you really hope we understand about the project or your organization that is not captured elsewhere?

Most of the relevant issues have been covered in the note above. However, it would be useful to reiterate two key points. First is the role of UNDP. While field level activities were implemented by relevant implementing agencies including government departments, NGOs, private sector agencies, etc. the basic design of Disha, its models and activities emerged from the human-centric ethos of UNDP and its intensive experience in capacity building. These factors distinguished Disha from other initiatives in this domain. Second, it is pertinent to highlight that the analysis and solutions evolved by Disha have gained high recognition by the government, private sector, think tanks and NGOs etc. earning a rightful place on policy tables. These insights and learnings could play a vital role in livelihood reconstruction post-COVID-19 and in empowering women to lead this transformation. It is critical that this capacity is fully understood and acted upon through the scale-up phase which was part of the original program design.

6.2   We asked when you first applied and we are asking again: If there were one thing which you could change about the sector you are working in, what would it be?

As reiterated above, Disha enabled breaking new grounds in WEE. Yet, it is just the start of a long journey. UNDP considers it critical to pursue and further strengthen this journey, particularly as it has implications in the post COVID-19 scenario. One area that will need to be considerably strengthened going forward is private sector partnership. If a clear time frame of three to four years is made available, solid breakthrough could be made not only in value chain linkages but also in jobs. The basic understanding for this exists in Disha.

6.3   How can IKEA Foundation staff or processes improve to support grantee succeed in the future?

As mentioned above, the ethos of IKEA Foundation and its personnel played a key role in shaping Disha as a flagship initiative. Special mention may be made of IKF's role in partnership building, joint ownership of risks and rewards and in the pursuit of innovation. There is a need to remain steadfast on these towards the ambitious goals agreed upon. One possible area of improvement might be a practical approach to MEL as it seemed to overwhelm program implementation.

Annexure 1

DISHA: Overview of Solutions

Model	Population Segment (Girls/Women)	Barriers	Impact on socio-economic conditions	Disha's solutions
Model 1: Creation of career guidance and counselling framework in government schools and colleges	Students in government schools	- Poor educational standard - Low access to information on educational and vocational option - Lack of parental guidance - Absence of role models	- Low aspirations - High drop-out - Unemployment - Unproductive and low paying jobs - Child labour - Early marriage	- Career counselling and guidance with high motivational content - Sensitization of parents and community - Enriched peer to peer interaction and motivation - ICT enabled learning - Acquisition of soft skill
	College students, particularly from tier 2-5 cities/towns	- Gap between expectation of employers and the jobs aspirants' understanding of the eligibility/their knowledge about the current market scenario, latest industry and employment trends and job dynamics etc. - Inadequate soft skills	- Low aspirations - High drop-out - Unemployment - Unproductive and low paying jobs	- Career counselling and guidance with high vocational awareness and interaction content (internship, apprenticeship, mentorship by corporate volunteers) - Sensitization of parents and community - Enriched peer to peer interaction and motivation - ICT enabled learning - Acquisition of soft skill
Model 2: Employment Market Place	- Youth (18-35 years) in smaller cities/towns looking for employment (skilled or unskilled)	Deficient skills - Informal hiring practices by large number of small local businesses	- Migration to large cities leading to squalid living conditions in slums - Informal employment leading to low wages and informal working conditions and lack of access to social security such as health insurance, Provident Fund and pensions	- Creation of local employment marketplace for resolving information deficit/asymmetry thereby reducing transaction costs of hiring and increasing employment - Enabling mechanisms of Youth Employability Services Centers (YES Centers) and Disha Town Hall - Conversion of Govt. Employment Exchanges and public libraries into youth learning centers - Integrated ICT-enabled state-wide initiatives such as E-Kaushalkar

Model	Population Segment (Girls/Women)	Barriers	Impact on socio-economic conditions	Disha's solutions
Model 3: Enterprise promotion in non-formal value chains	- Farmers with marketable surplus/desire for cash income - Artisans and handloom workers - -Waste pickers	- Disabling local customs - Low education levels - Lack of organization - Lack of access to skills and capital - Low managerial capacity precluding equitable partnership with organized value chain -	- Low productivity and product quality - Low value realization from products - Low surplus income - Low access to paid health care services - Low investment in education of children - -Low peer interaction and social capital	- Integrated value chain solutions comprising creation/ strengthening of producer groups, skill building (technical and market related such as on safe practices and quality) and forging of market linkages - -Creation of endogenous managerial capacity through training of local educated youth
Model 4: Women in rural areas desiring local/flexible enterprise opportunities Women in urban areas looking for local self-employment opportunities	- Women with lower education levels - With domestic responsibilities - Women confronting constraints in transport and mobility	- Disabling local customs - Low education levels - Lack of organization - Lack of access to skills and capital	- Low aspirations - High burden of domestic work and drudgery - Low mobility - Difficulties in joining group activities - Inability in tapping local opportunities though micro-enterprises/self-employment	- Motivation building through group activities - Skill building - Mechanisms for access to capital/micro-credit - Creation of capacity for local mentoring/handholding

Annexure 2

MIS Framework (Disha portal – thedisha.org)

The MIS had to be flexible in order to add more and more pilots; and ii) the scale, and hence, all data which was gathered in certain pilots, in the scaled-up phase, could grow dynamically. Workflow of Disha MIS is outlined below:

Step-1 <u>Identification of nodes and indicator:</u> This is discussed in section above in some detail.

Step-2 <u>Identification of key actor for each indicator:</u> The idea was to ensure that data get captured as soon as it was generated. A person was assigned to feed the data simultaneously. In the MIS, identification of the actors, therefore, was the key. Note that these actors were designated as 'users'.

Step-3 <u>Tag trainees as they enter the pilots:</u> The MIS tagged each woman as she was enrolled. This was done through technology through where each trainee and some of her demographic information was entered into the MIS.

Step-4 <u>Read/Write/Execute protocols:</u> IDF was the administrator and held execution privileges. Read/Write privileges were decided for each user separately based on consultations with other project partners.

Step-5 <u>Creation of web-based user interfaces:</u> In case of training programmes for jobs and entrepreneurship, use of an id-card with trainee information automated data capture on attendance. Similarly, for other users, simple web-based forms for entering information on each indicator was created. The fields as well as directory of users for the MIS was dynamic.

Step-6 <u>Creation of a database with security issues:</u> A dynamic database, keeping in mind the best practices on data security, was created.

Step-7 <u>Creation of dashboard and portal:</u> The information was available on a dashboard created on a web portal.

Step-8 <u>Reporting:</u> The dashboards had facilities using which some real time reports was generated. In addition, relevant project specific documents, and reports submitted were also kept in the MIS.

Step-9 Orientation: Users were given detailed training on how to use the MIS. This formed a continuous activity. A manual for ease of use was also developed.

Illustration of MIS

For illustrating the process of setting up the MIS, actors under each node are fleshed out. Further, how the data are captured at each node is also shown.

- <u>Enrolment</u>
  - Users
    - User-1 Trainees were required to fill up a form containing demographic information for the women and got an id-card issued which had their names and course-code. Once a woman got an id-card issued in her name, she was enrolled by the MIS with a unique identity number present on each id-card.
    - User-2 Training agency helped in creating id-cards for women. In addition, trainers also got id-cards.
  - User interface
    - Web based form: User-1 Trainees entered information on their names, fulfilment of eligibility norms and some demographics on a web-form which is operated by User-2 (training agency).
  - Indicator: The indicator 'No. of women enrolled' was updated with creation of each id-card automatically.
- <u>Training</u>
  - Users
    - User-1 Trainees

- User-2 Training agency helped in creating id-cards for women. In addition, trainers also got id-cards.
    - o User interface
        - Card reading machine: Attendance tracking for teachers (User-2) and trainees (User-1) was done automatically through a card tracking machine. Data coming into the machine was fed into the MIS automatically.
        - Web-based forms: Web- based form was used for entering test scores into the system.
    - o Indicator
        - Attendance: Note that attendance and information on classes held were captured automatically in the system in real time.

- Certification
    - o Users
        - User-2 Training agency
        - User-3 Certifying agency who did third party certification of trainees.
    - o User interface
        - Web-based forms: A web-based form to enter information on certification status for each trainee was used by user-3
    - o Indicator:
        - No. of women certified was ascertained from User-3's interaction with the MIS.

Even as offline activities like submission of pilot proposals, review and approval of pilots continued, IDF proposed to rationalize online data collection so as to address the partner concerns and Dalberg's recommendations.

A. Recording registration data in MIS:

- Training and incentivizing partners for data collection: IDF facilitated registration data collection by conducting one-hour training sessions through video conference in beginning of every pilot. Tutorials (audio/video) were also developed for the data acquisition under registration. In order to incentivize the implementing partners, the MIS allowed them to use registration data for their own record.
- New modes of registration, including Aadhaar, to ensure real time data collection: IDF enabled registration through hand-devices, local-hosts, etc. to facilitate data collection in remote areas and ensured real time registration of data. IDF also integrated Aadhaar QR code reading to hasten the registration process.

B. Collection of baseline data: Following Dalberg's recommendation and consultations with UNDP, the baseline data collection was restricted to a sample of only five per cent of all registered Disha participants. This baseline data was uploaded in the MIS and was used for quantitative and qualitative studies. Baseline data collection protocol was changed in phase B. In lieu of universal baseline data collection representative sample baseline data were collected.

C. Capturing activity data in MIS: IDF is committed to facilitate the uninterrupted real-time data flow. The technical partners responsible for data collection were provided proper support and IDF assigned a points person to resolve technical difficulties. Hand-held devices, local hosts were used to collect activity level data. IDF ensured that basic data acquisition infrastructures like computers, laptops, and smart phones were available in the proposal review stage. The potential risks of failure in collecting activity data, and strategies to overcome such risks were also studied at the proposal stage. IDF created tutorials (audio-video tutorial) for smooth data acquisition at the activity stage.

D. Follow up data collection: Such collection was done for about five thousand among the Disha participants, which was no more than one per cent of the assumed beneficiary target. IDF conducted follow up interviews with sample Disha beneficiaries at regular intervals through telephone calls.

Data Collection Protocol

The data collection protocols were defined and followed for the project as follows:

Phase A:

Table 4- Data Matrix (Phase A)

Type of data collected	Collected by	Collected through	Facilitator	Real time on MIS
Registration	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF/UNDP	Yes
Baseline	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF/UNDP	Yes
Activity	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF	Yes
Feedback	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF	Yes
Follow-up	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF	Yes

Phase B:

Learnings of phase A suggested few data collection difficulties and streamlining of data collection. Hence, some part of data collection protocol was changed since December 2018.

Table 5- Data Matrix (Phase B)

Type of data collected	Collected by	Collected through	Facilitator	Real time on MIS
Registration	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF/UNDP	Yes
Baseline	IDF	MIS; surveyors	IDF	Deferred
Activity	Technical Partner, implementation agency	MIS; computer, mobile, local host	IDF	Yes
Feedback	NA	NA	NA	NA
Follow-up	IDF	MIS; tele-caller		Deferred