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# Rise of philanthropic collaboratives is tackling complex social challenges

by **INDIA CSR NETWORK** — February 19, 2020 *inMore*

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**New Delhi:** The Bridgespan Group released a research report titled, “Philanthropic Collaboratives in India: The Power of Many.”

Drawing on a survey of 13 Indian philanthropic collaboratives (unions of funders and other partners pursuing shared goals and strategies for improving people's lives) as well as more than 50 interviews, Bridgespan's report spotlights *why* Indian philanthropists collaborate, *what* conditions give rise to impactful collaboratives, and *how* actors work together to overcome the barriers to amplifying social impact.

According to Arghyam Founder-Chairperson, Rohini Nilekani, whose philanthropic collaborative work is featured in the report, "The key benefits of a collaborative are to mitigate individual risk, be greater than the sum of its individual parts, and to enable ideas and missions to scale."

Supported by The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, the report takes a deep look at how India's funders and other actors are joining forces to help improve public schools, drive sustainable sanitation, combat climate change, improve nutrition, and take on other urgent social challenges. According to Hari Menon, India country director at the Gates Foundation, "Philanthropic collaboratives have the potential and ambition to solve large and complex problems. India is seeing the emergence of collaboratives, and early signals of collective progress are encouraging."

"If we want to work at scale or be involved in systems change, we must look to collaborate with others," adds Vidya Shah, CEO of Edelgive Foundation. "There is no other option to tackle these big social problems."

Bridgespan's research found that actors in philanthropic collaboratives tend to agree with Menon and Shah. "More than 70 percent of our survey respondents say that working collectively has enabled them to make more progress against India's socio-economic challenges than working alone," says Pritha Venkatachalam, Bridgespan partner and co-author of the study. "The majority of stakeholders believe that the benefits of collaborating have exceeded the investments required of each of them in working together."

Most of India's philanthropic collaboratives are uniquely comprised of multiple stakeholders—not just funders, but also other actors including implementing organizations, government, and research organizations. "With such a complicated structure, collaboratives often struggle to organize many stakeholders around a mission, agree on their respective roles, and align on a strategy," says Kashyap Shah, Bridgespan principal and co-author of the study.

The report—which builds on the work of other investigators, including Bain & Company, Dasra, EdelGive Foundation, and previous Bridgespan research—profiles

three philanthropic collaborative efforts in depth and draws on the experience of several others to discern lessons that others can use to overcome the barriers to collaborating.

Demand for field-tested insights like these is on the rise. “Interest in philanthropic collaboratives across social sector actors is accelerating,” concludes Pritha Venkatachalam. “During the course of this research, we learned that some global collaboratives, as well as domestic philanthropists, are actively considering setting up new collaboratives in India.”

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