NATIONAL CSR NETWORK
An initiative of Strategic CSR Alliance

SUSTAINABLE SOCIAL INSIGHTS

CSR I ESG I SUSTAINABILITY

OCTOBER'25

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KEY NEWS ON CSR, ESG & SUSTAINABILITY

INDIA'S COAL, MINERAL SECTORS TARGET GREEN GROWTH AMID SURGING ENERGY DEMAND

India's coal and mineral sectors are embracing green growth to meet the country's rising energy needs. Coal production crossed 1 billion tonnes in 2024-25, with a 2030 target of 1.6 billion tonnes, while coal gasification is set to reach 100 million tonnes supported by ₹85 billion in incentives. Public sector undertakings are also expanding into renewable energy, currently at 1,900 MW with a goal of 15 GW by 2030. Advanced mining tech, dust suppression, and land reclamation have restored over 57,000 hectares, with more planned under Mission Green Coal Regions. India has auctioned 542 mineral blocks, including 34 critical minerals, using drones and AI for exploration. The National Critical Minerals Mission is securing strategic reserves and overseas assets like lithium in Argentina, while a ₹15 billion recycling and research push strengthens domestic supply chains. Together, these efforts drive sustainable development and support PM Modi's vision of a self-reliant India by 2047.

Source: ESG Times

GOVT'S NEW LOGISTICS PLAN AIDS IN SUPPLY CHAIN EFFICIENCY, ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY GOALS

The Indian government has approved an Integrated State and City Logistics Plan to enhance supply chain efficiency and support sustainability goals. Launched in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the initiative will be piloted in eight cities, including Ludhiana, Shimla, Jaipur, Indore, Patna, Visakhapatnam, Bhubaneswar, and Guwahati. The plan focuses on promoting low- and zero-emission vehicles, establishing low-emission freight zones, and addressing infrastructure bottlenecks such as urban roads, truck terminals, and last-mile delivery systems. With technical support from the ADB, the program aims to align state logistics with city-level freight networks, improve automation, encourage data-driven decision-making, and enhance transparency in freight operations. The planning phase is expected to last 6–8 months, after which implementation support may be provided to scale the strategies nationally.

Source: Hans India

"SUDHA SITARA: A Case Study on Employee Driven CSR Engagement"

About SUDARSHAN

Sudarshan is a leading 60-year old colour and effect pigment manufacturer. Sudarshan began manufacturing pigments in 1952 with a few inorganic pigments and has since flourished with a breadth of products that cover classical azo pigments, high performance pigments, effect pigments and pigment dispersions. The company primarily serves the coatings, plastics, inks and cosmetics markets. In recent developments, Sudarshan has acquired Heubach Group, a move that significantly expands our global footprint and strengthens our market position.

Believing an organization is a living entity like its people, Sudarshan's higher purpose "*Growing Together*" guides every endeavour to be Spiritually Fulfilling, Socially Just, and Environmentally Sustainable.

Beyond our industry expertise, Sudarshan is deeply committed to fostering meaningful and holistic lives. Our mission extends beyond business success to encompass environmental sustainability, spiritual enrichment, and social equity. For over 40 years, we have implemented impactful social development programs designed not only for immediate results but also for lasting benefits across generations.

GROWING TOGETHER WITH OUR VALUES (REAPS)

Respect — "Listen actively and embrace diversity"

Entrepreneurship — "Spot it, own it do it!"

Passion — "Put your heart in everything you do"

Agility — "Act quickly!"

Seva — "Joy through service"

Corporate Social Responsibility at Sudarshan

Under the aegis of SUDHA – Sudarshan's Holistic Aspirations, the company's CSR efforts strive to improve the quality of life in an eco-friendly and inclusive manner. Over the years, our business has added social, environmental and economic value through simple acts of philanthropy driven by our Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) philosophy, which is rooted in the belief that the company should give back to the society that has given to it. Through this initiative, Sudarshan empowers children, women, and underprivileged communities across its operational regions.

Problem Statement:

Access to quality education remains a challenge for students from low-income and marginalized families, particularly in semi-urban and rural areas like Raigad district, where financial constraints often force young learners to discontinue higher studies. Many bright students,

especially girls, face socio cultural barriers and lack of guidance that limit their academic and career growth. Recognizing this gap, Sudarshan launched an initiative to remove financial obstacles, promote inclusive education, and empower youth through holistic development, while also fostering social responsibility and volunteerism among its employees.

The Significance of Employee Engagement at Sudarshan

At Sudarshan, employee engagement is at the heart of our mission. Rooted in Seva (selfless service), employees are encouraged to volunteer and participate in community initiatives, reflecting our culture of purpose and compassion. The Sudha Sitara Scholarship Program empowers underprivileged students to complete their education, turning opportunity into lifelong impact and aligning with our philosophy of "Growing Together."

Key Pillars of Engagement:

- **EE Groups & CSR Champions:** Employees form department- or interest-based groups to apply their expertise on community projects, guided and coordinated by two CSR champions per group who ensure progress and regular updates.
- **Suvidha Portal:** Easy registration, participation, and tracking of volunteering activities.
- **Leadership Projects:** Executives lead specialized projects such as LDP(Leadership Development Program), MDP(Manager Development Program), and EDP(Executive development Program) to build leadership and social responsibility.
- **Alumni & Retired Employees:** Engagement extends beyond active staff for lifelong community service.

Impact created by Employee Engagement model

- Enhanced Involvement: Interest-based groups promote active, sustained participation.
- Leadership & Coordination: CSR champions ensure impactful, goal-aligned initiatives.

- Digital Platform: The Suvidha portal streamlines volunteering and boosts visibility.
- Community Projects: Local and departmental efforts deliver measurable outcomes.
- Social Responsibility: Engagement nurtures empathy, collaboration, and positive change.

Beyond Scholarships: Sudha Sitara's Journey of Empowerment:

Program Vision:

Empowering underprivileged students to shine by supporting academic and professional growth, fostering transformation through education and holistic development.

Purpose:
- Removes financial barriers for bright students, particularly at higher secondary and undergraduate levels.
- Encouraging voluntary employee contributions, both financial or mentorship, fostering social responsibility, engagement, and organizational purpose.

Primary Objective:
- Support students from marginalized and economically weaker backgrounds in the Raigad district to complete their education through financial aid and holistic mentoring.

Secondary Objectives:
- Promote Gender Equity: Prioritize girls' education, addressing socio-cultural barriers and enabling long-term empowerment.
- Foster Inclusive Education: Include boys and PWD students, for an equitable environment.
- Career Preparedness: Equip students with soft skills, self-confidence, and guided career planning.
- Employee Involvement: Engage employees in CSR through donation and mentorship.
- Community Development: Leverage education to uplift communities, supporting poverty alleviation and social mobility.

Program Features: Educational Support Initiatives

A) Scholarship Support: Fully funded through voluntary employee donations, covering one academic year's tuition fees with funds disbursed directly to institutions for transparency.

B) Mentorship Program: Employees engage with students 3-4 times a year, offering academic guidance, personal mentoring, and career support.

C) Inclusion and Accessibility: Originally for girls, expanded in 2024-25 to include boys from low-income families and persons with disabilities, promoting diversity and inclusion.
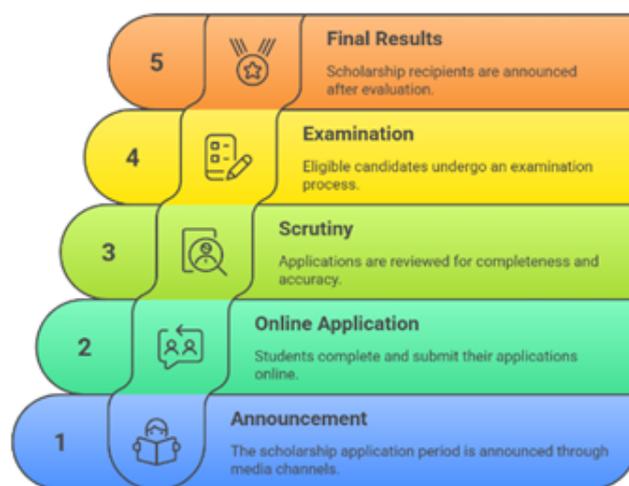
Student and Donor Statistics Over Years

	Location	Students	Donors
2020-21	Roha	25	14
2021-22	Roha	30	21
2022-23	Roha	46	34
2023-24	Roha & Mahad	102	68
2024-25	Raigad District	235	86

Sudha Sitara Scholarship- Application Process:

- **Announcement:** Applications for the Sudha Sitara Scholarship Programme are now open and will be shared through print and social media.
- **Online Application:** Students must complete the online form and upload required documents accurately.
- **Scrutiny:** Submissions will be reviewed for completeness and accuracy; incomplete applications may be disqualified.
- **Examination:** Eligible applicants will undergo qualifying examination.
- **Final Results:** Scholarship recipients will be announced after evaluation process

Steps to Scholarship Success

- **5 — Final Results:** Scholarship recipients are announced after evaluation.
- **4 — Examination:** Eligible candidates undergo an examination process.
- **3 — Scrutiny:** Applications are reviewed for completeness and accuracy.
- **2 — Online Application:** Students complete and submit their applications online.
- **1 — Announcement:** The scholarship application period is announced through media channels.

Outcomes:

Qualitative Impacts/Outputs
A) Student Outcomes
- Educational Continuity: Reduced dropout rates during key academic stages.
- Improved Performance: Less financial stress, better focus, and higher results.

- Career Clarity: Mentoring enhances academic and career guidance.

B) Employee Outcomes
- Stronger Engagement: Purpose-driven involvement in CSR initiatives.
- Skill Growth: Mentoring builds empathy, communication, and leadership skills.

C) Community Outcomes
- Women's Empowerment: Educated girls drive positive family and community change.
- Social Inclusion: Increased participation of boys and PWD students.
- Ripple Effect: Beneficiaries inspire peers, creating a cycle of aspiration.

D) Organizational Outcomes
- Enhanced CSR Impact: Strengthened brand trust and social value.
- Scalable Framework: Adaptable model for wider educational CSR programs.

Quantitative Impacts / Outputs

- **9X Growth in Beneficiaries:** Expanded from 25 students (2021–22) to 225+ students (2024–25).
- **Gender Inclusion:** 75% are girls; 12.5% differently-abled students; 12.5% boys under special provisions.
- **Financial Support:** 100% tuition and education-related expenses covered for all.
- **Employee Engagement:** 220+ mentors actively counseling students and parents.
- **Skill Development Activities:** 4+ career workshops and 3+ life-skill sessions annually.
- **Education Continuity:** Dropout rate reduced to 0% among supported students.
- **Community Recognition:** Schools, local leaders, and families view Sudha Sitara as a trusted rural youth empowerment initiative.

Sustainability- "The Power of Educating Girls"

Educating a girl has a ripple effect, uplifting her family and transforming her community, laying the foundation for long-term development. The Sudha Sitara Scholarship Programme brings this belief to life through a sustainable model that empowers rural students, especially girls, to pursue higher education. Its approach is built on five key pillars: financial sustainability through CSR and employee sponsorships, community integration via NGO and school partnerships, employee ownership through mentoring and facilitation, technology and governance ensuring

transparency and scalability, and alignment with government schemes for continuity. Together, these elements create lasting impact-fostering equality, building self-reliant communities, and empowering future generations.

Scalability & Replicability

The Sudha Sitara Scholarship Programme is a scalable and replicable model that combines financial assistance, employee mentorship, and community engagement to address financial and guidance gaps in higher education. Its holistic design has delivered proven impact, growing from 25 girls in Roha in 2021–22 to 225 students by 2024–25, reflecting strong results and community trust. Scalable processes such as digital applications, transparent selection, progress tracking, and periodic reviews enable smooth expansion, while the framework is adaptable across regions with support from NGOs and institutions. Planned future growth includes skill development, vocational training, and inclusion initiatives aligned with government schemes. Overall, the programme fosters inclusive education, empowerment, and lasting community transformation.

Transforming Agriculture, Sustaining Livelihoods: The DS Group Rural Empowerment Story

About DS Group

The DS Group (Dharampal Satyapal Group) is a one of the leading FMCG conglomerates and a Multi-Business Corporation with a strong Indian and international presence. Founded in 1929, it is an inspiring and successful business story that blends a remarkable legacy with visionary growth. The Group has an extensive and diverse portfolio, with a presence in Food and Beverage, Confectionery, Mouth Freshener, Hospitality, Agri, Luxury Retail businesses, and other investments including brands like Catch, Pulse, Pass Pass, Silver Pearls, Ksheer, Rajnigandha, Ovino, L'Opera, Le Marche, Birthright, LuvIt, Chingles, Golmol, Namah.

The DS Group is guided by a strong value system that places collective good at the heart of its operations. Corporate Social Responsibility is not viewed as an obligation but as a core business objective, embedded into its growth philosophy. DS Group's initiatives focus on creating sustainable impact by addressing economic, environmental and social challenges through inclusive, scalable and need-based interventions.

Enhancing Farmer Livelihoods

Problem Statement:
Agriculture remains the backbone of India's rural economy, employing nearly 54.6% of the workforce (World Bank, 2021) and contributing 18.3% to the GDP (MoAFW, 2023). For more than 70% of rural households (NITI Aayog, 2021), it is the primary source of income. Despite this central role, the sector faces persistent challenges. Nearly 86% of farmers are small and marginal, cultivating less than two hectares of land (Agriculture Census, 2015–16), which makes them highly vulnerable to economic shocks.

DS Group' Livelihood Intervention was conceived to address the persistent challenges faced by small and marginal farmers. There is often limited access to resources and technologies, over dependence on single-crop farming, low resilience to climate variability and restricted market opportunities. These gaps often translate into unstable incomes and a cycle of vulnerability for rural households.

Recognizing these vulnerabilities, the DS Group identified 28 locations across 13 Indian states, covering the entire geographical range from North to South and West to North-East of India.The goal of this initiative was to strengthen

livelihoods of farmers and enhance their income from farming.

The DS Group focused on an integrated approach to driving rural prosperity. This approach secured water availability and simultaneously modernized the agricultural sector by promoting sustainable practices, crop diversification, farm mechanization, entrepreneurship, and market linkages. Furthermore, the promotion and strengthening of community institutions played a pivotal role.

By integrating water conservation with livelihood enhancement, the initiative successfully began to transform local economies. Constructing water structures and introducing water-saving techniques expanded irrigated land, while sustainable agricultural practices, modern technologies, skill development and farm mechanization drove productivity and secured long-term income growth.

DS Group's Livelihood Intervention initiative blends traditional farming wisdom with modern innovation, ensuring solutions are both sustainable and rooted in local realities. Prioritizing community-led models, the program encourages ownership, strengthens resilience and creates pathways for diversified incomes through strong local partnerships.

The intervention supports farmers by promoting a suite of sustainable agricultural practices across Kharif and Rabi seasons. These methods include System of Rice Intensification (SRI), Broad Bed Furrow for soybeans, Ridge Bed Furrow for maize, and Zero Tillage for wheat, along with line sowing for crops like mustard, gram, coriander, and cumin.

This approach is holistic, integrating crop diversification, farm mechanization, skill development, intercropping, and micro-irrigation. It also promotes high-value crops and integrates farming with dairy to reduce risk and boost income.

Furthermore, the initiative strengthens grassroots institutions such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and farmer collectives. These groups pool resources, improve market access, and enhance collective bargaining power. Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) and Bio Resource Centres (BRCs) are key in promoting chemical-free crop cultivation.

Together, these interventions are designed to empower farmers, close critical resource and knowledge gaps, and build sustainable, scalable livelihood models that enhance long-term economic security for rural communities.

Objectives of the Program:

Since a large section of farmers belong to small and marginal categories in India thus the program is designed for Strengthening Stable and Sustainable Means of Livelihood for farmers. The program has following objectives:

- Promotion of sustainable agricultural practices and crop diversification including introduction of high value crops, establishing support networks such as Bio Resource centres & Farm mechanization
- Encouraging farmers for adoption of water efficient practices such as sprinklers and drip as per the requirements
- Facilitating government schemes and convergence of various aligned interventions
- Ensuring better access to market through Entrepreneurship Development and strengthening Farmer's Producer organizations

The initiative covers more than 50,000 households across the 28 project locations in 13 states, laying the foundation for scalable rural transformation.

Theory of Change:

The process begins with recognizing that small and marginal farmers often face limited access to quality inputs, technology, markets, and information. The intervention therefore focuses on capacity building, access to resources, and institutional strengthening. Key activities include promoting climate-smart and sustainable farming techniques, facilitating collective action through farmer producer organizations (FPOs), and enabling market linkages for fair pricing. Strengthening extension services, and ensuring gender and social inclusion are also integral. These actions are expected to lead to increased productivity, diversification of income sources, reduced vulnerability to climate change, and empowering farmers. Ultimately, the long-term impact envisions sustainable livelihoods, economic empowerment, and resilient rural communities where small and marginal farmers actively participate in and benefit from equitable agricultural growth.

Monitoring and Evaluation:

The project is guided by a three-tier monitoring system to ensure effective implementation and accountability. At the ground level, the field team oversees day-to-day execution, while the project coordinator based at the site conducts regular reviews to maintain quality and consistency. Thematic experts at the

eadquarters provide technical guidance and monitor progress, strengthening delivery across all stages. Reporting is carried out on a quarterly and annual basis, supported by a centralized online MIS platform for real-time tracking and performance review.

Outcomes and Impact

As the initiative spans 28 locations in 13 states of India, it reaches more than 50 thousands households directly with intense interventions to ensure additional income enhancement of rupees 20,000 to 50,000 while many other households benefit indirectly through awareness drives, training programs, and demonstrations of improved agricultural practices. Together, these efforts aim to generate both immediate improvements in farm productivity and long-term resilience for the wider community.

Sustainability and Exit Strategy:

- Sustainability is ensured by involving the local community in every stage of the project, from planning to execution.
- Field staff are drawn from the project area, allowing them to understand the local context and guide the community effectively.
- The project emphasizes the formation and strengthening of Kisan Samities along with Custom Hiring Centres (CHCs) and Bio Resource Centres (BRCs) so that farmers can collectively sustain activities over the long term.
- Identified farmers and demonstration plots serve as reference points to support and replicate sustainable practices.
- Collaboration with external agencies is pursued to establish reliable market connections for farm produce.
- Communities are made aware of relevant government schemes, with active liaison established with line departments to extend support beyond the project period.

Beneficiaries:

- **Vandana, Betul**

Vandana, a small farmer in Yenkhedi, Betul (MP), raised her earnings from ₹20,000 to ₹30,000–35,000 per acre per season by switching to maize and vegetable cultivation, following training in soil testing, intercropping, and natural

pest management.
Her kitchen garden gave her family fresh produce and earned ₹17,450 from surplus sales. She now saves up to ₹10,000 per cycle, investing in farm tools and her children's education, showing the impact of community-driven support.

- **Gaynabai Kavde, Gokhlapur**

An elderly couple, Gaynabai Kavde and her husband from Gokhlapur, MP, struggled to afford daily meals, relying on a small pension and government rations. After DS Group's CSR initiative trained them and provided a seed kit, Gaynabai started a backyard garden with spinach, tomatoes, okra, brinjal, and gourds.

Within weeks, they got fresh, chemical-free vegetables, saving ₹500–₹700 monthly for medicines and essentials. The initiative restored their dignity and independence, and Gaynabai now inspires other women to adopt the model.

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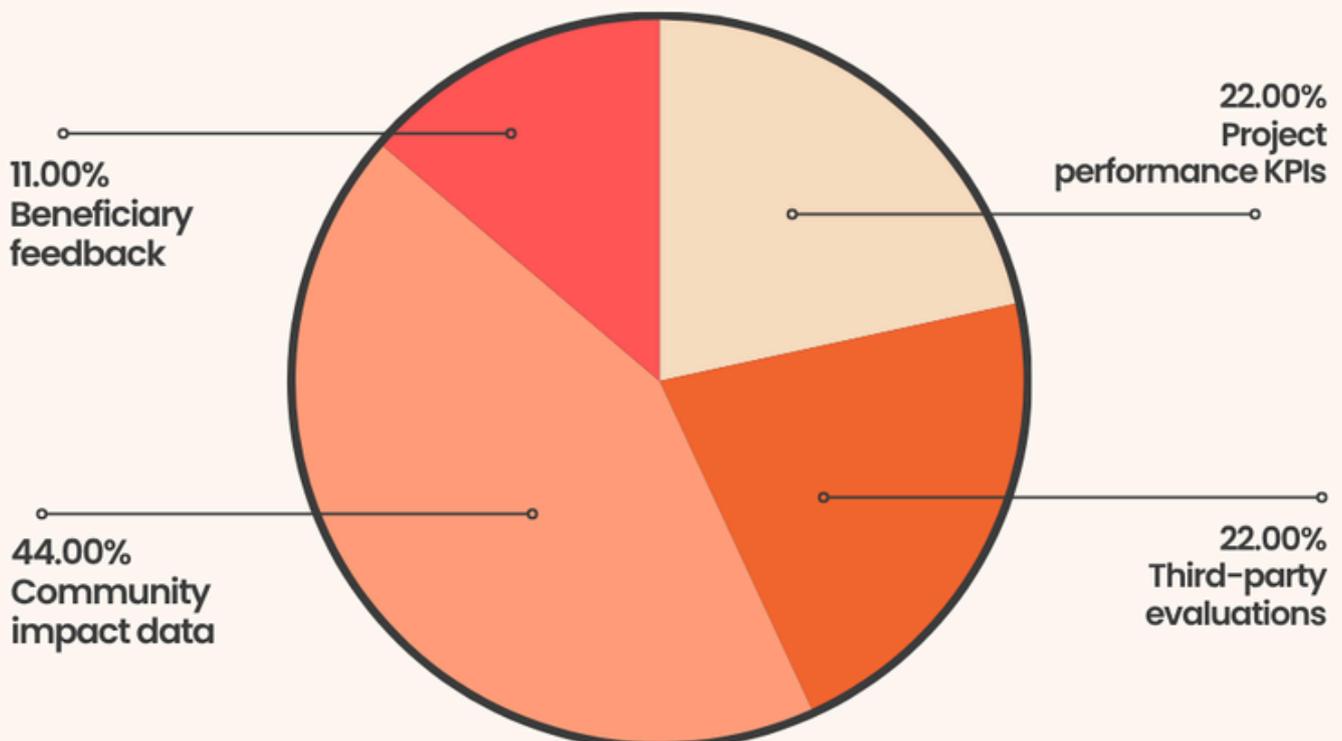
Survey Conducted by NCN

When assessing the effectiveness of CSR/ESG initiatives, which data do you trust the most to inform future decisions?

Introduction:

In today's sustainability landscape, data is the new compass. Organizations are increasingly shifting from compliance-led reporting to impact-driven decision-making. Yet, a fundamental question persists - what kind of data truly earns our trust?

To explore this, we conducted a survey asking professionals across CSR, ESG, and sustainability domains.

When assessing the effectiveness of CSR/ESG initiatives, which data do you trust the most to inform future decisions?

11.00%
Beneficiary feedback

22.00%
Project performance KPIs

44.00%
Community impact data

22.00%
Third-party evaluations

Survey Poll Results

Survey Conducted by NCN

The responses reveal not just preferences - but deeper insights into how impact is being understood and valued today.

Key Findings:

Results at a Glance:

1.Community Impact Data — 44%
Reflects growing confidence in evidence-based, outcome-oriented data that captures real social and environmental change.

2. Project Performance KPIs — 22%
Indicates that efficiency and goal achievement remain important, though not the top measure of trust.

3. Third-party Evaluations — 22%
Signifies recognition of independent validation as a key factor in credibility and transparency.

4. Beneficiary Feedback — 11%
Suggests a gap in integrating human experiences into data-driven decision-making.

Analysis

- **Impact Over Activity:**

The clear lead of community impact data shows a paradigm shift from what we did to what actually changed. CSR and ESG practitioners are increasingly seeking measurable transformation rather than input-based reporting.

- **The Credibility Factor:**

The equal trust placed in third-party evaluations emphasizes the need for objectivity and accountability. Stakeholders are aware that internal data alone can carry bias, and external audits strengthen both authenticity and confidence.

- **Operational Metrics vs. Outcome Metrics:**

While KPIs are essential for tracking project delivery, their lower ranking suggests they are seen as tools for monitoring, not necessarily decision-making. The modern CSR lens demands KPIs that align with long-term ESG outcomes, not just short-term targets.

Survey Conducted by NCN

- **The Missing Human Element**

The low emphasis on beneficiary feedback points toward a critical gap: voices from the ground are still not fully embedded in assessment frameworks. Without this, organizations risk missing contextual realities, what success feels like to those who experience it.

Conclusion

The findings underline a clear trend - trust is shifting towards evidence that proves real-world change.

Community impact data stands out as the north star for decision-making, while independent evaluations add credibility. However, the undervaluation of beneficiary perspectives signals that the CSR-ESG ecosystem still needs to evolve toward a more human-centered, participatory model of measurement.
To move from compliance to sustainability, organizations must balance numbers with narratives, ensuring that both data and dialogue inform impact strategies.

Recommendations

- **Integrate Mixed Methodologies**

Combine quantitative impact data with qualitative beneficiary stories for a holistic understanding of effectiveness.

- **Strengthen Independent Evaluations**

The equal trust placed in third-party evaluations emphasizes the need for objectivity and accountability. Stakeholders are aware that internal data alone can carry bias, and external audits strengthen both authenticity and confidence.

- **Reframe KPIs for ESG Alignment**

Redefine success metrics to focus on long-term sustainability outcomes, not just project-level efficiency.

- **Elevate Community Voices**

Introduce structured beneficiary feedback mechanisms - digital surveys, participatory storytelling, and ground-level consultations.

Survey Conducted by NCN

- **Close the Loop**

Use survey insights not just for reporting but for strategic recalibration, ensuring every CSR and ESG initiative remains relevant, responsive, and resilient.

Final Thought

"*Data tells you what happened. People tell you why it mattered.*"

As the world of CSR and ESG matures, the true measure of success will no longer be found only in dashboards or reports, but in the stories they enable, the trust they build, and the lives they touch.

We're entering an era where numbers alone aren't enough. The future of responsible business lies in the fusion of analytics with empathy, where hard data meets human insight. When organizations learn to read both with equal clarity, they don't just measure impact - they create it.

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ABOUT US

Section 8 Company

Industry led organization governed by a strong Advisory Council

Interactive platform for CSR Stakeholders

Insights & Solutions to address pain points

THE AAA APPROACH

ADVISORY: *CSR Strategy, Capacity Building, Professional Development, Influence and Advocacy, Knowledge and Expertise, Recognition and Awards*

ALLIANCE: *Networking Opportunities, Collaboration and Innovation Government, Access to Resources and Information, Resource Sharing*

AMPLIFY: *Best Practices, Brand Building, Showcasing Work, Recruitment and Talent Acquisition Community and Support*

For suggestions and feedback, Connect with us :

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