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#SUSTAINABILITY TALKS

Empowering Change: Strategies And Insights from HCLTech's CSR Leader

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Unlocking transformative change, Nidhi Pundir, VP of Global CSR at HCLTech and Director, HCLFoundation, shares strategic insights on NGO collaboration, impact measurement, sustainability and progress transparency in an illuminating discussion with HCLTech and BW Sustainability World



In a recent conversation between HCLTech and BW Sustainability World, Nidhi Pundir, Vice President of Global CSR at HCLTech and Director, HCLFoundation, discussed the intricacies of effective NGO collaboration, mechanisms for measuring social impact, strategies for long-term project sustainability, scaling successful initiatives, and ensuring transparent data sharing to track progress.

1. How will HCLFoundation, the CSR arm of HCLTech ensure effective communication and collaboration with the NGOs throughout the project lifecycle?

The HCLTech Grant extends far beyond a typical CSR program and functions as a crucial driving force, empowering NGOs to enact positive societal change. To ensure the fulfillment of our objectives, we meticulously manage projects through a process-driven approach. This comprehensive framework fosters open communication and regular dialogue with all stakeholders. Our unwavering commitment to transparency guarantees informed decision-making alongside the valuable feedback of everyone involved. Through this collaborative effort, we achieve alignment with project goals, ultimately leading to the upliftment of targeted communities. Additionally, we host regular symposiums to equip NGOs with in-depth knowledge of both our brand and pertinent CSR regulations. This empowers them to strategically develop their non-profit initiatives within a robust legal framework.

2. What mechanisms will HCLFoundation put in place to measure the social impact of the funded projects?



The HCLTech Grant delivers transformative social impact through the successful interventions of its meticulously selected NGO partners. These organizations consistently achieve exponential growth in the number of vulnerable beneficiaries they reach. The interventions themselves are characterized by exceptional reach, quality and long-term sustainability. This success can be attributed to two key factors: the outstanding leadership and innovative approaches employed by our partners and their deep integration with local communities and government entities at all levels.

To ensure program effectiveness and timely goal achievement, our team implements a rigorous monitoring framework. This framework includes regular field visits, a stringent quarterly reporting system and a comprehensive review process for all partner reports. These reports undergo both programmatic and financial evaluations. Additionally, we have transitioned to an automated system that facilitates real-time tracking of program progress. For further assurance, we engage external agencies or consultants to conduct thorough Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) assessments.

3. How will HCLFoundation support the NGOs in ensuring the long-term sustainability of their projects beyond the grant period?

At HCLFoundation, we understand that lasting impact requires more than just financial assistance; it demands strategic planning, meticulous execution and continuous evaluation. Each year, in collaboration with the NGOs, we define annual plans and allocate budgets, ensuring clarity of purpose and resources from

the outset. However, we also recognize the ever-changing dynamics of the field, and thus, we exercise flexibility in our implementation approach, acknowledging and adapting to the realities on the ground.

Our support begins with a thorough needs assessment conducted by NGOs during the proposal stage, to identify critical issues/areas of intervention in the specific thematic areas (Education/Health/Environment) in the target geographies. Following the selection of partners and

finalization of projects after the 250 days' due diligence process, baseline surveys and assessments are carried out to further refine project objectives and strategies, setting the stage for impactful interventions tailored to local contexts. And as projects progress, our comprehensive impact assessments, guided by predefined selection parameters, helps us to ensure the required impact of the project.

Central to our approach is the rigorous monitoring and review of project progress. Through field visits and regular progress reports, we ensure that projects stay on track and deliver on their intended goals. Monthly review meetings, HCLTech Grant Partners convergences and annual reporting mechanisms further facilitate collaboration and shared learning among stakeholders.

4. Does HCLFoundation have any plans to scale up successful projects or share best practices with other NGOs working in similar areas?

Beyond mere organizational growth, the HCLTech Grant prioritizes scaling impactful interventions while maintaining high quality standards. This commitment is demonstrably successful. Several partner NGOs have achieved significant replication of their initiatives, expanding their reach and impact. Notably, a Nagpur-based recipient has transitioned into a partner for the national HCL Uday program, tackling urban poverty on a broader scale. Similarly, the My Clean City program (in NOIDA) is undergoing expansion to Greater Noida, and the learnings from the Samuday program in Hardoi are now being applied in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. These replications serve as compelling testaments to the program's ability to achieve both scalability and excellence.

'The Fifth Estate – The HCLTech Grant Compendium,' is a comprehensive collection of highly credible NGOs. It showcases the proposals they submitted for the HCLTech Grant program, all focused on empowering rural India. Each case study highlights best practices in environment, health, and education, demonstrating the positive changes achieved in rural communities across the country. By featuring these NGOs, the compendium increases their global visibility and recognition for their important work.

Beyond grant funding, we foster knowledge exchange through initiatives like Partnering for Change, an annual forum that facilitates collaboration among our NGO partners. Additionally, we organize workshops and leverage digital platforms such as the HCL Foundation's Academy to disseminate learnings and foster ongoing collaboration.



5. What mechanisms will be in place to ensure transparent data sharing between the NGOs and HCLFoundation to track progress and assess impact

The HCLFoundation prioritizes continuous improvement through regular, independent impact assessments of our programs. These assessments are conducted by third-party organizations and the resulting reports are published on our websites for transparency. The findings and recommendations from these assessments inform several critical aspects:

- Systematic Progress Tracking: We utilize a systematic approach to track program progress over time.
- Ground-Level Results Mapping: Assessments directly measure the program's impact on the targeted communities.
- Strategic Effectiveness and Intervention Agility: We evaluate the effectiveness of our chosen strategies and the adaptability of our interventions to address evolving needs.
- Resource Optimization: We assess the alignment between program outcomes and the resources deployed.

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