

# EMPOWERING THE NORTH EAST: COLLABORATIVE CSR & PHILANTHROPY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2nd NECSRF 2024  
Report

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# Executive Summary



- The 2nd North East CSR Forum (NECSRF 2024) brought together key stakeholders to discuss the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the holistic development of North East India. The event featured speeches by notable speakers who shared insights and strategies for empowering the region through sustainable development initiatives.

Executive Summary

- The inaugural plenary session focused on fostering collaborative efforts in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy to drive sustainable development in the North East Region, exploring the need, scope, and opportunities for impactful interventions. The session was also highlighted by the release of - ***'A Decade of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in the North East Region (NER) of India [2014 - 2023]: Unlocking Sustainable Development Potential'***.
- Speakers stressed the importance of enabling sustainable development by allowing communities to define their own priorities, ensuring that funding aligns with local needs rather than external assumptions. There is a lack of representation from the region in national philanthropy networks and urged for more significant investments and risk-taking by funders. The focus should be on sustainable suggestions that align with United National Development Programme's broader strategy of integrating CSR into sustainable development frameworks, as outlined in its discussion paper on CSR as an enabler of green growth and climate action.
- There should be collaborative success and future aspirations. The Axis Bank's collaborative efforts with government and community stakeholders have yielded significant successes. The recent digitization of a government event, completed within 10 days, as an example of the bank's capacity to deliver impactful solutions. It was reaffirmed that the bank's commitment to deepening its engagement in North East India through continued investments and partnerships to be continued.
- There is need for persistent efforts to unlock the region's potential and stressed on long-term partnerships with NGOs and senior leadership's active involvement in CSR projects. The need is for informed decision-making and collaboration between NGOs and CSR entities to foster sustainable development and environmental preservation in the North East.
- The key takeaways from the plenary session of the NECSR emphasized on the following: the critical role of CSR and NGOs in addressing regional disparities, the importance of education, health-



and ecological preservation in the development of Northeast India, and collaborative efforts and long-term partnerships as fundamental to sustainable development.

- The thematic session 1 discussion centred on critical gaps in corporate social responsibility (CSR) investments in North East India and explored actionable strategies to bridge these divides. The session underscored the disparities in resource allocation, thematic focus, and geographical reach, while emphasizing sustainable, long-term approaches to CSR that deliver meaningful impact. Speakers elaborated on the unique challenges faced by the region, particularly its ecological sensitivity and limited industrial base, highlighting the need for tailored CSR strategies.
- The session 1 discussion highlighted the pressing need to address systemic gaps in CSR investments and execution in North East India. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders, diversifying thematic priorities, and ensuring long-term impact, the session envisioned a roadmap for equitable and sustainable regional development. The insights and recommendations presented by the panellists provided actionable strategies to transform CSR into a meaningful instrument for change in the North East.
- The thematic session 2 focused on the future of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy in North East India (NER), highlighting the critical need to improve access and delivery mechanisms for CSR and philanthropic resources in the region. The session explored challenges and proposed actionable strategies to strengthen governance, institutionalize CSR, and enhance community development through innovative approaches.
- The thematic session highlighted the untapped potential of CSR and philanthropy in driving sustainable development in North East India. By addressing structural barriers, fostering collaboration, and adopting innovative approaches, the panel envisioned a future where CSR becomes a transformative force for equitable growth and community empowerment in NER. The insights and strategies shared during the session provide a roadmap for stakeholders to align their efforts toward achieving this vision.

# 1. Background



## North East CSR Forum

It has been a decade since India became the first country to legally mandate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in 2014. According to this law in Section 135 of India's Companies Act, it is mandatory for companies of a certain turnover and profitability to spend 2% of their average net profit for the past 3 years on CSR.

In regard to North East Region (NER), state-wise data shows that Assam with Rs 470 crores in FY 2022-23 continues to be the highest CSR investment receiving state of the NER, with the state alone getting 73.5% of this investment. The second highest CSR receiving state is Manipur with Rs 53.45 crore, followed by Sikkim with Rs 36.18, Meghalaya with Rs 21.73 crore, and Tripura with Rs 19.26 crore. The lowest CSR receiving state is Mizoram with Rs 10.99 crore, followed by Arunachal Pradesh with Rs 13.35 crore and Nagaland with Rs 13.57 crore. Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Tripura continue to be some of the least CSR receiving states in India. Further, a regional comparison of CSR allocation in India shows that the Western part of the country received 38% of the CSR funding, as of FY 2022-23. This is followed by the Southern region which received an investment of 25.6% while the Northern states received a funding of 18%. Eastern and Central India received CSR investment of 10.3% and 5.5% respectively. The NER, however, received only 2.8% of the total CSR investment, 74% of which went to Assam alone!



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The NER gets CSR investment from 534 companies as of FY 2022-23 with the number of non-government companies investing being higher than government companies in every state of the region. This shows the growing importance of non-government companies in the region. Private companies are increasingly implementing projects in the region. 88% of the companies investing in CSR in the NER are non-government or private corporations. However, 6 of the 8 states of the region remain highly dependent on Public Sector Units and government run companies for CSR. Among the 2 states which are dependent on CSR from private corporations, Manipur received most of its CSR from one private bank while Meghalaya hardly received any CSR from private corporations.

Education and health continue to receive the highest CSR allocation in the region, with rural development making its way. However, other important sectors like gender empowerment, slum development, and protection of heritage have seen a fall in CSR allocation and have been neglected. This stems for a need to have projects that implement results in a shorter time frame, while ignoring the structural issues and projects that need a longer and sustained investment. There are also disparities in CSR investment within the state among the NER states. The remote, aspirational, and backward districts have not received any preference by corporations for CSR investment. CSR allocation in the NER needs to bridge the following gaps - zonal and state-wise divide, inter-state divide in the NER, intra-state and regional divide, thematic divide, and gap in CSR investment by PSUs and private companies. Hence, a policy revision along with mandated allocation, districts, regions, thematic sectors, and targeting corporations can bring about a healthy CSR investment in the NER.

The Council for Social and Digital Development, in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Guwahati, Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF), Unifiers Social Ventures Private Limited, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Fair Climate Fund, and East Mojo, organized the 2nd North East CSR and Philanthropy Forum (NECSRFP) on 6th December 2024 in the TISS Guwahati Campus. The one-day event saw a deliberation between various bodies, and stakeholders working on CSR in the region and facilitated discussions and conversations on CSR in the North-East.

## 2. Inaugural Plenary: Collaborative CSR & Philanthropy for Sustainable Development in the North East Region: Need, Scope & Opportunity

Panel Speakers & Chair and Co-Chair:



**Naghma Mulla**  
CEO, EdelGive Foundation



**John Borgoyary**  
Regional Head (NER), UNDP



**Ansuman Samantaray**  
Senior Vice President & Circle  
Head, Axis Bank



**Devang Pandya**  
Deputy Vice President & Lead -  
CSR & Ethics, Tata AIG General  
Insurance Company Limited



**Bibhab Kumar  
Talukdar**  
Secretary General and CEO,  
Aaranyak



**Chair: Prof. Jagannath  
Ambagudia,**  
Co-Convenor, NECSRF 2024  
& Director, TISS Guwahati





**Dr. Syed S. Kazi,**  
Co-Chair & Convenor,  
NECSRF 2024 & Director,  
CSDD



**Ritwika Patgiri**  
Session Manager

**This plenary session focused on fostering collaborative efforts in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy to drive sustainable development in the North East Region, exploring the need, scope, and opportunities for impactful interventions.**

According to **Dr Syed S. Kazi, Convener, the Northeast CSR Forum, and Director, Council for Social and Digital Development (CSDD)**, the Forum was conceived in 2022 as a platform to address the growing need for CSR initiatives tailored to the unique challenges of the region. He highlighted how the idea for this forum emerged as the significance of CSR philanthropy began gaining ground. He emphasized the necessity of creating a collective space where stakeholders could come together to align CSR resource flows, funds, and investments with the region's priorities. Dr. Kazi also addressed the inherent challenges faced in implementing programs in the Northeast, including delayed program initiation and a lack of awareness, underscoring the forum's role in overcoming these obstacles.

Dr. Kazi pointed out that despite comprising eight states, the Northeast receives less than 3% of CSR investments, compared to states like Maharashtra and Gujarat, which receive nearly 30% each. This disparity, he argued, underscores the urgency for advocacy, workshops, and collaborations to elevate the region's voice on mainstream platforms. He also emphasized the ecological sensitivity of the region, which limits industrialization but opens avenues for investments in renewable energy, environment-friendly technologies, and climate change adaptation strategies.

**Professor Jagannath Ambagudia, Co-Convenor, NECSRF, and the campus director of the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Guwahati**, elaborated on the institutional role of TISS in advancing CSR initiatives. He outlined the academic framework at TISS, which integrates CSR into various courses under the School of Social Sciences and Humanities and the School of Social Work. Professor Ambagudia also discussed the institution's partnerships with public and private sector undertakings to implement and assess CSR projects, emphasizing the importance of fostering collective responsibility to address the socio-economic challenges of the Northeast.

He highlighted the region's potential as an emerging market and called for increased CSR investments to capitalize on its growth. Additionally, Professor Ambagudia emphasized the importance of preserving the region's cultural and ecological identity, advocating for CSR initiatives that align with sustainable development goals. He noted that the North East's unique challenges, including its underdeveloped infrastructure and reliance on natural resource-based industries, require innovative and tailored solutions.

Both speakers acknowledged the forum's pivotal role in fostering dialogue, collaboration, and actionable strategies to bridge the gaps in CSR investments in the Northeast. They expressed gratitude to the stakeholders, participants, and supporting institutions for their commitment to advancing the region's socio-economic development.





According to **Naghma Mulla, CEO, EdelGive Foundation**, the Foundation has been committed to fostering development and enabling collaboration between corporates and non-profits for meaningful social impact. It has focused on responsible philanthropy and addressing systemic gaps in resource allocation, particularly for marginalized regions like Northeast India. The core philosophy revolves around mobilizing resources, including time, skill, and funding, for social development. The foundation emphasizes responsible giving to ensure funds are used contextually, avoiding harm and maximizing impact.



Historically, North East India has been underfunded and overlooked in national philanthropic efforts. Despite being resource-rich, the region struggles with inadequate representation in CSR initiatives. Naghma acknowledged the foundation's initial challenges in connecting with the North East and emphasized the need for inclusive representation.

Post-COVID, EdelGive introduced the GoFund initiative, a non-programme funding scheme aimed at supporting 100 organizations. A dedicated quota of grants was reserved for the North East to encourage participation. Initial hesitation from NGOs revealed systemic distrust and neglect in funding for the region. Persistent outreach efforts led to increased engagement and partnerships with local organizations. Naghma stressed the importance of enabling sustainable development by allowing communities to define their own priorities, ensuring that funding aligns with local needs rather than external assumptions.

Collaboration among academia, policymakers, and community leaders is crucial for defining a sustainable vision for the North East. Naghma highlighted the lack of representation from the region in national philanthropy networks and urged for more significant investments and risk-taking by funders.

Towards recommendations for Sustainable Development in North East India, there is need to define priorities locally. It is critical that the local stakeholders are engaged to identify the region's unique needs and aspirations. There is need to avoid imposing external models of development that may not align with the cultural or social fabric of the area.

***Historically, North East India has been underfunded and overlooked in national philanthropic efforts. Despite being resource-rich, the region struggles with inadequate representation in CSR initiatives. Hence, there is a need for inclusive representation when it comes to CSR in the North East.***

There is need to encourage participation from North East-based organizations in national and international forums. Establishing mentorship programs to nurture local leaders in philanthropy and social development can be an effective approach for the region. There is need to shift the focus from mere distribution of resources to ensuring impactful and long-term support. Investing in capacity-building for grassroots organizations to enhance their ability to implement sustainable projects will be a priority area going forward.

The Region needs strong collaborative frameworks to strengthen partnerships between corporates, academia, and non-profits to drive cohesive and impactful initiatives. It will be beneficial to promote peer-learning platforms to share best practices across regions.

Naghma underscored the critical need for thoughtful, responsible, and inclusive philanthropy. Her advocacy for the North East highlights the importance of representation, collaboration, and contextual funding in driving sustainable development. By prioritizing local voices and focusing on long-term impact, EdelGive aims to transform the philanthropic landscape in India, ensuring that no region or community is left behind.





According to **John Borgoyary, Regional Head, North East India, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)**, the focus must be on promoting sustainable development in North East India. UNDP has fostered collaborations with the local governments to advance the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in the region. For instance, UNDP has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Government of Meghalaya, aimed at localizing the SDGs within the state. There is greater need to encourage corporations to design CSR activities that directly contribute to the achievement of SDGs, ensuring that business operations support broader development objectives. The emphasis must be on the importance of tailoring CSR initiatives to the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of North East India, ensuring that interventions are relevant and effective.

***“There is a need to tailor CSR initiatives in the North East, keeping in mind the unique socio-economic and cultural contexts of the region, ensuring that interventions are relevant and effective. There is also a need to promoting collaborations between the private sector, government agencies, and civil society to leverage resources and expertise for sustainable development projects.”***

Public-Private and Corporate Partnerships can bolster collaborations between the private sector and CSRs, government agencies, and civil society to leverage resources and expertise for sustainable development projects. The region and the stakeholders need to advocate for CSR programmes that invest in building local capacities, enhancing skills, and creating employment opportunities within communities. Further, keeping in mind the environmental and geological sensitivity of the region, encouraging businesses to adopt environmentally sustainable practices and support initiatives that address climate change and biodiversity conservation, should be a topmost priority.

Additionally, there is utmost need for transparent reporting and accountability mechanisms in CSR activities to build trust and ensure the effective use of resources. Overall, these perspectives aligns with the UNDP's broader strategy of integrating CSR into sustainable development frameworks, as outlined in its discussion paper on CSR as an enabler of green growth and climate action.

### **Ansuman Samantaray, SVP & Circle Head at Axis Bank, North East Region (NER)**

With a legacy of over 30 years, Axis Bank has evolved into a key player in fostering socio-economic development, leveraging its Axis Bank Foundation to align its initiatives with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). According to Mr. Ansuman Samantaray, SVP & Circle Head, NER, Axis Bank, Mr. Samantaray highlighted the foundational role of the Axis Bank Foundation, established in 2006, as a dedicated wing to manage and execute CSR activities. The foundation's primary objectives include: Addressing the needs of underprivileged communities; Strengthening community capacities for sustainable growth; and Collaborating with government programs, financial institutions, and markets to maximize impact.



The foundation's CSR programs are strategically aligned with SDGs, focusing on eradicating poverty (Goal 1), achieving zero hunger (Goal 2), ensuring quality education (Goal 4), promoting gender equality (Goal 5), reducing inequalities (Goal 10), and taking climate action (Goal 13).

The Axis Bank has established a robust presence in North East India, operating 182 branches across the region, with plans to expand to 200 branches by the end of the financial year. Mr. Samantaray emphasized the institution's commitment to generating local employment, noting that 90% of the staff in the region are women. He outlined key investments and ongoing projects by the Axis Bank Foundation in the region. Under education initiatives, a safe teaching and learning environment project in Majuli, Assam, benefiting underprivileged children and implemented in partnership with a Trust. This initiative, spanning 2021 to 2025, involves an investment of ₹9.4 crore. Then there is educational support for 90 underprivileged students in Nagaland, preparing them for competitive exams in medical and engineering fields, with an investment of ₹2.55 crore.



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***CSR in the region can be a path to generate local employment - that 90% of the (CSR project of Axis Bank) staff in the region are women."***

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Under its sustainability and need-based programme, there has been investment on installation of solar cold storage systems across 16 locations in Nagaland, ensuring better agricultural storage solutions, with an investment of ₹5.21 crore. There is the ecological restoration projects in Majuli for natural habitat conservation, with an investment of ₹4.07 crore. A soil and water conservation project has been initiated in Tripura aimed at enhancing household incomes through sustainable practices, with an investment of ₹16.45 crore.

In regard to digital transformation in CSR and Banking Mr. Samantaray underscored the bank's adoption of digital transformation to enhance both banking and CSR operations. He introduced key technological advancements such as, Adi, a AI-powered internal system that empowers staff to address customer queries efficiently; Televiso, a platform enabling seamless service request tracking across branches nationwide; and Siddhi, a mobile-enabled system allowing employees to perform banking transactions and provide customer services outside the branch environment. He emphasized that these innovations have positioned Axis Bank as a leader in digital banking and improved the efficiency and accessibility of its CSR initiatives.

Axis Bank's collaborative efforts with government and community stakeholders have yielded significant successes. Mr. Samantaray cited the recent digitization of a government event, completed within 10 days, as an example of the bank's capacity to deliver impactful solutions. He reaffirmed the bank's commitment to deepening its engagement in North East India through continued investments and partnerships.

**Mr. Devang Pandya, Deputy Vice President & Lead – CSR & Ethics, Tata AIG General Insurance Company Limited**, delivered an insightful address emphasizing the importance of leveraging CSR for the empowerment of North East India. He highlighted the foundational philosophy of the Tata Group, inspired by Sir Jamshedji Nusserwanji Tata's vision of serving the community and highlighted the role of Tata Trusts, which holds 66% of Tata Sons' equity, in philanthropic investments across education, healthcare, arts, and environmental conservation. Mr. Pandya shared the key initiatives of the Trusts including the North East Initiative Development Agency (NEIDA) and the Centre for Microfinance and Livelihoods (CML) in Assam.



***“There are structural challenges for CSR in the North East due to limited industrialization. Tata AIG's has adapted a unique approach in this regard to focus on underserved regions like the Northeast”***

Mr Pandya explained the statutory CSR mandate under Section 135 of the Companies Act, 2013, requiring companies to allocate 2% of profits to social initiatives and highlighted the structural challenges in the North East due to limited industrialization. He shared the Tata AIG's unique approach of focusing on underserved regions like the North East.

Among the key Tata AIG's CSR Initiatives includes scholarships for girls in government schools, benefiting over 247 girls and covering all educational expenses; professional coaching under the Avanti Fellows program in Kokrajhar, Assam, leading to successful admissions in institutions like IIT Guwahati; Healthcare initiatives in partnership with FXB India Suraksha to raise awareness about government schemes and entitlements.

As the Way Forward, Mr Pandya advocated for persistent efforts to unlock the region's potential and stressed long-term partnerships with NGOs and senior leadership's active involvement in CSR projects.



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*There is a need for accountability and consistent communication with donors to sustain long-term partnerships in the region. Further, CSR in the region should adapt a process where conservation is integrated with livelihood initiatives to involve local communities in biodiversity preservation. A balanced development and ecological preservation, particularly in the culturally diverse North East, is required*

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**Dr Bibhab Kumar Talukdar, Secretary General & CEO, Aaranyak,** shared Aaranyak's journey and approach to conservation and sustainable development. He highlighted the importance of accountability and consistent communication with donors to sustain long-term partnerships.

He emphasized integrating conservation with livelihood initiatives to involve local communities in biodiversity preservation and stressed balancing development and ecological preservation, particularly in the culturally diverse North East.

The NER region has its own set of development challenges like limited resources, geographical fragility, and non-compliance by NGOs. There is need to advocate for diversified funding sources and organizational endurance to overcome obstacles.

Dr Bibhav highlighted the necessity of science-based planning to mitigate ecological impacts and advocated for tailored interventions that respect the region's cultural and ecological diversity. Importantly, the 'Financial Viability of Conservation,' is a challenging area and asserted that "Conservation without money is conversation." He also highlighted the emerging opportunities like carbon credits and the importance of recognizing neglected ecosystems.

Finally, Dr Bibhav stressed the need for informed decision-making and collaboration between NGOs and CSR entities to foster sustainable development and environmental preservation in the North East.

### 3. Thematic Session 1:

# Bridging the multi-dimensional CSR Divide in North East Region and Ensuring Meaningful and Sustainable CSR Impact in NER



**Dr. Sanjeeb Kakoty**  
Session Moderator  
IM Shillong



**Amba Jamir,**  
Founder, Sustainability  
Development Forum, Nagaland



**Sukanya Goswami,**  
CSR Manager, STAR Cement



**Shri. I. Changsang, NCS,**  
Under Secretary,  
Investment and Development  
Authority (IDAN), Govt. of Nagaland



**Vikrant Abrol**  
Director, Unifiers Social  
Ventures



**Ritwika Patgiri,**  
Session Manager



The panel discussion centered on critical gaps in corporate social responsibility (CSR) investments in North East India and explored actionable strategies to bridge these divides. The session underscored the disparities in resource allocation, thematic focus, and geographical reach, while emphasizing sustainable, long-term approaches to CSR that deliver meaningful impact. Speakers elaborated on the unique challenges faced by the region, particularly its ecological sensitivity and limited industrial base, highlighting the need for tailored CSR strategies.

## Key Points Discussed

### 1. CSR Investment Gaps in and within North East India

Panellists emphasized the significant discrepancies in CSR fund allocation across the North East Region (NER). Urban areas often attract a disproportionate share of resources compared to rural communities, exacerbating inter- and intra-state disparities. Speaker insights highlighted how underdeveloped districts remain largely ignored despite pressing socio-economic needs.

### 2. Bridging Information and Communication Gaps

The session stressed the lack of coordination between CSR entities and regional NGOs/CSOs. Panellists noted that many field actors remain unaware of available CSR funds, while corporations struggle to identify credible local partners. Establishing a centralized network or platform to facilitate these connections was proposed as a key solution.

### 3. Addressing Thematic and Sectoral Divides

Speakers identified the unequal focus of CSR funds, which tend to prioritize education and healthcare while neglecting critical areas like environmental sustainability, renewable energy, and livelihood generation. They advocated for diversifying thematic investments to create a balanced approach that aligns with regional needs and global sustainability goals.

### 4. Enhancing Industry and Market Presence

With limited industrialization in NER, panellists highlighted the need for innovative approaches to attract CSR investments. Leveraging the region's unique biodiversity, cultural heritage, and ecological context to create market-driven CSR projects was recommended. This approach could foster partnerships with national and multinational corporations.

### 5. Prioritizing Sectors and Communities

The discussion emphasized the importance of targeting CSR efforts toward vulnerable communities, such as indigenous tribes, women, and youth. Panellists noted the need to prioritize sectors like agriculture, renewable energy, and climate adaptation, which have long-term potential to uplift livelihoods and ensure

## 6. Transitioning from Short-Term to Long-Term CSR Investments

Panellists underscored the necessity of moving beyond immediate, output-focused CSR activities. Instead, investments should aim to build sustainable, impactful initiatives that address structural issues and foster long-term socio-economic resilience. Examples of successful pilots scaling into state-wide programs were shared to illustrate this approach.

## 7. Ensuring and Measuring Sustainable Impact

Accountability emerged as a recurring theme, with panellists emphasizing the importance of assessing the qualitative impact of CSR initiatives. Speakers advocated for implementing robust monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure progress, ensuring transparency and meaningful community benefits.

## Additional Insights from Discussions

**1. Disparities in Resource Allocation:** Speakers pointed out how Assam, despite receiving the largest share of CSR funds within NER, sees a concentration of resources in urban centres while rural and remote areas are left underserved. This pattern reflects broader regional trends of inequality.

**2. Ecological and Cultural Challenges:** Panellists stressed the unique challenges posed by NER's fragile ecosystems and rich cultural diversity. They called for CSR strategies that respect these sensitivities while fostering development. Projects that integrate traditional knowledge with modern practices were recommended.

**3. Collaboration with Government and Private Entities:** Panellists emphasized the role of state CSR authorities and local governance in facilitating CSR initiatives. Collaborative frameworks involving corporations, governments, and NGOs were highlighted as key to maximizing the region's development potential.

**4. Overcoming Year-End Spending Rush:** Speakers noted the tendency for CSR funds to be hastily allocated at the end of fiscal years, often leading to inefficient spending. They proposed year-round planning and strategic disbursement to ensure quality and effectiveness.

## Recommendations

- Develop a centralized database of regional NGOs/CSOs to improve coordination with CSR entities.
- Ensure equitable distribution of CSR funds across underserved states and districts.
- Diversify thematic investments to include overlooked areas like climate resilience, renewable energy, and livelihood generation.

- Foster partnerships between corporations, government bodies, and local organizations to create scalable, impactful projects.
- Implement robust frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the sustainability and effectiveness of CSR initiatives.
- Promote community engagement to ensure CSR projects are aligned with local needs and priorities.

**The panel discussion highlighted the pressing need to address systemic gaps in CSR investments and execution in Northeast India. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders, diversifying thematic priorities, and ensuring long-term impact, the session envisioned a roadmap for equitable and sustainable regional development. The insights and recommendations presented by the panellists provided actionable strategies to transform CSR into a meaningful instrument for change in the North East.**





***There is a lack of coordination between CSR entities and regional NGOs/CSOs. Many field actors remain unaware of available CSR funds, while corporations struggle to identify credible local partners."***



***There is an unequal focus of CSR funds, which tend to prioritize education and healthcare while neglecting critical areas like environmental sustainability, renewable energy, and livelihood generation. There is a need for diversifying thematic investments to create a balanced approach that aligns with regional needs and global sustainability goals."***

***"There are discrepancies in CSR fund allocation across the Northeast region. Urban areas often attract a disproportionate share of resources compared to rural communities, exacerbating inter- and intra-state disparities."***



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***“There is a need for innovative approaches to attract CSR investments. Leveraging the region's unique biodiversity, cultural heritage, and ecological context to create market-driven CSR projects is the need of the hour.”***

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***“There is a necessity of moving beyond immediate, output-focused CSR activities. Instead, investments should aim to build sustainable, impactful initiatives that address structural issues and foster long-term socio-economic resilience.”***

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- Foster partnerships between corporations, government bodies, and local organizations to create scalable, impactful projects.
- Implement robust frameworks for monitoring and evaluating the sustainability and effectiveness of CSR initiatives.
- Promote community engagement to ensure CSR projects are aligned with local needs and priorities.

**The panel discussion highlighted the pressing need to address systemic gaps in CSR investments and execution in Northeast India. By fostering collaboration among stakeholders, diversifying thematic priorities, and ensuring long-term impact, the session envisioned a roadmap for equitable and sustainable regional development. The insights and recommendations presented by the panellists provided actionable strategies to transform CSR into a meaningful instrument for change in the North East.**





## 4. Thematic Session 2: Future of CSR and Philanthropy in Northeast Region (NER): Strengthening & Improving Access to CSR & Philanthropic Resources



**Sunil Kaul,**  
Independent Development  
Expert  
(Session Moderator)



**Bamin Tarang, APCS,**  
Director,  
Human Resource Development  
& Employment, North Eastern  
Council (NEC)



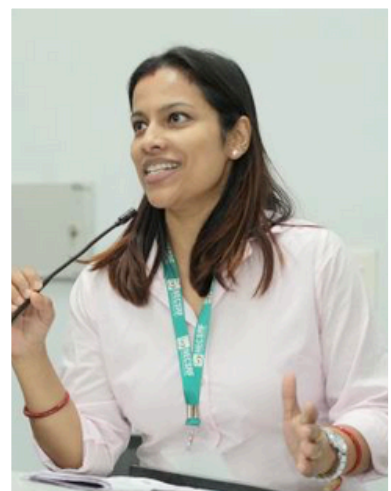
**Raju Narzary,**  
Executive Director,  
The North East Research &  
Social Work Networking  
(NERSWN)



**Prof. Dr. Amarjeet Singh,**  
Centre for North East Studies and  
Policy Research, Jamia Millia  
Islamia University, New Delhi



**Dharamjeet Kumar,**  
Co-Founder & Executive  
Director, Ayang Trust



**Tonmoie Sarmah,**  
Session Manager

The thematic session focused on the future of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and philanthropy in North East India (NER), highlighting the critical need to improve access and delivery mechanisms for CSR and philanthropic resources in the region. The session explored challenges and proposed actionable strategies to strengthen governance, institutionalize CSR, and enhance community development through innovative approaches.

## Key Points Discussed

### 1. Improving Channels of Access and Delivery of CSR and Philanthropic Support

The panel emphasized the importance of developing streamlined channels to bridge the gap between CSR contributors and beneficiaries in NER.

- Challenges Identified: Limited awareness among local NGOs/CSOs about available CSR opportunities and a lack of capacity to engage with corporate entities effectively.
- Proposed Solutions:
  - Establishing regional hubs or platforms for NGOs to interact directly with CSR contributors.
  - Simplifying bureaucratic processes to enable easier access to CSR funds.
  - Increasing corporate visibility in remote and underserved areas through outreach programs and capacity-building workshops.

### 2. Strengthening CSR Governance at State and Regional Levels

Speakers underscored the need for robust governance structures to oversee CSR activities in the region.

- Proposed Measures:
  - Formation of state-level CSR advisory boards to monitor and evaluate CSR projects.
  - Regular audits to ensure transparency and accountability in fund allocation and utilization.
  - Encouraging the creation of state CSR databases to track ongoing projects and assess their impact.

### 3. Policy Frameworks and Institutionalizing CSR Presence

The discussion highlighted the need for a comprehensive policy framework to institutionalize CSR activities in NER.

- Recommendations:
  - Developing region-specific CSR policies that address the unique socio-economic challenges of NER.
  - Mandating CSR contributions from industries operating within the region.
  - Collaborating with academic institutions for policy research and advisory support.

#### 4. CSRs Adopting a Philanthropic Approach for Community Development

Panellists advocated for CSR projects that go beyond compliance to embrace a philanthropic mindset.

- **Key Suggestions:**

- Focusing on long-term community development projects that address systemic issues like education, healthcare, and livelihood generation.
- Partnering with local organizations to design culturally relevant and community-driven initiatives.
- Encouraging corporations to invest in the preservation of NER's unique cultural and ecological heritage.

#### 5. Voluntary vs. Compulsory Mandate for CSR Focus in the Region

The session explored the debate between voluntary and mandatory CSR contributions in NER.

- **Arguments for Voluntary CSR:**

- Encourages genuine engagement and innovation from corporate entities.
- Promotes goodwill and a sense of ownership among corporations.

- **Arguments for Mandatory CSR:**

- Ensures consistent funding for critical sectors and regions.
- Addresses disparities in resource allocation by compelling corporations to contribute equitably.

- **Consensus:** A hybrid approach was suggested, combining mandatory baseline contributions with incentives for voluntary initiatives that exceed minimum requirements.

#### Session Recommendations

- Create a centralized CSR facilitation centre in NER to act as a liaison between corporations, government bodies, and local organizations.
- Develop training programs for NGOs/CSOs to enhance their ability to access and manage CSR funds effectively.
- Design region-specific CSR policies that reflect the cultural and ecological sensitivities of NER.
- Encourage multi-stakeholder collaborations to amplify the impact of CSR and philanthropic efforts.
- Institutionalize frameworks for periodic impact assessments to ensure sustainability and accountability.

**The thematic session highlighted the untapped potential of CSR and philanthropy in driving sustainable development in Northeast India. By addressing structural barriers, fostering collaboration, and adopting innovative approaches, the panel envisioned a future where CSR becomes a transformative force for equitable growth and community empowerment in NER. The insights and strategies shared during the session provide a roadmap for stakeholders to align their efforts toward achieving this vision.**



# 2nd North East CSR Award 2024

## Recognising the Best CSR Practices in North East India

The North East Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Award seeks to identify, recognize, document, publish, and promote innovative CSR community and social development initiatives in North East India, comprising all eight States, including Sikkim.



This is towards building, strengthening and contributing to an inclusive, innovative, and robust CSR ecosystem in the region.

The North East CSR Award provides a holistic and dynamic platform to strengthen the development network that includes various non-profits, donors, companies, and CSRs contributing towards sustainable growth and development in the region.



# Objectives



The North East CSR Award provides a holistic and dynamic platform to strengthen the development network that includes various non-profits, donors, companies, and CSRs contributing towards sustainable growth and development in the region.

- To scout, recognise, acknowledge and felicitate the CSR good sustainable development practices in North-East India aligned to the UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs) and Ministry of Corporate Affairs in India;
- Collate, build, and share evidence in CSR practices for research, knowledge building, and sharing;
- Provide a platform to exchange, share and network amongst the CSR practitioners, stakeholders, and doers in the region for meaningful engagement and collaboration;
- Contribute, build and strengthen a robust CSR ecosystem in the region with improved processes, governance, implementation, output, outcome, and impact;

# CSR Award Categories



## **Education & Learning**

This award recognizes exemplary CSR efforts in advancing education and learning across North East India. Eligible initiatives may focus on innovative teaching methodologies, digital education, STEM learning, mental health in education, financial literacy, vocational training, and the intersection of health and education. Projects that solely invest in educational infrastructure, such as school buildings and classroom setups, are not encouraged.



## **Health & Well Being**

This award honors CSR initiatives that enhance healthcare access, preventive care, and overall well-being. Recognized efforts may include developing healthcare infrastructure, supporting mobile health units, funding medical equipment, promoting vaccination drives, health screenings, mental health awareness, and leveraging digital technology for telehealth solutions. Collaborations with NGOs, healthcare institutions, and government agencies to ensure sustainable impact are encouraged.



## **Livelihood & Employment Generation**

This category celebrates impactful CSR projects that create sustainable livelihoods and employment opportunities in North East India. Eligible initiatives may include skill development programs, micro-finance support for communities (especially women), strengthening market linkages for artisans and farmers, and promoting eco-tourism, organic farming, or renewable energy-based livelihoods.



## **Skill Development & Entrepreneurship**

This award honors CSR initiatives that enhance healthcare access, preventive care, and overall well-being. Recognized efforts may include developing healthcare infrastructure, supporting mobile health units, funding medical equipment, promoting vaccination drives, health screenings, mental health awareness, and leveraging digital technology for telehealth solutions. Collaborations with NGOs, healthcare institutions, and government agencies to ensure sustainable impact are encouraged.





### **Environment & Climate Change**

#### **Green Guardian CSR Award**

This award acknowledges CSR initiatives that address environmental challenges and promote climate resilience. Recognized projects may include conservation efforts for biodiversity protection, renewable energy initiatives such as solar and biogas solutions, climate-smart agricultural practices, and waste management programs fostering recycling and circular economy principles.



### **Agriculture & Rural Development**

#### **Cultivating the Future Award**

This award honors CSR efforts driving sustainable agriculture and rural development. Eligible initiatives may focus on skill development for farmers, micro-finance support for agricultural growth, establishing direct market linkages to improve farmer incomes, and fostering agri-preneurship through organic farming cooperatives, farm tourism ventures, and local food processing units.



### **Youth & Women Empowerment**

#### **Empowering Change Award)**

This award recognizes CSR programs that empower youth and women through skill development, financial literacy, and mentorship initiatives. Eligible projects may include vocational training programs, financial literacy workshops promoting economic independence, and mentorship networks connecting aspiring leaders with role models to enhance confidence and leadership skills.



### **Art, Culture & Tourism**

#### **Celebrating Heritage Award**

This category honors CSR initiatives that preserve and promote the rich artistic, cultural, and tourism heritage of North East India. Eligible initiatives may include restoration of historical sites, support for indigenous art and crafts, cultural exchange programs, artisan skill development, and responsible tourism initiatives that empower local communities.



## Sports & Music

### Green Guardian CSR Award

This award celebrates CSR initiatives that nurture the vibrant sports and music culture of North East India. Recognized efforts may include grassroots sports development programs, providing access to coaching and infrastructure, promoting traditional music and dance through workshops and mentorship, and establishing cultural centers to support local artists and attract tourism.



## Digital Inclusion & Empowerment

### Bridging the Digital Divide Award

This award acknowledges CSR initiatives that promote digital literacy and inclusion. Eligible projects may include digital literacy training, expanding internet access in remote areas, donating or refurbishing digital equipment for schools and community centers, and developing inclusive digital content in local languages to cater to the region's diverse population.



# Honoring Excellence

## Winners & Special Mentions



### Best CSR Performers

**Electronics Corporation of India Limited (ECIL) Hyderabad**, for its exemplary work in improving health infrastructure support by providing essential medical equipment including wheel chairs, ICU beds, ABG machines and others, during 2022-2023 in Lunglei in Mizoram State

**STAR Cement** for its CSR initiatives during 2022-2023, primarily in its areas of operations i.e. particular places of Assam, Meghalaya and West Bengal in five major verticals like Livelihood & Skill Building, Health & Sanitation, Education, Rural Development & Emergency Relief, Environment & Biodiversity and supporting over 2 lakh population



### **Indian Oil Corporation Limited (IOCL) Bongaigaon Refinery**

for its work during 2022-2023 in supporting education in and around its Bongaigaon refinery especially in running the BGR Higher Secondary School as a flagship project, imparting quality education to young children of the area.

**ALKEM Laboratories limited** recognized for its exemplary work in healthcare, supported through health camps and community initiatives. Project Pragati targeted TB elimination, while blood donation camps and World AIDS Day awareness strengthened public health efforts. Garbage management programs and Swachh Samardung Abhiyaan improved sanitation in Kabrey and Samardung. The Mayal Layang Mission Society enhanced community health and elderly care. Project Aagaz fostered empowerment, while new roads and footpaths improved accessibility and safety.



## **Winners**

### **North East Coaching Project,**

(Assam & Meghalaya)

by Avanti Fellows & TATA AIG General Insurance;



Over the past three years, a CSR initiative by TATA AIG General Insurance has provided a free two-year entrance test preparation program at JNV Kokrajhar, Assam. This initiative has supported over 200 high-potential girls from all Eight North Eastern States in Grades 11 & 12, helping them qualify for India's top engineering and medical colleges.

### **Initiative for Empowerment and Sustainable Livelihood (IESL), Assam,**

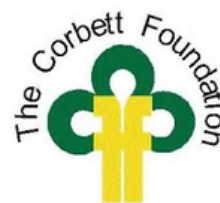
by the Action North East Trust (the ANT) and InterGlobe Foundation;



Sustainable Livelihoods for Smallholder Farmers (Sus-FARM) has enhanced farmers' livelihood security by promoting diversification and expanding income sources. It has increased their earnings through sustainable agricultural practices, improved food security by ensuring better availability and accessibility of nutritious food, and strengthened marketability through value addition and improved marketing strategies. Additionally, improved livelihoods have contributed to better health outcomes for women and children.

## **Project Human-Elephant Coexistence in the Kaziranga Landscape, Kaziranga Tiger Reserve (Assam)**

by the Corbett Foundation, Hem Chandra Mahindra Foundation, International Elephant Foundation (USA), DMCC Speciality Chemicals Ltd, Eicher Group Foundation and Conservation Corporation of India Pvt. Limited (Infinity Resorts)



Established in 1994, The Corbett Foundation (TCF) promotes human-wildlife coexistence across India. In the Kaziranga landscape, its Human-Elephant Coexistence (HELP) programme has worked with Kaziranga National Park and local communities to implement humane, elephant-friendly crop protection methods. This initiative has reduced crop damage, safeguards human lives, and prevents retaliatory harm to elephants, earning strong community support for its sustainability.

## **Project The Classic Football Academy, Manipur**

by the Paamel Foundation and Babina Group of Companies (Sports & Music Category);



Founded in 2019 by The Classic Group of Hotels and supported by the Paamel Foundation, Classic Football Academy (CFA) has become a key force in youth football in Manipur. Dedicated to nurturing talent, especially from underprivileged backgrounds, CFA has won multiple U-17 AIFF Youth League titles and developed players for elite Indian clubs and national teams. In just five years, it has set new benchmarks in football development, shaping the future of Indian football.

## **Indus Pragati Flagship CSR Programme**

(Assam, Nagaland and Meghalaya) by North East Centre for Equity Action on Integrated Development (NEAID) and Indus Towers



Its WASH initiatives enhance public health, reduce waterborne diseases, and empower communities for sustainable development. Through community engagement, infrastructure development, and educational programs, it fosters participation, improves access to clean water, establishes sanitation facilities, and promotes hygienic practices. A key effort under this initiative is the Construction of Girl's Toilet – INDUS Pragati Flagship CSR Initiative, ensuring dignity and better sanitation for all.



## Special Mentions

### **Project 'Morning Nutrition Programme to 10,000 Government School Children**

(Sikkim, Tripura, Nagaland, Assam and Mizoram)

by Sri Sathya Sai Annaporna Trust;



The Sri Sathya Sai Annapoorna Trust is a not-for-profit organization that runs India's largest Morning Nutrition Program. What began with just 50 students has now grown to serve 10 million children across 1,06,000+ government schools, primarily in rural areas, spanning 25 states and 4 union territories. As of July 2024, the program has surpassed the milestone of serving 1 billion meals nationwide, driven by the vision: "Let no child go to school hungry ever!"

### **Project Revive: Skill Building in the area of decorative painting amongst the community of Substance users**

in Manipur and Assam

by AkzoNobel India



Project Revive: Skill Building in Decorative Painting for Substance Users in North East India is an initiative by AkzoNobel, in partnership with the Social Welfare Department, Government of Manipur, and Makers Foundation (NGO), aimed at empowering individuals recovering from addiction through vocational training. With over 600 individuals trained, 50% linked to employment, and 21+ rehabilitation centers engaged, the project has also sent 12 candidates for advanced training at the AkzoNobel Paint Academy, with 6 appointed as trainers. By integrating rehabilitation with skill development, Project Revive enables sustainable recovery and economic independence.



## **Project Swabalamban: A Skill Development Programme for youth in Assam**

by Assam Don Bosco University and ADBU Trust;



Launched in 2014, the Swabalamban initiative provides technical skills to local youth to enhance their employability and self-employment opportunities. It has received financial assistance from the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) under its VAANI scheme, which promotes Indian languages in technical education. The Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE) has also supported Swabalamban on multiple occasions.

## **Rahat Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation *Dignity Under Rahat***

(Assam, Tripura and NER)

by Goonj and MK Hamied Foundation and JLL



Since 2010, Goonj has been active in Northeast India, focusing on states like Assam, Tripura, Meghalaya, and Manipur. They are pioneers in responding to natural disasters like floods and earthquakes, as well as human-made crises such as fires and harsh winters, ensuring timely and effective disaster relief. Their approach goes beyond aid, empowering communities to rebuild lives and infrastructure through the Rahat initiative, which conducts activities under the "Cloth for Work" program. This initiative also aims to reduce migration by providing rehabilitation kits to those who lose their livelihoods in disasters

## **Project Women in Poultry Production (WiPP),**

Assam, by SeSTA, Assam;



The **\*\*Women in Poultry Production (WiPP)\*\*** project, led by **\*\*Seven Sisters Development Assistance (SeSTA)\*\***, empowers rural women in Assam through sustainable poultry farming. By enhancing technical skills, connecting farmers to markets, and strengthening livestock value chains, WiPP provides 900 underprivileged women with annual earnings between **\*\*Rs. 30,000 to Rs. 1,50,000\*\***. This initiative promotes economic participation, bridges financial decision-making gaps, and exemplifies how cooperative, community-driven solutions can transform rural livelihoods.

### **Project School Transformation Programme,**

Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya',  
by Sunbird Trust and Axis Bank Limited (Dil Se) and Manas  
Foundation;



Founded by Col. Christopher Rego in 2014, Sunbird Trust's School Transformation Program has significantly impacted education in Northeast India's remote and conflict-affected areas. By empowering school founders, teachers, and student leaders, the program fosters a collaborative learning environment. Integrating peace-building with education, Sunbird Trust addresses educational gaps and promotes community stability. Collaborating with local communities, the Army, Assam Rifles, and District Administration, they have transformed schools into centers of progress and resilience.

### **Girls Scholarship Project, North East States**

by Avanti Fellows and TATA AIG  
General Insurance



Over the past five years, a CSR initiative by TATA AIG General Insurance has supported 171 meritorious students from disadvantaged backgrounds in Northeast India (303 students by FY 25) with financial aid for higher education. Beyond funding, scholars receive digital devices, mentorship, and skill-building resources, ensuring holistic academic and career support.

# Gallery











## Organisers & Partners



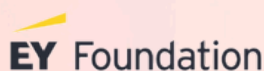


# 2nd North East CSR Forum 2024

Participating organisation



BABINA GROUP OF COMPANIES



# Thank You

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We sincerely appreciate your time, effort, and commitment in contributing to the North East CSR Forum 2024. Your participation and support play a vital role in fostering sustainable development and impactful CSR initiatives across North East India.

Whether you joined us as a participant, speaker, nominee, or partner, your dedication to driving positive change is truly inspiring. Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive future for communities across the region.

We look forward to staying connected and continuing this journey of collaboration and innovation. If you have any feedback or would like to explore future opportunities with us, feel free to reach out.



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