

# Philanthropy and Equity: The Case of India

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GLOBAL EQUITY INITIATIVE  
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The Global Equity Initiative seeks to advance the understanding and address the challenges of equitable global development. Global inequity - both among people and nations – is among the greatest challenges of our times. Severe disparities exist not only in wealth, but in health, education, economic opportunity, and access to new technologies. Less apparent but also troubling are inequities in human security, access to power, and democratic freedoms. Despite the urgency and importance, our understanding of the forces and consequences of severe inequity is critically limited.

Philanthropy, at least in theory, has a pivotal role to play in advancing global equity, acting beyond the broader concerns of government and the narrower interests of business. Social investing can contribute not only monetary resources, but also new skills, fresh thinking, and innovative approaches to global problems. The unprecedented growth of global wealth, the globalization of the economy, the increased mobilization of individuals and the development of a global nonprofit sector are creating an encouraging environment. Most importantly, there is a growing recognition that political boundaries do not define our moral compass, our social responsibility or even our enlightened self-interest any more than geographical borders contain economic markets or cultural influence.

Through its Global Philanthropy Program, GEI seeks to advance the understanding of global philanthropy and to strengthen the role of private philanthropic investments in advancing global equity. Specifically, the program aims to: map and assess the nature and impact of philanthropic traditions and practices in various countries and on specific issues; enhance the effectiveness of philanthropic strategies for advancing global equity; and encourage an international “learning network” of scholars and practitioners engaged in the study and strengthening of philanthropy.

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## Introduction

Seldom does a country challenge the imagination the way India does. Drought and floods stalk the land at the same time; information technology and illiteracy walk hand in hand. Of the population of over one billion, 75% live in rural areas while the rest live in highly concentrated urban conglomerates; a minority live in magnificent luxury while most dwellings lack basic necessities. Limited access to potable drinking water, rudimentary sanitation, frequent epidemics, and the fear of natural disasters are a part of the larger picture of this land.

In a country where vast majorities of the rural population have little or no access to basic services — education, health, food, and shelter — ‘equity’ and ‘equitable development’ are faint and elusive concepts. Yet the prospects for a prosperous, sustainable, and democratic country rest upon the ability of India to provide equitable opportunities for all citizens. While the Government of India is, and will remain, the major provider of basic services in the country, it is increasingly apparent that the resources and ingenuity of the private and voluntary sectors need to be brought to bear on key development and equity challenges. The concept and practice of ‘social investing’ must be swiftly and solidly established.

India has long established traditions of philanthropic and charitable engagement. Yet to date, philanthropy has not systematically addressed the country’s most fundamental development problems. Philanthropy has provided charitable relief to those in need, but not sought to address the underlying causes of deprivation. While many individuals, families, and corporations give generously, many more need to become involved if philanthropy is to have a significant impact. The prevailing mindset -- that government should be the sole provider of social services and needs – must be radically changed.

This paper begins with an overview of India’s development and equity challenges. It then explores philanthropy in India, including its early traditions, more modern influences, and the current landscape of charitable giving. Throughout, it seeks to explore the extent to which philanthropy does – or doesn’t – support and accelerate a process of equitable social and economic development in India. The last section of the paper offers some recommendations and considerations for how to strengthen the nexus between philanthropy and equitable development in this vast and varied country.

Every effort was made to provide a thorough and complete overview of the practice of philanthropy in India. Yet in the end, it is only a beginning. Documentation and data on philanthropy is extremely limited. Much more research is needed in order to develop an accurate picture of philanthropic investors, their investments, and impact.

## Social, Economic, and Equitable Development Challenges

On 15 August 2002, India celebrated its 55<sup>th</sup> year of Independence. While significant achievements in poverty reduction, education and human rights are evident, the country continues to be marked by terrible deprivation and poverty and witness to enormous challenges in education, literacy, and basic health.

The national economic outlook is generally positive. According to the Asian Development Bank's chief economist for India, Sudipto Mundle, the nation's economy is projected to grow at 6.7% in 2003.<sup>1</sup> But in a recent report, the Bank noted that notwithstanding the economic growth, India continues to face major social challenges related to human poverty. In fact, this flagship publication of the Bank paints a national outlook that is mixed at best. The GDP is growing strongly, the markets are buoyant and the balance of payments position is comfortable. However, the large fiscal deficit, short-term and reversible nature of foreign exchange inflows, poor quality of infrastructure and slow growth of employment are of concern. Moreover, performance in human development and growing inter-regional disparities are particularly disturbing. The report notes that:

"An emerging social challenge relates to accentuation of economic and social disparities between leading states, such as Gujarat, Haryana, Kerala, Maharashtra, Punjab and Tamil Nadu, and lagging states, such as Assam, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Such growing inter-regional disparities can lead to serious socio-political tensions in the future if they are not urgently addressed."<sup>2</sup>

Other social and economic reports present similar findings. The first *Human Development Report of India* (2001), carried out by the Government's Planning Commission, illuminates the vast disparities that exist despite overall growth. Performance in terms of education, health and social exclusion indicators remain disappointing. India is still ranked as low as 127 out of 175 countries on the Human Development Index, lower than its per capita income rank of 115.

These and other development reports provide an overview of social and economic challenges in India:

*Income.* Human poverty in India declined considerably during the 1980s and 1990s, yet too many still live below the poverty line. At the national level, the incidence of poverty declined from 44% in 1983 to 26% in 2000. In absolute terms, the number of

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<sup>1</sup> <http://us.rediff.com/money/2003/dec/>

<sup>2</sup> ADB questions poverty reduction in India: Sunday, 02 May 2004, (<http://sify.com/finance/fullstory>)

poor declined from about 323 million in 1983 to 260 million in 2000.<sup>3</sup> Slightly greater improvements were realized in several of the poorest rural states. Nevertheless, poverty – a state of deprivation characterized by the inability of an individual to satisfy certain basic minimum needs for a sustained, healthy and a reasonably productive living<sup>4</sup> -- persists throughout the country.

*Education.* India's educational sector reflects a combination of success and failures. There has been a significant reduction in inequalities in educational attainments across gender, castes, income levels, and the rural–urban divide. But one-third of the population — nearly 300 million people in the age group seven years and above — are illiterate. Almost 60 million children (23 million boys and 36 million girls) are out of school. Almost 40% of children drop out of school before fifth grade, and female to male net enrolment ratio in secondary education remains low at 68. Critical gaps exist in the availability of educational infrastructure and in qualitative aspects of education, including teacher training and curriculum development in the publicly funded school education system. Similar to other social and economic indicators, there are substantial inter-state variations in literacy rates. Kerala has a literacy rate of 90%, the highest among Indian states. In contrast, Bihar had a literacy rate of less than 50% in 2001.

*Health.* Since independence, the government -- ostensibly driven by socialistic goals -- has expressed its intentions in each five year plan to provide basic healthcare for all citizens. Ambitious programs have sought to alleviate poverty while promoting the goals of universal health care, although the close linkages between the two have not been fully appreciated. There have indeed been large gains in health status since independence. Life expectancy has gone up from 36 years in 1951 to 62 years in 1995. The infant mortality rate decreased from 146 per thousand in 1951 to 71 in 1997. The crude birth rate has been reduced from 36.9 in 1970 to 26.1 in 1998, and the crude death rate from 14.9 to 8.7 in the same period.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the significant gains, huge health challenges and inequities remain. In particular, the Government has failed to control communicable diseases, despite the availability of cost-effective and relatively simple technologies. Preventable communicable diseases kill over 2.5 million children below the age of five and an equal number of young adults every year.<sup>6</sup> Tuberculosis, malaria, water and soil transmitted illnesses, and acute respiratory infections are all prevalent diseases. Maternal and child health and nutrition remain enormous challenges. And the newly emergent challenge of HIV/AIDS is staggering: in the year 2000, the number of Indians infected with HIV was estimated at 3.86 million.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Government of India, *National Human Development Report*, 2002, p.38.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>5</sup> India Health Report, 2003, p.1

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*: p.2

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4

*Population.* The 2001 Census places India's population at 1,027.02 million.<sup>8</sup> The population increased by 181 million in the 1990s alone. Of note, population rates correlate with several equity issues. In states where total fertility rates (TFRs) have been reduced to 2% or less -- e.g., Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and several small states and Union Territories -- economic development has been pronounced and significant improvements in education and health have been achieved.

The 1990s saw a visible shift in development planning, in part to try and address some of the inequalities and inequities noted above. The focus has grown from an emphasis on the expansion of goods and services and the consequent growth in per capita income to more comprehensive planning for human well-being. The notion of human well-being is conceived to include not only consumption of goods and services but also the accessibility of all of the population — especially the marginalized and those living below the poverty line — to the basic necessities for a productive and socially meaningful life. Such a concept of well-being encompasses individual opportunity and attainment in education, knowledge, health, and longevity, as well as the quality of the social and physical environment in which individuals live.<sup>9</sup> It is too soon to know whether the shift in focus will usher in true, equitable change.

In response to the substantial social and economic challenges that continue to face the country, the Tenth Five Year Plan has identified the strengthening of social service delivery as one of its most urgent tasks. It has proposed a sharp 80% increase in public social spending in this period, along with improved governance to ensure the more decentralised and improved delivery of pro-poor public services.

Yet persistent negative indicators in literacy, health, education, and women and children's status set against a backdrop of structural violence and inequality clearly indicate the need for more innovative and multi-pronged strategies for change and development. Additional challenges include the digital divide; effective disaster management; participatory local government (*panchayati raj*); skill development and entrepreneurship; and empowerment of the under-privileged. No single template for change nor single cast of actors can bring about the required transformation, there is clearly a growing role for many players and partners in the regeneration of India. The broad *non-profit* or *voluntary* sector and the more circumscribed philanthropic sector have vital roles to play in engaging individuals and building broad-based momentum to bridge the equity divide.

## **Philanthropic Traditions and Influences in India**

The cultural roots of philanthropy in India are ancient and deep, and have given life to long established traditions of philanthropic engagement, social service, and voluntary work. Religion has always played a major role in philanthropic giving in India, and continues to be a profound influence on giving. However various other factors —

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<sup>8</sup> Government of India, *National Human Development Report*, 2002, pp.75-76.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*: p.8

social, economic, and political — have affected and accelerated the emergence of civil society in modern India and shaped the role and practice of philanthropy today.

A contemporary trajectory beginning in the mid-nineteenth century has built upon religious and cultural traditions and created a vibrant and innovative – if still somewhat limited – philanthropic landscape. While the ethos of ‘giving’ in India is clearly ‘personal’, in contrast with the institutionalized charitable giving practiced in the West, the last decade in particular has witnessed a trend towards more organized charitable giving.

The history and development of philanthropy in contemporary India is, in several ways, synonymous with the growth and establishment of the voluntary sector in India. Several major influences have strengthened, shaped, and defined philanthropy and the broader civil society in which it operates. The most significant influences are noted below.

### *Early Traditions*

The worthiness of social service is deeply engraved in India’s social consciousness; individual and unorganized giving have existed in various forms from time immemorial. The concepts of *daana* (giving) and *dakshina* (alms) in Hinduism, *bhiksha* (alms) in Buddhism, and *zakaat* (prescribed offerings) and *sadaqaat* (voluntary offerings) in Islam have been a part of Indian culture for many centuries. It was, however, with Buddhism, through the order of monks (*sanghas*) and later with Christianity, that serving the needy first became an organized institutional concern. The gospel of service was preached through the establishment of schools, hospitals, leper homes, and homes for the aged and the needy.

As in several other societies, the relationships between individuals and groups were established to ensure that the care of the under-privileged and vulnerable members of society was built into social institutions and structures. Social institutions provided mechanisms to help meet the needs of the old, the sick, and the handicapped, and well as other helpless sections of the community. For example, the joint family, caste members and community councils often took responsibility for individuals who needed support.

### *Growth of the Voluntary Sector in India*

The contemporary non-government, non-profit, and voluntary sector in India owes its origin to Gandhian principles, philosophy, and practices. Inspired by Gandhi, committed and charismatic individuals established village-oriented community organizations throughout the country. These organizers guided, motivated, and assisted the community in addressing their economic and social needs and, most importantly, in giving a voice to the unheard. Many of these community groups emerged as organized, informal representatives of the people who could challenge and confront the



establishment. Subsequently, many developed into powerful and effective organizations, capable of delivering social services in an efficient and cost-effective manner.<sup>10</sup>

Institutionalized philanthropy also gained momentum from *the industrialization* that gathered force from the late nineteenth century onwards. Gradually, corporate gains began to trickle towards welfare and development. Several business houses that emerged during rapid industrialization laid the foundation for a philanthropic tradition that have been followed and strengthened by succeeding generations. Notable among the pioneering efforts were the industrial houses of Tata, Birla, Godrej, Mahindra, and Bajaj. These are now some of the largest business houses in India and have been contributing to society in several ways. (The activities and impact of these groups are discussed in the next section.)

More broadly, with the spread of industrialization, there came a period of rapid economic and social change characterized by the transformation of villages into towns and of agricultural economies into industrialized ones. The economy of rural self-sufficiency was disturbed; the emphasis shifted to urbanization. Urbanization, as a process, ushered in several new kinds of social problems. The change affected traditional social structures and institutional forms, especially the joint family and the caste system, which began to experience difficulties in meeting traditional social responsibilities. This gap resulted in the need for more organized social welfare services, increasingly funded at least in part through private funds.

### *Independence and Post- Independence*

The dawn of Independence in 1947 witnessed the beginning of an extensive era of development activities in the country, with the Indian government realizing that political freedom was incomplete without economic growth and social development. The state also became secular in its service to people, whilst respecting the teachings of various religions. The Constitution of India enjoined the government to secure a social and economic order based upon the values of social justice. Planned development was envisaged through five-year plans, which made provisions for the welfare of people. Separate budget allocations were made in every five-year plan for development purposes. At the same time, the drive for Indian independence brought together a number of industrialists (Jammalal Bajaj and the Tatas being forerunners) who supported the movement with monetary funds, infrastructure and human resources.

The first twenty years of Independence (often referred to as India's era of nation building) thus saw the three sectors – the state, the market, and the voluntary sector -- join together to tackle the emerging tasks of nation building, focusing on extension work in such areas as agriculture, health, community development.<sup>11</sup> This, in fact, heralded the beginning of a much broader civil society participation in nation building.

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<sup>10</sup> Ghose and Sardana, *Resource Mobilization*, n.d.: p. 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Working with the non-profit sector in India*; 2003;p.24

In addition to these internal forces, external influences were simultaneously influencing the development of civil society in India. In the early 1950s, in the aftermath of World War II, the United States and many other countries in the industrialized West initiated significant aid programs to help develop and strengthen democratic societies throughout the world. Murray Culshaw the former head of Oxfam India and an independent consultant remarks that:

With the advent of the ‘international’ agencies in the mid 1950s we thus have a new ‘player’ in the growth of the voluntary sector in India which has also had its impact on ‘philanthropy’. At the basic level this ‘international’ influence can be divided up into two categories: the first relating to the grant-making of both multi-lateral and bi-lateral agencies; and the grant-making of the international voluntary (NGO) agencies. And, the second, the influence of the Western experience of fundraising spreading through and influencing the growth of fundraising/philanthropy in India.<sup>12</sup>

## **The Philanthropic Landscape of Today**

As illustrated below, there are a wide range of actors and activities on India’s philanthropic landscape. Yet philanthropy -- as traditionally practiced by private trusts, family foundations, corporate donors, and intermediary agencies -- has had only a limited impact on bridging the equity divide. While a variety of foundations and trusts have made strategic and systematic investments in the social space, the inputs and supplements provided by the private sector have been minimal. However, the world is changing rapidly, and so, too, is the situation in India.

Many trusts established by corporate leaders are increasingly strategic in addressing societal challenges. The information technology revolution has had a significant and positive impact on philanthropic investment trends. Diaspora philanthropy (not discussed in detail in this paper, but dealt with extensively in other papers in this volume) is significant, and has made particularly strategic investments in education and the digital divide. There is the beginning of a philanthropic infrastructure to support and nurture philanthropic engagement. Increasingly, philanthropic and social investment capital in India targets such areas as education, healthcare, population, gender issues, natural resource management, energy, and enterprise development; many initiatives are focused on rural India.

### *The Nonprofit or Voluntary Sector in India*

As noted above, organized philanthropy is part of the larger voluntary/non-profit sector that includes public charitable trusts, societies, and non-profit organizations

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<sup>12</sup> Culshaw, International Support for Philanthropy in India, 2002.

defined as “promoting commerce, art, science, religion, charity or any other useful object.”

The nature and character of non profit organizations (NPOs) or voluntary organizations (VOs) have undergone a noticeable change in the last decade and a half. A large number of organized, development-oriented, charitable and voluntary institutions have emerged that are led by professionals, and employ full-time, paid staff, who are trained to meet the needs and demands of the sector more effectively. These voluntary organizations are *not run for profit*, whether personal or organizational. They may organize and implement profit-earning programs but the earnings are not disbursed to the members.

The formal voluntary sector in contemporary India is fairly vibrant. While there is no definitive study on the size of the sector, there are several estimates and projections. According to a recent CAF study, it is estimated that there are between *two million and three million registered organizations*.<sup>13</sup> The factors that have contributed to this astronomical increase in the number of NPOs in the last few decades include weakening government delivery systems, widespread poverty and deprivation and increasing inequity, rising awareness and social concern about under-development and inequity, and the influx of increased funding — both indigenous and foreign — for development purposes.

The sector has emerged as a new force in social development. The nature of issues addressed by the voluntary organizations and their scale and spread have changed considerably over the years; today they cover a wide spectrum of activities, ranging from basic social issues of education, health, and family welfare to emerging areas like environment protection, gender equality, wildlife protection, and human rights. Their chief strength lies in the fact that they work at the grassroots’ level and are directly involved with the people in these areas.

The relationship between the NGO sector in India and the government is one of collaboration more than competition. The government has set up central and state welfare boards to promote and fund the sector and to provide technical support. From the very first five-year plan, budget allocations have been made for providing assistance to the voluntary sector as policy-makers have felt that this sector can deal with socio-economic problems that the state is unable to address effectively. The government also grants tax relief to individuals and organizations that donate to the voluntary sector.

The growth of the Indian voluntary sector — post-Independence — has been significant, yet it remains somewhat vulnerable. Although there is limited data, it appears that one of its greatest vulnerabilities is its dependence on funds from international aid agencies. Efforts to raise money indigenously for social development are few and far between, a situation shown up more starkly by the potential of the Indian private sector and middle classes to contribute. In recent years the Department for International Development (DFID) of Britain, the Ford Foundation, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, and the Sir Dorabji Tata Trust have all evolved *challenge funds* or *matching grant* models that in

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<sup>13</sup> CAF-India, *Dimensions of Voluntary Sector in India*, 2000.

many ways compel non-governmental organizations (henceforth NGOs) to make efforts at raising local resources. In initial years there was significant resistance; however, when pushed against a wall, many small grassroots organizations successfully raised local funds.

### *Philanthropic Investors and Investments*

A wide range of philanthropic giving takes place in India, ranging from individuals making modest gifts to international foundations hoping to influence the development and direction of civil society. Broadly, philanthropic resources can be classified under the following categories, each of which is described in more detail below.

- Individual giving
- Foundations and trusts
- International foundations and charities
- Regranting organizations
- Religious philanthropy
- Corporate philanthropy

#### Individual Giving

A national survey covering approximately 28% of the urban population conducted by Sampradaan Indian Center for Philanthropy<sup>14</sup> explored individual charitable preferences and behavior. The study found that almost 96% of upper-class and middle-class households in urban India donate for charitable purposes. About 89% of these give to individuals, 87% to religious organizations, and 51% to other organizations. The total amount donated was Rs. 16.16 million.

Additional findings indicate the following patterns:

- Donations are made both in cash and kind. However, 64% of the donors gave in cash to individuals, while 27% donated in both cash and kind, and only 9% donated only in kind.
- The largest portion of gifts (21%) is donated to relieve distress and assist victims of natural calamities. Donations for welfare of victims and family members of war and terrorism (18%) receive the next largest portion.
- The most important reasons for giving include feelings of compassion (68%), the joy of giving (45%), and religious beliefs and practices. Individual and community contributions to the voluntary sector have great potential in a country like India where the instinct of philanthropy is almost inherent in

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<sup>14</sup> SICP, *Investing in Ourselves*, 2001.

people. Religious and moral pressure, perhaps more than any other compulsion, makes the individuals and communities feel the need to give for social purposes. About 29% of the respondents donated because they believed in the cause supported by the organization they were donating to. Donating in order to save tax was polled as the least important of philanthropic impulses.

- About 26% of those surveyed said they did not donate because of a lack of trust in the non-profit organizations. An equal number of respondents said they did not give because they could not afford to do so. Approximately 14% of those surveyed did not give because they had not been asked to do so.

Such variations in the preferences of potential donors and the patterns of philanthropic giving suggests that fundraisers and others who seek to encourage and promote more philanthropy need to build greater understanding of motivations, practices, and barriers need into their approaches and strategies.

In addition to this broad philanthropic participation, there are several highly prominent individual philanthropists in India. These individuals are important not just for their own significant philanthropic investments, but for the attention they bring to philanthropy and the role they set for others. Because many of these individuals come from the corporate sector and/or have established foundations or trusts, their activities are profiled in other sections. Nevertheless, it is certainly important to recognize them as individuals, including: Ratan Tata, N. R. Narayana Murthy, Azeem Premji, K.V. Kamath, Rahul Bajaj, Anand Mahindra, K. M. Birla, Anji Reddy, Dhirubhai Ambani, Rajan Nanda, Jamshyd Godrej, Vikram Lal, Brijmohan Lal, M. V. Subbiah, and Arun and Manju Bharat Ram.<sup>15</sup>

India is home to thousands of family foundations and trusts set up by wealthy merchant communities, and also philanthropists from India's large agrarian communities about whom there is very little documentation.

### Foundations and Trusts

In India there exists a range of foundations and trusts -- mostly set up by business houses -- several of whom evidence a commitment to "invest" in the development of India and its people. Many foundations support specific geographical areas to which they have strong familial and/or corporate ties.

The business house of the **Tatas** is the pioneer in organized philanthropy in India, employing a modern, "Westernized," and secular form of philanthropic investment. The concern for the community and activism that marked the founder, the late Jamsetji Tata, has been followed not only by his sons and immediate successors, Sir Dorabji Tata and Sir Ratan Tata, but also by later generations of the Tatas. Reflecting on the contribution of the House of Tatas to the people of India, the late J.R.D Tata noted:

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<sup>15</sup> This is only an indicative list and in no respect is a complete list of Indian philanthropists

The wealth gathered by Jamsetji Tata and his sons in half a century of industrial pioneering formed but a minute fraction of the amount by which they enriched the nation. The whole of that wealth is held in trust for the people and used exclusively for their benefit. The cycle is thus complete; what came from the people has gone back to the people many times over.<sup>16</sup>

The House of Tata is unique among Indian industrial houses in that 63% of the capital of the parent firm, Tata Sons Limited, is held by Tata (Philanthropic) Trusts, endowed by Sir Dorabji Tata and Sir Ratan Tata (and named after them). These trusts have sponsored and promoted a number of public institutions of national interest, including hospitals, education and research centers, and scientific and cultural establishments. The Trusts founded by Sir Dorabji Tata and Sir Ratan Tata were the first to use wealth as a catalyst for development and they continue to remain in the forefront even today.

Similarly, the underlying tenet of the Mahindra Group, a company set up in the Independence era, reflects a strong commitment to give back:

Mahindra & Mahindra believes that its human resources are its richest assets. Thus a large part of the wealth created by the company must go towards the enrichment of its people.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to those foundations established by business houses, there are a handful of Indian foundations and trusts that make grants in a chosen area of interest. For example, The India Foundation for the Arts (IFA) is an independent, national, grant-making institution with clearly defined objectives to nurture artistic creativity, encourage serious research, and help vitalize and enrich cultural expression across the country. In contrast to much traditional support for the arts that funds presentations and celebrations, IFA gives focused and consistent attention to strengthening underlying artistic processes, overcoming constraints on creativity, and providing seed funding for innovation. IFA also provides assistance with capacity building and management. Other examples of issue-based foundations include the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and The National Foundation for India.

#### International Foundations and Charities

Many international foundations and charities provide funding for development activities in India. While some, e.g., the Ford Foundation, are exclusively grantmaking, the majority – including Action Aid, CARE, Christian Children Fund, Oxfam (UK), Plan International, Save the Children Fund, World Vision, the Aga Khan Foundation, and Charities Aid Foundation also operate their own programs. According to a study by CAF

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<sup>16</sup> [www.tata.com](http://www.tata.com), April 2002.

<sup>17</sup> Mahindra, Personal interview, 2002.

India, in 1997–98 ‘the total foreign funding was Rs. 2,760 crore and is estimated to have touched Rs. 4,000 crore in 1999.’<sup>18</sup>

The Ford Foundation was established in India in 1952. Since its establishment, the Foundation has made 3,475 grants to over 1,100 institutions, totaling around USD 506 million. The Foundation’s program of support has evolved in response to changing needs and priorities of the countries it serves. In India the Foundation has made substantial grants in agriculture and rural development, reproductive health and population, planning and management, livelihoods, human rights, governance, education and culture, regional cooperation and security and the promotion of indigenous philanthropy.

The grantmaking activities of the “operating” charities are difficult to summarize. Most seek to support “development” related activities –e.g., CARE India created a rupee fund of around 7.6 million was created for supporting CARE India’s non-food programs – but each has their own philosophy and agenda. Murray Culshaw, the former head of Oxfam India and current independent fundraising consultant promoting indigenous philanthropy, had the following comments on the role of international (private and public) funding in India.

The primary assumption underlying these agencies is that it is right to provide financial assistance from financially more wealthy societies to assist with disaster situations and poverty in India. In some situations the motivation has been ‘charitable’ (for example Oxfam supporting relief during the Bihar famines of the mid-1950s); in other situations it has been ‘political’ (for example much of USAID assistance could be categorized as ‘political’). This international aid, mostly in the form of grants to voluntary organizations and the governments, has in general not taken into account ‘indigenous’ philanthropy...the assumption being that if the grant would not be provided, the work would not be done. This would have been at least partly true. A consequence of this type of aid, presumably not foreseen, is that it will gradually promote an ethos that the work and service to be done in India needed a grant from either the Indian government or from a foreign source. By and large this international aid system has been counter productive to the development of Indian philanthropy, because it has basically ignored it.<sup>19</sup>

### Regranting Organizations

A fairly recent and promising development is the emergence of Indian donor agencies that both raise and distribute (or “regrant”) funds locally to address a specific issue or vulnerable population. While data is limited, such focused efforts appear to be successful both in stimulating philanthropy as well as in addressing some of India’s most

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<sup>18</sup> CAF-India, *Dimensions of Voluntary Sector in India*, 2000: p. 3.

<sup>19</sup> Culshaw, *International Support for Philanthropy in India: An Overview*, 2002.

critical development and equity challenges. Examples of regranteeing organizations include:

**HelpAge**, registered in 1978 (with the support of Help the Aged in the UK), began work as an Indian agency with an Indian board to promote care of the aged in India. From the beginning efforts were made to raise resources from within India; this has continued and expanded, with Indian resources being supplemented by resources from the international network of HelpAge members.

In 1979, **Child Relief and You (CRY)** was formed by a small group in Mumbai to raise resources to support work with children. It has grown into a nationally respected agency. Ninety percent of its resources are raised from public and corporate donations within India; 10% comes from the international non-resident Indian community mostly living in the USA.

Several international organizations have taken on or are considering roles as local fundraisers and regrantees. For example *World Wildlife Fund India*, raises resources from within India and is a member of the International WWF network. ActionAid established *ActionAid India* as a society to begin fundraising and grantmaking in India. Greenpeace started in 2001 to raise resources within India for its campaigning work on environmental issues. PLAN International has recently (2002) reviewed its strategy for India and has stated its intention to strengthen Plan India Society, to raise resources from within India and perhaps eventually take responsibility for all of PLAN (International's) work in India. Save the Children is also exploring options, though it has to first resolve its relationship with a group based in Mumbai, which has registered the name 'Save the Children' and has started public fundraising in India.<sup>20</sup> And finally, since the mid-1980s the Oxfam groups have been working to establish an *Oxfam India* with an Indian board and local fundraising to support disaster related work and long-term development initiatives. The process, unfortunately, led to two different groups in India calling themselves 'Oxfam India,' but moves are now underway to resolve the confusion. Noteworthy, one of the groups has developed a donor base of 17,000 people in India.

While this paper does not address the "fundraising" side of the philanthropy coin, it is worth noting that several other international, national, and local groups have begun to successfully mobilize Indian philanthropy to support their own work. Notable among these groups are Lok Kalyan Samiti in New Delhi (an eye-care program), which raises all its resources from within India through direct mail; the Hindu Mission Hospital in Chennai, which has built a very diversified system of local resource mobilization to enable its hospital to expand and provide rural healthcare; and *World Vision* which established a local affiliate with an Indian board and is actively raising resources from within India to support its development programs. In all, there are now perhaps 200 voluntary organizations throughout India which have strategic and professionally staffed fundraising programs to seek individual, corporate, and foundation donations.

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<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



## Religious Philanthropy

Religious ideology has always emphasized the values of charity, philanthropy, and mutual help. In modern times religious philanthropy has taken various new forms. A large number of religious sects and cults with large followings have come into existence that are very responsive to social and welfare needs. Many of these have taken the form of organized, registered trusts and foundations that work for the welfare of society. The trusts are expanding the religious-based work into new secular areas such as disaster relief, education (often through the establishment of new institutions), and the promotion of renewable sources of energy. Much of the work done by these religious organization(s) is carried out directly; however, there are instances of grantmaking to other agencies to implement specific projects. Again, while it is difficult to either analyze or generalize the efforts of these groups, there are clearly instances of important developmental work done by these religious-based organizations.

With few exceptions (e.g., a handful of larger organizations) there are no reliable data or statistics on the use of religious funds for development activities. There are clearly a multitude of often small institutions, which are doing excellent work but remain unknown in the larger philanthropy landscape. In some ways, religious philanthropy offers stiff competition to the evolution and growth of secular organized philanthropy. Substantial numbers of Indians in India and elsewhere are aware of the development activities of religious groups like the Swami Narayan Mandir, the Satya Sai Trust, the Ramakrishna Mission, and the Chinmaya Mission and support the activities of these trusts generously.

There is some evidence that Indians residing outside India provide significant support to religious philanthropic groups. For example, the Satya Sai Trust and the Ramakrishna Mission are preferred giving options for a number of non-resident Indians in the United States. In addition, (the females in) a number of households in California's Silicon Valley give to the Ramakrishna Mission and the Chinmaya Mission, both renowned for their work in education. Religious sentiments are not of primary concern to these households where the average income per household is over USD\$200,000. The brand identity of the two organizations vis-a-vis development work influences and inspires these women to extend generous support. Members of the Indian Diaspora in this region are articulate and informed and justify their giving by quoting examples of the exemplary development work undertaken by several of the examples, a pertinent example being the Satya Sai Trust's water project in India, which is also one of the largest in Asia.<sup>21</sup>

## Corporate Philanthropy

India's long and commendable heritage of 'Merchant Philanthropy' has occupied an important place in the development of Indian society. Business sector contributions have supported issues ranging from relief in times of natural calamities and epidemics, to

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<sup>21</sup> Personal Interviews; 1999

building and supporting temples, rest houses, water tanks, bathing *ghats* and wells, to supporting education initiatives and even dowries for poor girls.

This tradition has grown over the last several decades. Corporations are increasingly interested in social investment and corporate social responsibility. The presence of a large number of multinationals (including finance, insurance, and telecommunications companies) have led to increased investments in the development space. Nevertheless, the potential of the corporate sector to promote true social change remains largely untapped.

A national survey conducted by Action Aid in 1999 explored the philanthropic practices of 600 companies. The survey found that 69% were involved in social development activities of some kind. Of these, 17% were working or had worked in partnerships with NGOs/developmental agencies. Another 14% seemed positive about working with the NGOs, while 31% did not see any role for NGOs in their company's social development activities. The report also noted that most companies (78%) provided monetary contributions, while some also made "in-kind" contributions such as the use of company facilities.<sup>22</sup>

The survey revealed that almost 50% of the companies supported development activity for purely philanthropic reasons. However, increasingly, companies are realizing that supporting and nurturing the nation's development is probably also an excellent investment for the growth of their own businesses. Additionally, they recognize that philanthropy is important for corporate image and for developing customer faith in the company, quite aside from encouraging the development of local talent, network development, and product marketing. Employees, shareholders, and consumers also feel a sense of pride in being associated with a caring company.

Below are examples of some exemplary work done by leading Indian corporations that promotes development and equity. The list is illustrative not exhaustive, and provides only a glimpse of corporate philanthropy in India, now in existence for over a century.

For **Tata Sons**, concern for the community came from its founder, the late Jamsetji Tata and has continued; Tata Sons are considered leaders not only in their industrial endeavors but in philanthropic activity as well. Today Tata Sons, comprising 60 companies, operates six trusts distributing approximately Rs. 120 crore.<sup>23</sup> The Tata Trusts fund projects on progressive education, public health, rural reconstruction activities, as well as running hospitals, educational institutions, and cultural institutions.

The **Birla** Group also has a solid philanthropic reputation. The **K.K. Birla Foundation** has an annual income of Rs. 90 lakhs, made up of interest on corpus funds and donations from companies operated by K. K. Birla. Most of the welfare work is done

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<sup>22</sup> PIC, *Partners in Change: Report of Activities*, n.d.

<sup>23</sup> Mehta, Personal communication, 2002.

by the Trust itself, though occasionally ad-hoc grants — in the range of Rs. 10,000 to Rs. 50,000 — are given on humanitarian grounds. In addition, the Birlas are pioneers in building state-of-the-art temples all over the country.

The **Bajaj Group** has also been a leader in corporate philanthropy in India working in the areas of the education of women, abolition of child marriage, education, promotion of forestry, and the popularization of *khadi* and village industries. In 1942, The Jamnalal Seva Trust was set up with an initial corpus of Rs. 500,000; representing Jamnalal Bajaj's entire share in the family wealth. After Jamnalal's death, his wife also surrendered her wealth for development and relief efforts.

The **Social Initiatives Group (SIG)** of ICICI is a permanent and full-time group concentrating on development-related initiatives. Through the SIG, ICICI seeks to define and effectively fulfill its responsibilities as a corporate citizen. A particularly innovative ICICI-supported program is the new **GIVE Online**, promoted by **Give Foundation**, a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to help non-profit organizations to raise funds and to promote greater accountability and transparency in the non-profit sector in India. This is a charity portal that allows people to donate online, with a high degree of personalization, and assurance.<sup>24</sup>

The **Citibank India Community Support Program** was launched in June 1997 to focus on micro-credit organizations working to empower under-privileged urban women through income generation. The program is based on the 'Banking on Enterprise' program and builds on Citibank's extensive experience in supporting NGOs that serve the under-privileged across the world. The program is based on the philosophy of self-reliance and volunteerism. Citibank works with five local NGOs to implement the program. Citibank India's Micro-credit Community Support Program has been acknowledged as a 'unique example of public-private partnership'.<sup>25</sup>

In recent times, two of India's leading software giants -- **Infosys** and **Wipro** -- have established foundations, the Infosys Foundation and the Azeem Premji Foundation. These two foundations have brought a performance-based corporate discipline to their philanthropic programs, seeking to maximize and ensure investment impact for the beneficiaries. The Infosys Foundation focuses on healthcare and education (and related infrastructure), and the promotion of dying art forms. The Azim Premji Foundation focuses on universal elementary education.

#### *Efforts to Promote, Encourage, and Support Philanthropy*

The foregoing overview of philanthropic investors and investments in India shows a commitment to promote just and equitable development in the country through the use of "private resources for the public good." These efforts should be recognized, applauded, and held up as exemplars to others. But in truth, current levels of

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<sup>24</sup> [www.icici.com](http://www.icici.com), April 2002.

<sup>25</sup> [www.gcweb.citibank.com](http://www.gcweb.citibank.com), 2002

philanthropic resources in India are severely limited when compared to either the challenges facing the country or the ability of the wealthy to engage in addressing them. To have a true impact, more actors and greater resources more strategically invested are required.

A number of groups have taken on the challenge of promoting more, and more strategic philanthropy in India. While several of the groups seek to promote philanthropy more broadly within the country or among certain populations, others seek to strengthen the field through more focused activities, such as the encouragement of corporate giving. The three key organizations promoting philanthropy are:

**The Center for Advancement of Philanthropy (CAP)**, established in October 1986 to provide professional assistance to philanthropic organizations in the area of charity laws, effective administration, financial management, taxation, investments, and resource mobilization. The Center also undertakes research and critical appraisal of public policies affecting philanthropy and serves as a clearing-house for information in the field.

**The Sampradaan Indian Centre for Philanthropy (SICP)**, a national non-profit organization, founded in 1996, dedicated to promoting and strengthening philanthropy in India. The organization works to foster co-operation between the state, the corporate sector, and civil society organizations. It promotes networking among donors and NGOs. Its strategic program areas include networking and advocacy, research and documentation, communications, and the promotion of educational material and campaigns to promote giving.

**The National Foundation for India (NFI)**, established as a non-profit, philanthropic, fundraising and grant-making foundation to support voluntary action for national development. The mission is one of stimulating and supporting the creative potential of people and community organizations to build a prosperous, progressive, and united India. The Foundation aims to mobilize public opinion as well as resources for supporting development action, and lays great stress on networking between non-governmental social action groups, the media, the corporate sector, and academic and research agencies, and on forging partnerships between organizations sharing similar concerns.

Together these institutions perform a variety of functions, including documentation of philanthropic initiatives, skill-building in resource mobilization, and the promotion of dialogue and discussions on philanthropy. Of note, none of these organizations have used social marketing or public education techniques to promote public awareness of the challenges facing India or the role of individuals in addressing them.

In addition, as noted above, there are a number of important attempts to promote philanthropy more narrowly among particular audiences and to strengthen and support the philanthropic work of others. Significant efforts include:

**Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) India**, which seeks to help create a sustainable voluntary sector through the development of resources that reflect a trusted relationship and shared vision between donors and NGOs. CAF India has pioneered corporate community initiatives with several companies and established payroll giving programs through its offices in Delhi and Bangalore.<sup>26</sup>

**Partners in Change**, a not-for-profit organization that was initiated by ActionAid in 1995 with support from what is now the Department for International Development of the British government. Partners in Change seeks to increase corporate involvement in addressing and remedying the challenges faced by poor and marginalized communities.

Several other groups, including the **United Way of Mumbai**, the **Business and Community Foundation, New Delhi**, and the **Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)—Social Development and Community Affairs Council** are prominent intermediaries working to promote and raise corporate–NGO interface.

### **The Way Forward: Towards Strategic Social Investing?**

As illustrated above, the charitable impulse is well established in India. A plethora of individuals, families, and corporations are engaged in providing assistance and relief to those in need. And, as noted, there are indeed many excellent examples of philanthropists who seek to go beyond charity and use philanthropy to address the underlying causes that make charity necessary. But such efforts are limited. The concept and practice of strategic philanthropy aimed at true, equitable, social change – often referred to as “social investing” is still new to India. During the course of this research, many leaders from both the corporate and non-profit sector were interviewed; most had not heard the term and had some difficulty interpreting its meaning.

In *Global Social Investing: A Preliminary Overview*, Paula Johnson discusses social investing from a global perspective. She, too, notes that global social investing has no commonly accepted definition.

(It) refers to the strategic and systematic investment of private philanthropic resources to address complex, inter-connected manifestations of chronic underdevelopment. Representative targets of global social investing include poverty, health, the environment, human security, and basic education. Global social investing (GSI) is driven in part by the imperative to address vast inequities among rich and poor — the ‘haves and have-nots’ of the world — that have become all too evident since the debate on globalization began....Global social investing can be practiced strategically at both the macro and micro level...GSI

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<sup>26</sup> [www.cafindia.org](http://www.cafindia.org), April 2002

presents opportunities to make significant differences, almost irrespective of the level of available resources.<sup>27</sup>

The potential to promote more -- and more strategic -- social investment in India is tremendous. Perhaps more than most other countries, India is ready and fertile for the infusion of private funds into development initiatives. The Government of India, more than ever before, is ready for partnership and has, in fact, opened up key social sectors to third-sector investment. The challenge before the voluntary sector is to evolve mechanisms and strategies for domestic philanthropy and social investment. Communication and fundraising are two sides of a coin. How effectively the sector positions itself to attract private investment is the challenge for this century. There are fairly diverse philanthropic organizations that address social ills and are competent to champion philanthropic giving. These organizations will, however, need to look keenly at addressing issues of *mistrust*, *accountability*, *transparency*, and *governance* — critical in hampering partnership and investments for development.

More specifically, the following obstacles and barriers need to be addressed in order to promote social investing.

#### Knowledge and Information Gap

The single largest deterrent to promoting social investing is the existing knowledge gap in philanthropy. Data on the sources, amounts, recipients, and *impact* of philanthropy simply does not exist. By way of example, there is no study on the numbers, activities, and contribution of the many family foundations and trusts in India. Without such information, the “big philanthropists” will continue to get the spotlight, perhaps overlooking the extensive contributions of others. And without such knowledge, it is difficult to effectively make a case for the potential roles of private investing in the social space.

#### Philanthropic Infrastructure

With the exception of the Ford Foundation in India, Charities Aid Foundation, the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, and the Dorabhji Tata Trust, few organizations or funding agencies have invested in the promotion of philanthropy in India. Organizations promoted/funded by these agencies have a long way to go before we can become sustainable. Establishing a new institution or developing the capacity of an existing organization to support philanthropy in ways similar to The Philanthropic Initiative in Boston or similar ‘one stop institutions’ is critical to the promotion of social investing.

In addition, there are too few (only a handful) of philanthropy professionals in India. While ‘Moving Away From Aid’ is the new mantra of the international donor community, there are few ideas and resources to strengthen local resource mobilization, skills, and knowledge. A second tier of resource persons in philanthropy is virtually

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<sup>27</sup> Johnson, *Global Social Investing: A Preliminary Overview*, 2001: p. 4.

absent. For effective and sustainable social investment, an investment in building human resources/philanthropy professionals is critical.

### Legal and Regulatory Changes

Two major issues facing non-profit organizations in India are archaic laws and excessive government control. Consistent efforts are needed to advocate for a more enabling and encouraging legal environment.

Current laws – e.g., the Societies Registration Act (1860) and the Public Trusts Act – date to 1860 and do not adequately cover organizations working in areas of developmental support and activities. Even the federal Income Tax Act grants tax exemptions only to organizations having a ‘charitable purpose’. Developmental organizations today undertake wide-ranging activities, including research, documentation, and training as well as the operation of development programs. The Societies Registration Act, which was initially conceptualized in 1860 as a membership forum for professional and fraternal associations working in areas of literature, science, etc., is hardly a suitable choice for registering development-implementing agencies. As a result, organizations addressing the wide and varied issues facing modern society experience considerable frustration. There is a need for a separate legislation under which voluntary organizations working in the field of development can register themselves.

In India today, excessive government oversight and bureaucratic requirements also limits the effectiveness and efficiency of voluntary organizations. Non-profit organizations must register with and report to a number of government authorities. At the state level, the organization has to register either with the office of the Charity Commissioner, the Registrar of Societies, or the Registrar of Companies. At the federal level, they must register with the income tax authorities and if they receive foreign contributions, then they must also register with the Home Ministry. Separate returns must be filed annually with all three authorities.

While a friendlier Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) has replaced the Foreign Exchange (Regulation) Act (FERA) applicable to commercial organizations, the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act or FC(R)A continues to be a ‘thorn in the flesh’ for most non-profit organizations. There are endless delays in granting registration under the FC(R)A and organizations that are less than three years old are even refused registration. Even ‘prior permission’ to receive foreign funds is often denied without ascribing any reason.

In addition, while it is beyond the scope of this paper to review tax law in detail, it is worth noting that the tax deductions for philanthropic contributions are probably not sufficient to promote greater levels of philanthropy. For example, the tax rebate of 50% is no longer attractive for corporate donors, especially since corporate taxes have been reduced.

## Closing Thoughts

India's economic and political liberalization has opened doors for private participation in spheres hitherto the province of the State. Such participation has brought a sea change in areas such as education and health.

Yet this country of a billion people has an almost equal number of individual, local and national challenges that require even more significant private investment and participation. The ruling party and their "India Shining" campaign has just been rejected by the voters. A key factor in the vote appears to be a concern that despite promising national economic growth, poverty remains entrenched in many areas, and that the both regional and urban/rural divides have been ignored and unchecked. The architects of economic reforms have been routed for leaving rural India and poverty alleviation behind.

There are lessons to be learnt from these 14th General Elections. India's growth and development are impressive and promising, but their impact has been enjoyed by a minority in largely urban areas. More *equitable* development is the key challenge for this country and its new leaders. And such development will unlikely be achieved without the involvement of the private sector, at the corporate, community, and individual level. *Social investment* rather than more charitable forms of giving are needed. The new government must act swiftly to encourage such private commitment and participation to enhance social investments both quantitatively and qualitatively.



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ANNEXURE I: REFERENCES, BIBLIOGRAPHY

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*Monetary Terms and Conversion Rates*

▪ **Indian Currency = Rupees (INR)**

- 1 lakh =
- 100,000 = 0.1 million
- 10 lakhs = 1,000,000 =
- 1.0 million
- 1 crore = 100 lakhs = 10,000,000 = 10 million

**Conversion:** 1 USD = INR 48