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CSR AT SAINT-GOBAIN: A GLASS APART

With over 70 CSR initiatives and 55 partnerships In India, Saint-Gobain, has impacted over 55,000 lives across 10 states

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Saint-Gobain, a French company with a 359-year legacy, goes beyond crafting exquisite glass. In India, its far-reaching CSR initiatives are making the world a better home for countless families. With over 70 initiatives and 55 partnerships, Saint-Gobain has impacted over 55,000 lives across 10 states. This multi-part story explores how Saint-Gobain tackles social and environmental challenges, aligning business with social good.

For the last 359 years, Saint-Gobain, a storied French company, has been making fine glass and related products, preserving a tradition of excellence that started when King Louis XIV awarded Nicolas Dunoyer and his partners an exclusive manufacturing privilege for mirror glass. That singular event spawned the Manufacture Royale Des Glaces de Miroir and started the decline of Venetian monopoly of the European mirror glass market, the prime objective of the King's Minister of Finance, Jean-Baptiste Colbert.

In its remarkable history of three centuries and more, this venerable glass company has steadfastly mirrored the essential philosophy of its business, moving innumerable hearts with its far-reaching CSR programmes that continue to reinforce its purpose of "Making the world a better home."

Through 70 initiatives and 55 partners in 10 states in India, Saint-Gobain has impacted the lives of over 55,000 people. That has, in turn, fulfilled 9 SDG goals, encompassing health, education, gender equality, clean water and sanitation, sustainable living, and climate action.

Saint-Gobain established its operations in India in 1996 and began with medical camps for high-risk mothers as its first CSR project in 2003. Twenty-one years later, the company has a robust CSR portfolio with an allocation of Rs. 350 million





▲ Nurturing young minds: A moment of learning at a renovated anganwadi



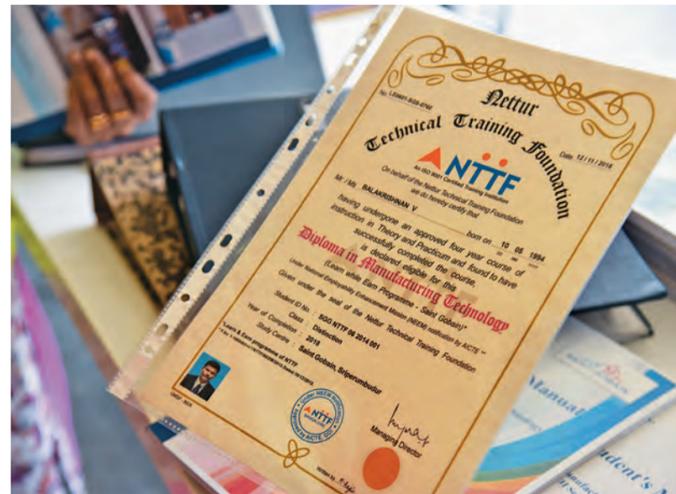
▲ Little innovators at work: Experiential learning with diy science projects

in FY 2023-24. “We always support Skills & Livelihood, Girl Children Education, Sustainability & Environment, Health Care (WASH), Differently Abled communities and local infrastructure, of our surroundings,” says P Padmakumar, Executive Director – HR & Head of CSR, Saint-Gobain India.

The impact of Saint-Gobain’s CSR initiatives is best understood in the context of its two pillars: Business Identity and Business Values. Aligned with the former, Saint-Gobain’s Flagship Portfolio focuses on educating, skilling and upskilling stakeholders in the construction industry, ensuring a workforce aligned with its core business needs. As for Business Values, Saint-Gobain’s Strategic Portfolio champions the holistic development of the girl-child. These same values - gender diversity, education, infrastructure, and health - also guide its Regional Portfolio, which addresses specific local needs and requests.”

LEARN WHILE EARN (LWE): INNOVATIVE SCHOLARSHIP BREAKS BARRIERS, BUILDS FUTURES

Saint-Gobain’s innovative scholarship programme turns vocational education into a paying proposition, ensuring low dropout rates and high returns both for students and their families.



▲ Empowering futures: A certificate of achievement from Saint-Gobain’s learn while earn program

Though the power of vocational education to transform lives and build sustainable future is indubitable, in India, it remains a distant dream for families facing economic hardship. Recognising this, Saint-Gobain has tailored an innovative scholarship programme which goes beyond supporting students and helps families too, with 50% of the aid going to their parents. This financial cushion empowers families, enabling them to prioritise their children’s education and minimises drop-out rates. Indeed, in many cases, the scholarship not only supplements family income but also subsidises the education of younger siblings, fostering a sustainable cycle of learning that ripples through generations.

Take, for example, S. Kavita, whose son Sri Varshan is a beneficiary. “Given that we have no regular income, the scholarship is a boon,” she says. “It allows us to make ends meet and has brought about a positive change in our son. He is more disciplined now.”

In collaboration with the Nettur Technical Training Foundation (NTTF), Saint-Gobain has launched a four-year (eight-semester practice school) diploma programme in Manufacturing Technology aimed at equipping students with the skills required for roles in modern shop floors, utilising the idea of a practice school. Since its launch in 2011, 360 students have enrolled.

Beyond Tamil Nadu, the LWE programme has been rolled out in Rajasthan and is now open to girls as well.

To apply for this programme, candidates must have completed 10th grade, be at least 18 years old, and come from a financially deserving background. The application process includes a psycho-diagnostic and neuro-muscular test, as well as a parent interview. Once accepted, students are required to attend a five-day practice school and a one-day theory session.

“25 to 30% of seats are vacant at the ITIs and polytechnics because parents pull out students as they want them to start earning as soon as possible. We have addressed this problem with our innovative scholarship initiative,” says Padmakumar, Executive Director – HR & Head of CSR, Saint-Gobain India. According to A.B. Chithra, Vice President of NTTF, Saint-Gobain LWE caters to those who wish to study but cannot, due to family pressures.”

Kanhuram Mandi, a 19-year-old farmer’s son in Jharkhand with modest means and a younger brother also studying, had resigned himself to dropping out of school after the 10th grade. “Higher education in science would have been unaffordable for my parents. However, the scholarship proved to be a godsend, allowing me to pursue my dreams without any financial stress on my family.



Since its launch in 2011, 360 students have enrolled. Beyond Tamil Nadu, the LWE programme has been rolled out in Rajasthan and is now open to girls as well."



Learn while earn program enhances vocational education and economic empowerment

There is a chance of placement right here in Saint-Gobain. My parents are relieved," explains Mandi. Though Saint-Gobain offers jobs to the students, it is not mandatory for them to join.

For Maria Stephen and his family, the opportunity to work at Saint-Gobain has been life changing. After completing the LWE programme, Maria and his brother were absorbed by Saint-Gobain. Over the years, they saved enough money from their jobs to build a house of their own, turning a far-fetched dream into a concrete reality. Stephen, who works as an unloading and shut-down maintenance mechanic, shares the turnaround in his life: "My father is a tailor and paying the house rent was a monthly struggle, with seemingly no way out. But the scholarship and the job at Saint-Gobain have changed our fortunes."

1,050 SMILES & COUNTING: SAINT-GOBAIN CHEERS UP EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE IN INDIA

Saint-Gobain is fostering brighter futures by turning anganwadis into well-provided, stimulating environments for children to play, learn and grow

Saint-Gobain is changing the face of early childhood care by setting up and upgrading anganwadis and child development centres across India. Thus far, the company has set up 28 model anganwadis and renovated 55 others, impacting over 1,050 children and mothers in 2023 alone. A prime example is the renovated anganwadi in Thirumangalam village. This centre, unlike most, boasts features like vitrified tiles, audio-visual

equipment, clean water, mosquito nets, a play area, and a kitchen garden. These improvements, made in collaboration with Hand in Hand India, create a safe, secure, and stimulating environment for young children. While the government ensures food and nutrition, Saint-Gobain focuses on infrastructure upgrades. Together, they're providing a well-rounded experience for children under 6. Dr. Krishna Kumar, Vice President of Health at Hand in Hand India, reports a surge in attendance since the renovation, with 25 children currently enrolled and room for more.

SAINT-GOBAIN'S STEM SPARKS SCIENTIFIC CURIOSITY

The programme ignites young minds by weaving science into captivating narratives, making it fun and relatable

Saint-Gobain is on a mission to cultivate future scientists! Partnering with the Samskriya Foundation, it is transforming science education in rural Sriperumbudur schools. Its innovative STEM program ignites a passion for science in young minds, impacting over 615 students from grades 6 to 8 across 6 schools.

Eschewing fancy equipment, this programme embraces the magic of science hidden in plain sight. Using low-cost, readily available materials, the curriculum brings science to life through engaging storytelling. Sandhya Jaichandren, Managing Trustee of Samskriya Foundation, explains, "We weave science into captivating narratives, making it fun and relatable for the students."



Interactive learning: A teacher engages students with visual aids in a classroom session

Step into Panchayat Union Middle School in Mambakkam Village, and you'll see the spark first-hand. Students proudly showcase their science experiments – a testament to the programme's success. Piyush Tiwari, a bright-eyed 6th grader, beams as he demonstrates his motion sensor experiment. "Science was just memorising facts before," he exclaims. "Now, it's exciting! I can't wait to explore it further."

SANITATION INITIATIVE BUILDS DIGNITY

Saint-Gobain contributes to India's ambitious Swachh Bharat programme, building dozens of modern toilets in Tamil Nadu in collaboration with Single Teacher Schools

Around the world, 3.5 billion people lack something as basic as a toilet. Thankfully, in India, the Swachh Bharat Mission is changing this unpalatable

reality with a massive rollout of toilets. Saint-Gobain, on its part, has jumped in to empower communities in the Pondur village, Sriperumbudur, in Tamil Nadu. Here, the company has joined forces with Swami Vivekananda Rural Development Society. Together, they have built 111 toilets for families identified by the village head. These aren't just basic facilities; they are 40-square-foot facilities with tiled walls, bathing space, water storage, and even cleaning supplies. Shanti, an MGNREGA worker for over 40 years, shared a cramped shanty with her family without toilets. Open defecation brought with it perils of its own, especially at night when the area is frequented by wild animals. But last year, their lives changed. "The toilet brought us dignity and safety," Shanti beams. No more fear, no more shame."

The impact isn't limited to Pondur. Saint-Gobain has sponsored the construction of 289 toilets in the Mambakkam village too. This remarkable project earned it the prestigious Nirmal Gram Puraskar Award, a national recognition for total sanitation efforts.

FORGING RELATIONSHIPS - SAVE OUR SOULS CHILDREN'S VILLAGE

Since 2016, Saint-Gobain has partnered with SOS Children's Villages, an organisation dedicated to providing loving homes and a nurturing environment for children in need. These villages simulate a family environment, with dedicated SOS mothers, each caring for a group of eight children like her own.

Saint-Gobain has also adopted the Family Strengthening Programme, empowering 600 vulnerable families across eight SOS villages in Karnataka, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Rajasthan. This programme identifies families at risk and equips them with the resources and skills needed to provide adequate care for their children, ultimately preventing family separation.

Twenty-one-year-old Arya, who is now studying to be a speech therapist, reveals that she came to SOS village as a 3-year-old and left it as a 'home' after 17 years. "For others, it might be an orphanage, but for us, it's home. We had a mother and siblings. We went to school, and based on our

✓ Bright futures begin here: Engaged toddlers at play and learn session



interests, they arranged activities like spoken English classes. That's how I learned Bharatanatyam!"

Srinivasan, the Village Director at SOS, expresses his deep appreciation for Saint-Gobain's unwavering support. "Their contribution fills us with energy," he says. "We've even had 40 children from our village take the Gift of Education-LWE course, and some have found jobs at Saint-Gobain!"

BREAKING BARRIERS, BUILDING FUTURES: SAINT-GOBAIN SUPPORTS PROJECT PUTHRI

Puthri is a life-altering initiative that arms teenage girls with the skills to rise above their daunting circumstances, dream big, and carve out successful careers.

In rural Chennai, a group of young women is charting a new course. *Project Puthri*, a unique initiative by Avtar Human Capital Trust (AHCT) supported by Saint-Gobain, is arming these girls to fight their way out of the cycle of poverty and carve out successful careers.

Project Puthri is a five-year programme that starts in 8th grade and continues

through high school. It equips girls with the tools and confidence they need to make informed career choices. Launched in 2018, the programme has already impacted over 1,100 girls across 11 schools.

Kanishka S., a bright-eyed 14-year-old in 9th grade, is a testament to the programme's success. "Before *Project Puthri*, I had no idea what I wanted to do after school," she shares. "Now, I dream of becoming a lawyer! The programme has taught me valuable skills like empathy and how to prepare for entrance exams and interviews."

Statistics paint a stark picture. According to an AHCT study, only 12% of girls in Chennai's government schools escape poverty. This often forces them to abandon their education, limiting their professional aspirations. *Project Puthri* disrupts this cycle by providing girls with confidence and the necessary tools to navigate higher education and secure white-collar jobs, ultimately paving the way for financial independence.

"Long-term programmes like *Project Puthri* require dedicated partners," says Dr. Saundarya Rajesh, Founder-President of AHCT. "Saint-Gobain's unwavering commitment has been instrumental in reaching so many girls. Together, we're empowering them to break down barriers and build brighter futures for themselves."

SAINT-GOBAIN EMPOWERS GIRLS WHO ARE DIFFERENTLY ABLED

Well-known American author and disability rights activist Helen Keller wrote in a letter to a friend that "after a lifetime in silence and darkness, to be deaf is a greater affliction than to be blind... Hearing is the soul of knowledge and

information of a high order. To be cut off from hearing is to be isolated indeed."

Keller's powerful words resonate through Saint-Gobain's stirring social initiative that is helping scores of girls rise above their disabilities. Since 2017, it has been supporting the Little Flower School in Chennai, providing education, accommodation, and healthcare for 90 girl students. Notably, 60 of these girls are hearing and speech impaired, 30 girls visually impaired highlighting the importance of inclusive education that caters to diverse learning needs.

✓ Innovative smart glasses open a new world for visually impaired students



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Empowering the Visually Impaired: A Partnership with HTBF

Saint-Gobain's commitment to accessibility extends beyond hearing and speech. It has partnered with Help The Blind Foundation (HTBF) to uplift the lives of visually impaired individuals. HTBF works towards providing university education and improving job prospects for the visually challenged.

Saint-Gobain actively supports HTBF's mission by providing scholarships, laptops, and innovative smart vision glasses. R.Sunder Kumar, HTBF's trustee, applauds this collaboration: "Saint-Gobain shares our vision, and their transparent communication makes them a perfect partner."

Their impact is evident at Madras Christian College (MCC), where HTBF, with Saint-Gobain's support, launched a resource room equipped with computers and assistive technology. This space empowers visually impaired students through the EMET programme, enhancing their education, mobility, and employability. Additionally, 15 students received smart vision glasses – a technological marvel featuring an SOS button and a built-in camera for reading and facial recognition.

Subhashree, a student at MCC, expressed her gratitude: "This resource room is a game-changer, as I don't have a computer at home." Such stories showcase Saint-Gobain's commitment to creating a more inclusive world where education and opportunity are accessible to all, regardless of ability.

Sustaining Mother Earth - Urban Forest

At SIPCOT's behest, Saint-Gobain took on the mammoth project of converting a dump yard next to their factory in Sriperumbudur into a Miyawaki Forest. Result: Instead of plastic and waste, the space is covered with 60,000 plantations and 40 types of species. The water is fed through an STP tank, which has abundantly harvested rooftop rainwater routed to it. A Miyawaki Forest is basically a grove of fast-growing native plants and dense mixed vegetation. The concept was created in the early 1970s by the late



▲ Kanishka's canvas: Crafting dreams on the blackboard with Project Puthri

Japanese forest ecologist Akira Miyawaki.

Srinivasan K, who leads maintenance of greenery and sustainability at Saint-Gobain, says, "The forest shows Saint-Gobain's commitment to Zero Net Carbon. After 4-5 years, each tree will be able to absorb 10-20 kg of CO2 from the atmosphere."

EMPOWERING AND LIBERATING GIRLS WITH IMPACT & OTHER INITIATIVES

From education and empowerment to bridging gender divides and fighting child abuse, Saint-Gobain has emerged as a torchbearer for causes across the social spectrum

Saint-Gobain supports Akanksha Education in its endeavour to educate underprivileged students by honing their academic excellence and



» From waste to wonder. A walk through the flourishing Miyawaki forest at Sriperumbudur

imparting life skills. Around 467 students in two schools in Pune and Mumbai have been impacted in the 2023.

Through its partnership with the Nanhi Kali Foundation, the company reached out to 4000 underprivileged girl students in Gujarat, Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh in 2023 and enabled them to continue their education. With Saint-Gobain's support, Nanhi Kali could focus on providing quality digital education to girls through adaptive learning software via digital tablets.

One in two children in India are survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA), as per the Rakshin Project led by Sakshi. This non-governmental outfit spearheads campaigns against sexual harassment, gender-based violence, and CSA. Saint-Gobain is enabling capacity building for anganwadi workers and helpers with the knowledge, skill and resources needed for child protection. Sakshi conducted workshops on capacity building, behavioural changes and safe practices for children with Saint-Gobain's support. About 300 community creche helpers and workers benefited from these activities.

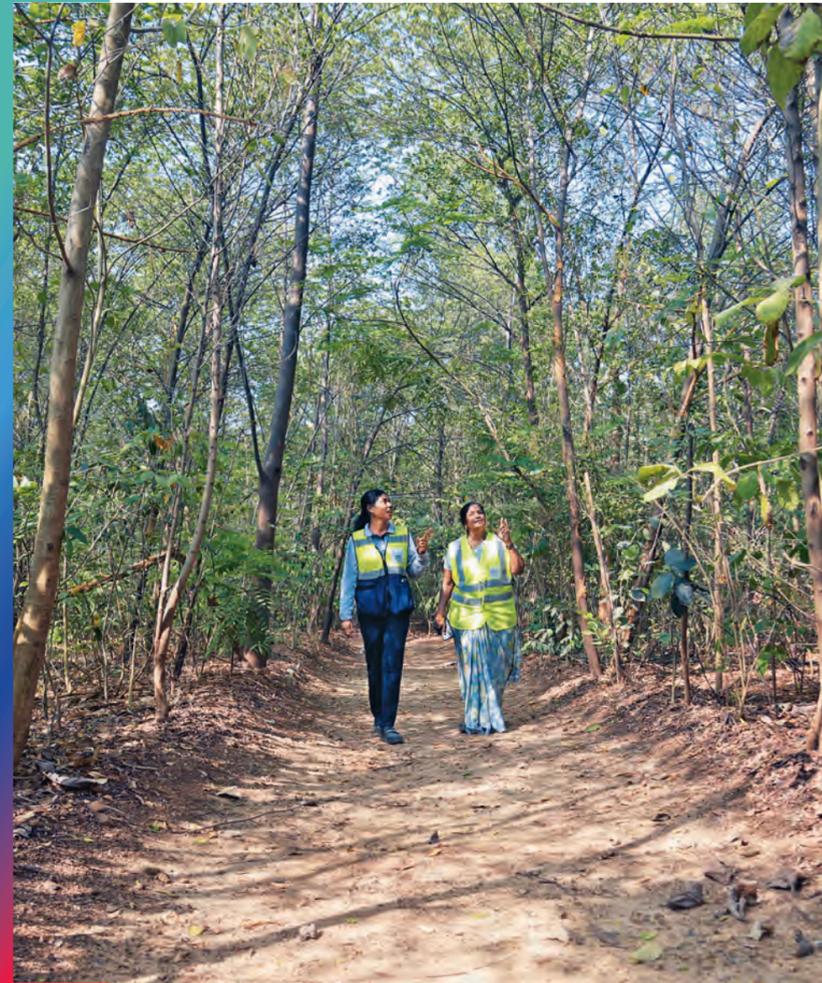
As part of its gender diversity girl child programme, Saint-Gobain is supporting 30 IIMPACT learning centres, which benefitted 900 students in 2023. These centres enable girls to assimilate Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) and life skills, encouraging them to become independent and self-starters. It also gives them access to basic primary education.

Parikrama Humanity Foundation works towards providing standard education for children from underserved communities. It supports early childhood development and creates opportunities for low-cost but high-quality education. It also provides comprehensive healthcare and family support. In 2023, Saint-Gobain sponsored 360 students from 10 classes.

Saint-Gobain's CSR projects transcend corporate philanthropy to make a meaningful difference in the lives of underserved communities and people. By focusing on community development, education, particularly among girls and differently-abled children, the safety of children from sexual abuse, and sustainability, the company is leading by example. 🌱



Instead of plastic and waste, the space is covered with 60,000 plantations and 40 types of species.



▲ Roots of change: Planting new life in Saint-Gobain's urban forest initiative

Corporate Social Responsibility is the heartbeat of numerous organisations' operations. **The India Drive** highlights the heartfelt efforts of some of India's leading companies, which have passionately implemented policies to weave social, ethical, environmental, educational, human rights, and consumer concerns into their business practices. Their unwavering commitment aims to uplift and enhance the lives of India's human capital, leaving a lasting, positive impact on society.

