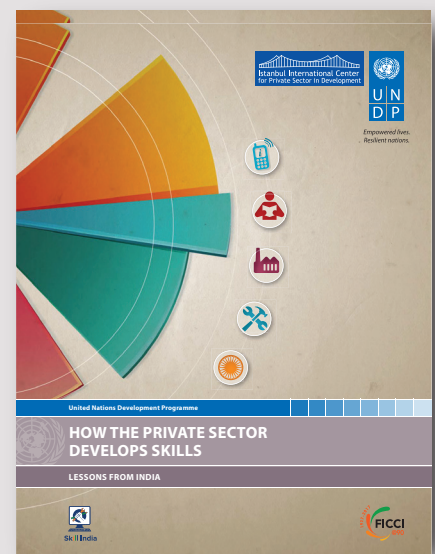




HOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPS SKILLS

EMPOWER PRAGATI: TRANSFORMATIONAL TRAINING AND WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT

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SUMMARY

AUTHOR	Prof. Neera Agnimitra Ms. Vidya M. Iyer
SUMMARY	Empower Pragati is a private venture in the skilling industry in India with a unique focus on home management for women in the informal sector. Founded in 2010, it had provided training to 75,359 candidates as of the end of 2014, engaging in as many as 14 projects across 14 sectors. The company received funding from the National Skill Development Corporation starting in January 2011 in a public-private partnership.
KEY FEATURES	Its commitment and gained knowledge in skilling of female house workers is unique among training providers. With an intent to work for women's empowerment and a focus on the often-ignored unorganized sector, Empower Pragati began with transforming domestic workers into home managers. Gradually, the company scaled up to providing skill training in a variety of domains including computer operations, salesforce development and creation of front office staff for 14 industries across India.
RESULTS	In five years, Empower Pragati has trained 75,359 people, conducted more than 1 million days of training, and generated more than 2 million days of employment and \$8 million in revenue. It has established some 600 training centres where 300 trainers provide specialized management, monitoring and active training and counseling with trainees and companies for prospective jobs. The company has evolved as a profitable and sustainable business venture as well as a successful social enterprise. It has effectively countered pervasive concerns related to the safety of women, social mindset against women's empowerment and blocks to women's spatial mobility.



SUMMARY

Empower Pragati began as a private sector social enterprise, specializing in livelihood skill development to empower India's disadvantaged youth and vulnerable sections of society. The company initiated its agenda with a programme to transform domestic workers into 'home managers' through skill building. It started providing free-of-charge training for women and then placing them on the rolls of the company (Empower Pragati) for verified and preselected household activities. Empower Pragati subsequently enlarged its reach in the skilling landscape to include government projects such as Aajevika Bihar, Saksham, Uttar Pradesh Skill Development Mission (UPSDM) and the STAR scheme (a framework linking national skills certification with monetary benefits) in its portfolio over the years. It also built a corporate social responsibility portfolio by providing skill training to vulnerable youth under CSR programmes for Indian Oil, Aircel and other private sector partners.¹

The company has been successful in consistently achieving expected targets. Empower Pragati's vocational skilling programmes are currently being delivered in 600 centres across 20 states of India. Since its origin in 2010, Empower Pragati has trained 75,359 people, conducted more than 1 million days of training, and generated more than 2 million days of employment and \$8 million in revenue.²

History and development

In June 2010, Airtel's former CEO Rajiv Sharma founded Empower Pragati Vocational and Staffing Pvt. Ltd. as a private company to provide skills and knowledge to the marginalized sections of society. Jagannath Rao Dasigi was another co-founder. Later, Pritha Dutt joined the Board. The urge to realize achievements that are not 'self-centred' lead to the establishment of Empower Pragati as a private sector social enterprise, as Mr. Sharma said: "We want transformation as the end goal of every project that we are into. Else, we are not in it. We are not in the business of just making money."³

Initially, training focused on skills development training of maids to become 'home managers'.⁴ This successful initiative was the starting point for Empower Pragati. It enlarged its reach to provide skilling services to a broader social group such as migrant workers, physically challenged persons, and school and college dropouts. For those groups, Empower Pragati engaged in several different projects for government and private sector clients. Today, the company also provides paid training programmes leading to a Certificate for Vocational Trainers and a Certificate for Debt Recovery Agents, among others.

In December 2010, Empower Pragati formally became a partner firm the Government of India's National Skill Development Corporation. Empower Pragati functions as a public- private partnership in collaboration with NSDC. Empower Pragati received its first tranche of funds from NSDC in 2011.

In 2015, Empower Pragati enhanced its profile when it became accredited by the Business Call to Action (BCtA), and invited to join their initiative to expand Empower's wide range of training. BCtA is a UNDP global initiative that challenges companies to develop inclusive business models that offer the potential for development impact along with commercial success.⁵



Box 1: Empower Pragati as member of UNDP's Business Call to Action

In 2015, Empower Pragati became accredited by the Business Call to Action (BCtA), a UNDP global initiative that challenges companies to develop inclusive business models that offer the potential for development impact along with commercial success.

Empower Pragati became a participating company of BCtA Impact Measurement Services (BIMS), which helps inclusive business members of BCtA conduct ongoing measurement of social impact along with operational performance. BIMS provides technical expertise and technology tools to design and implement survey-based data collection from the field through employees, customers and other stakeholders.

Empower Pragati is working towards implementing the National Skills Qualification Framework programme in six states in India. It has successfully entered into an Agreement with the State Government of Himachal Pradesh to implement this programme. The NSQF programme provides vocational-education content to Secondary and Senior Secondary Schools (grades 9 through 12). Empower Pragati specifically works with the Himachal Pradesh government on implementing ITES, retail and agriculture content. BCtA is helping Empower Pragati collect feedback on its vocational programmes from different stakeholders to channel their opinions to policy makers. Through BIMS, BCtA helped Empower Pragati develop an analytical framework with indicators to visualize the linkage between their business and social impact. After several rounds of consultations with Empower Pragati's management and field staff, BIMS further helped them design mobile-enabled surveys for different stakeholders including students, teachers, parents and government officials, etc. The company completed the surveys for over 2,000 individuals in Himachal Pradesh within the first three months of implementation. Empower Pragati plans to expand its data collection to other locations.

Organizational setting

Empower Pragati has 600 training centres across 20 states of India with 300 people who provide specialized management, monitoring and active training and counseling with trainees and companies for prospective jobs. In each centre an average of 300 trainees is trained per year.⁶ Empower Pragati is headquartered in New Delhi with its branch offices in Ahmedabad, Bhubneshwar, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Solan and Patna.

Its organizational structure is functional and simple. The top management is composed of three directors, headed by a managing director. At the headquarter level, the second layer of management is composed of departments of business development, operations, human resources, placements and finance. The functions of these departments is to support and monitor the state-level teams.

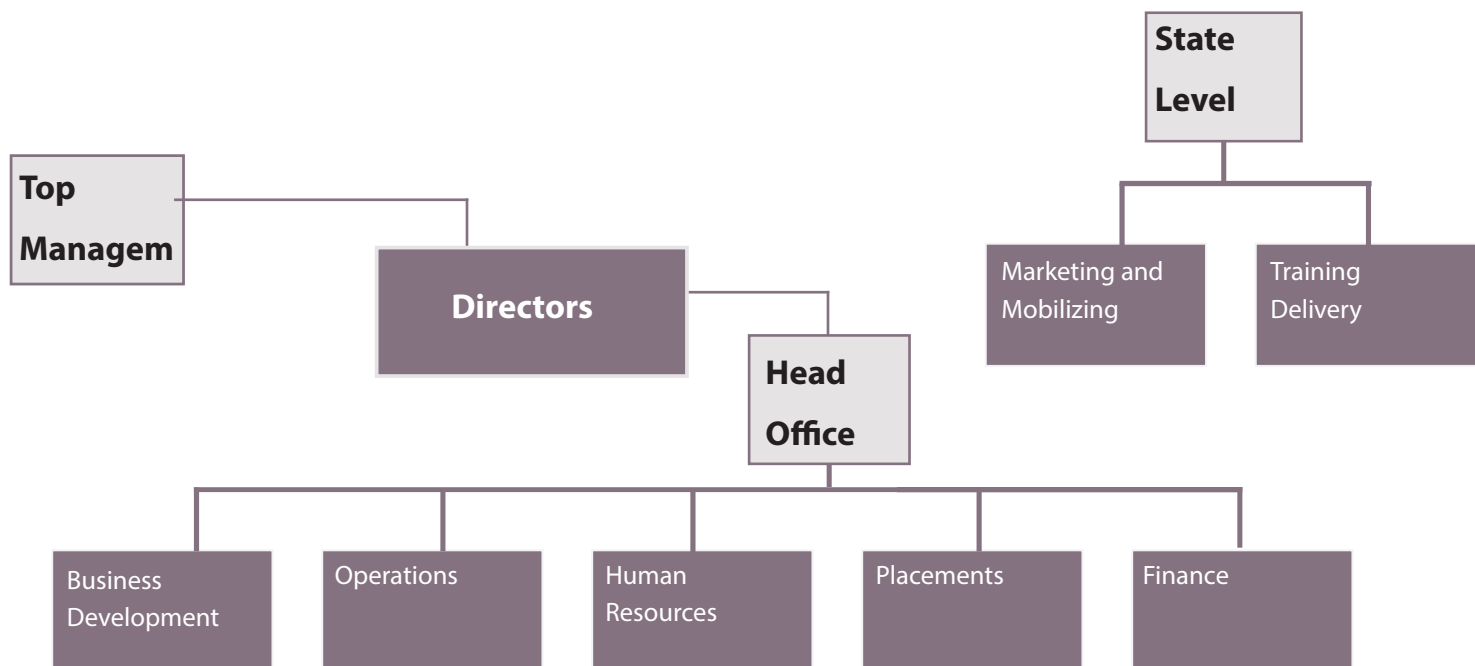
- The business development team is responsible for identifying skills for training as per NSDC skill gap reports;



- The operations team is responsible for implementation of training programmes at ground level. It further trains and certifies the Master Trainers, places the trainers at the centres, develops the training content, evaluates trainee feedback and reports daily activities;
- The human resources department manages and supports the trainers, staff and conducts other internal processes;
- The finance department organizes resources, manages debt and working capital and ensures market credibility. Decisions related to tie-ups with government agencies or CSR departments of the companies are determined primarily by financial considerations.⁷

The most critical processes in the skilling value chain are managed at the state level. Identifying the local business partner, training the trainers, delivering the right content and quality assurance are the primary roles of the state-level operations team. The teams for mobilizing the candidates operate at the district and the village levels in each state. Communication between the top management and state level staff is key for the smooth functioning of the organization. In order to keep the communication channels free, there is a focal point for coordination at the state level, which is connected to another focal point of co-ordination at the Head Office. The organizational values are transparency and honesty. The culture of the organization is informal, emphasizing mutual respect and equitable outcomes.

Figure 1: Empower Pragati's organizational structure





Business/operational model

Empower Pragati operates as a self-sustaining social venture. It is a business venture that addresses the financial needs of the public through skilling and training and, at the same time, generates revenue to sustain itself. It strikes a balance between funded projects and paid projects.

Focusing on vulnerable groups, Empower Pragati develops programmes that provide essential life skills that build self-esteem and dignity at work – in addition to programme that provide technical skills. Empower aims to transform the vulnerable segment of the population to valuable assets for the labour economy. It thereby targets minority groups, persons with disability, adolescent girls, unemployed youth, migrants and displaced communities and underprivileged children.⁸ It improves their lives through the effective implementation of programmes in education, skilling and livelihood creation. The offers to those targets group can be categorized in three areas:

- skills development for employability and self-employment;
- enhancement of school and college curriculum with job relevant skills; and
- programmes for vulnerable youth.⁹

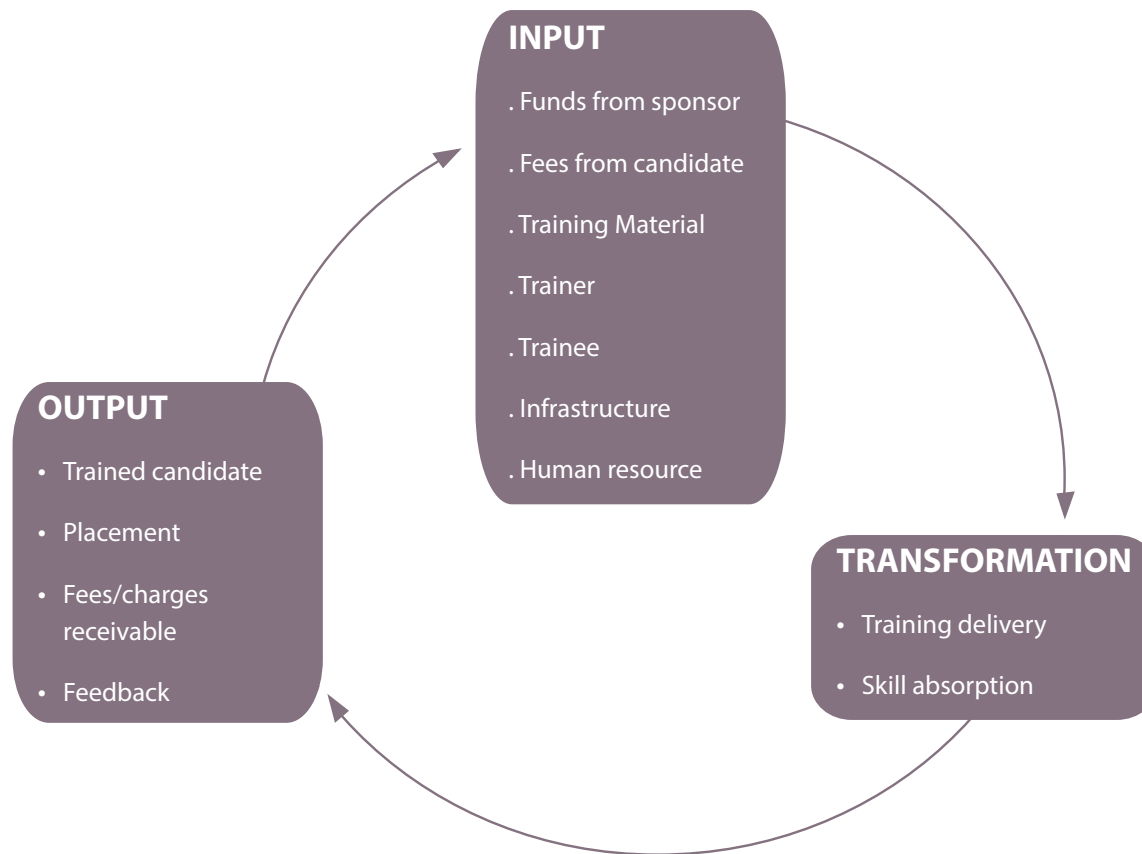
In each of those areas, Empower Pragati exercises several initiatives that are conducted in the form of projects. Those projects are created and performed with its private and public partners. Empower Pragati's business process for all projects uses external financial inputs such as funds from sponsors and fees from candidates. It further often hires or leases external infrastructure, from vendors turning them into project partners and thus operates on an asset-light model. Empower Pragati itself provides training material and trainers. All inputs together are combined to conduct the training delivery. The outputs of the process are the successful training of the trainees, placement, possible fees and knowledge creation. Figure 18 illustrates the business process.

Empower Pragati follows an asset-light model and has implemented a lean management principle. The company has created a manpower plan that optimizes the multiple skills of the people into multiple roles that they could play. For example, the State Level Head is also the project manager for the project(s) in the state and the trainer of a centre in a project area (even if a village) also doubles up as the centre-in-charge.¹⁰

Some schemes cater to the unemployed, other to the schools and colleges. Aircel A+ is targeted towards skill building and IT training for school children and youth across India through daily lectures, hobby classes, guest lectures, industrial and field visits to enrich the learning experience. Also, a specialized centre, the Skill Enhancement and Rehabilitation Centre for Youth, provides vocational training and employability for juveniles in conflict with the law.



Figure 2: The business process at Empower Pragati



Source: Empower Pragati

Empower Pragati conducts two types of projects:

- **Sponsored or funded projects:** These are projects owned and driven by a sponsoring company or the government. Empower Pragati steps in as the operations partner and charges the sponsoring company/ government. Funds are disbursed at various stages of the operation as per agreement.
- **Learner-paid projects:** These projects are conceived and driven by Empower Pragati. In these projects, candidates are mobilized for admission. An earmarked amount (fee) is charged from the candidate for the programme.

Figures 3 and 4 illustrate the processes in the project implementation for both types of projects.

Figure 3: Process flow for sponsored or funded projects





BUSINESS/OPERATIONAL MODEL

Figure 4: Process flow for sponsored or funded projects

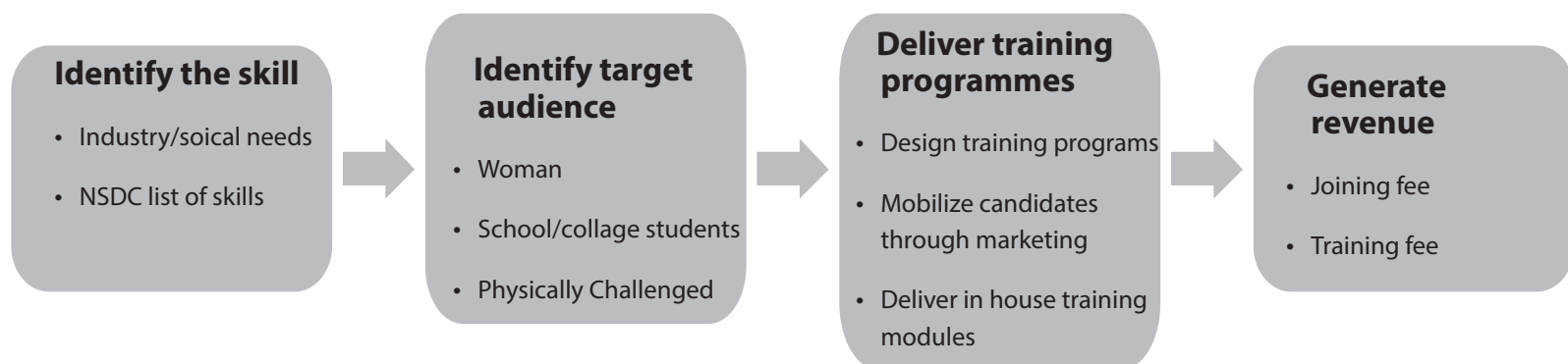


Table 1: Sponsored or funded projects conducted by Empower Pragati for private sector or government partners

SPONSORING AGENCY	PROGRAMME	TARGET AUDIENCE	SECTOR	TRAINEES TARGETED/ SKILLED	LOCATION
PROJECTS FUNDED BY STATE AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT					
State Governments of HP, Haryana and MP		Schools & colleges	• Basic IT • Agriculture • Life skills	N/A	• Himachal Pradesh • Haryana • Madhya Pradesh (MP)
Bihar State Government	Grameen KaushalyaYojana (Formerly Ajeevika Skills)	Schools & colleges	• Basic IT • Agriculture • Soft skills • Retail • Hospitality	268	• Bihar • Muzaffarpur • Samastipur • Darbhanga
	NULM	Women entrepreneurship in vocational skills	• Beauty • Wellness	135	• Himachal Pradesh
Himachal Pradesh National Urban Livelihood Missions	Uttar Pradesh Skill Development Mission (UPSDM) State Governments		• Hospitality • Beauty culture • Garment making • ICT • Health care	1083	• Uttar Pradesh

BUSINESS/OPERATIONAL MODEL



SPONSORING AGENCY	PROGRAMME	TARGET AUDIENCE	SECTOR	TRAINEES TARGETED/ SKILLED	LOCATION
PROJECTS FUNDED BY STATE AND CENTRAL GOVERNMENT					
Himachal Pradesh National Urban Livelihood Missions	Employment Generation and Marketing Mission (EGMM)		Placement linked programme	11781	• Andhra Pradesh
	Shaksham	Adolescent girls	Employability training	317	• Delhi
Ministry of HRD	National Skills Qualification Framework	Senior secondary schools	• Retail • Banking • IT/ITES sectors	2591	• Haryana • Himachal Pradesh • Madhya Pradesh
Ministry of HRD	Kerala ASAP (Additional Skill Acquisition Programme) and Additional Skill Enhancement Programme	Unemployed youth	• Retail • Banking	920	• Kerala
PROJECTS FUNDED BY FOUNDATIONS AND CSR AGENCIES					
Aircel A+		Schools & colleges	• Basic IT • Agriculture • Life skills	14330	• Andhra Pradesh • Telangana
Indian Oil		Juvenile Group	• Retail • Hospitality • Supply chain management • Mobile phone repair	144	At Kingsway Camp, Delhi

As of 31st December 2015



Skilling value chain

Empower Pragati offers its services by conducting various activities along the skills development value chain. In its three-step approach, the training process is separated in pre-training, training and post-training. The first step includes activities in sourcing, training standards and training content. In the second step, the actual training is conducted. The process concludes with post-training, which its placement and post-placement activities. Table 2 lists the activities conducted during each step. All steps are cost-optimized by reasoned allocation of resources and technology.

Table 2: The three-step approach to the core business process

STEP ONE PRE-TRAINING	STEP TWO TRAINING	STEP THREE POST-TRAINING
• Identify the skill to be imparted • Tying with most-suited partners • Mobilizing candidates (marketing) • Candidate selection (details as required by government agencies) • Needs assessment of candidates • Designing training material • Training material development • Ensure the availability of trainers	• Identify one male and one female trainer for a programme • For female audiences, female trainers are assigned • Domain knowledge trainer and soft skills trainer are assigned per centre • Ensure appropriate infrastructure during training • Mobilizer to ensure attendance of students • Quality assurance by central operations team	• Feedback from the trainees is collected • Placement related finishing and preparing of candidates • Placement of candidates with corporates • Continuous interaction with alumni • Programme enhancement based on inputs from alumni, trainers and recruiters

1. Sourcing

The entire skilling process focuses on the prospective student. Thus, a detailed preparation before the programme is the key to his/her success. The mobilization team is located at each level of the organization. The team works in the Head Office operation function staff, in the state-level staff, in the district-level staff and in the village-level staff. The interchange with the potential candidate takes place at the village level. New marketing initiatives such as brochures, EP Talk, newsletters, WhatsApp groups, branding at centres and regional offices and updates on social media are used to motivate the potential trainees. The marketing team emphasizes prior success stories to highlight the positive impact of skill training on the livelihood of previous participants.¹¹

Candidates are then selected based on the specific criteria for the courses. At this selection stage a message of trust, individual growth and development is transmitted through a personal message in the area-specific language. The close connection between trainees and trainer and the use of marketing in the local language have been successful in motivating youth.



2. Training standards and content

Empower Pragati recognizes the importance of establishing India-wide learning standards.¹² In order to contribute to this goal, significant attention is given to the development of the training content and its effective delivery. The course content is created in compliance with the National Occupational Standards. Most of this content is designed and developed from the Content Training Delivery and Quality Monitoring (CTQ) team in Delhi. Some parts of the content are evolved by external subject matter experts.

To standardize and homogenize the training delivery, the CTQ developed Trainer Milestone Charts, which give trainers the possibility to picture the training content of each day for the entire training period. Further, a Management Information System (MIS) has been implemented to ensure accurate and timely data collection and analysis. In the area of quality, the Quality MIS helps to monitor and improve the training delivery at centre level and ensures quality of the content as per the Qualification Pack with its National Occupational Standards.¹³ The organization further strengthens its processes through the teams across the country. A quarterly newsletter helps to improve communication within the organization and to exchange information between departments at the same level.¹⁴

3. Training

During the training activities itself, a 1:30 trainer–trainee ratio is maintained for effective transfer of skills. A very detailed programme is conducted, spanning four to five months. The programme duration varies with the nature of the skill and is delivered by combining classroom learning and on-the-job learning. The training portfolio covers the sectors of retail, supply chain management, debt recovery, IT enabled services, hospitality services, health, telecom and the informal sector.¹⁵



Source: B-ABLE website



SKILLING VALUE CHAIN

Informal sector

Empower Pragati offers two programmes to target groups in the informal sector: the Home Manager programme and Bed Side Patient Attendants / Home Care Nursing programme.

Home Manager programme: This programme is designed for uneducated, poor women in urban and rural areas, to skill them from a domestic worker to a Home Manager. During a programme of 60 to 90 days, participants build work-related competencies, e.g. knowledge and operation of common household gadgets, knowledge and awareness of healthy cooking, and home management. In addition, life skills such as self-esteem, problem solving abilities, basic money management, personal and community hygiene and basic communication and language skills (English) are developed. Upon completion, participants receive offers of post-training employment opportunities with the hospitality services sector and domestic households.

Bedside Attendants / Home Care Nursing programme: This programme is a 90-day course for females and males with an education above the 10th or 12th grade and who belong to economically and socially vulnerable groups. It provides similar life skills as the Home Manager programme and teaches work-related skills such as non-invasive medical care for infants, the aged and physically-challenged individuals.¹⁶

By participating in such training programmes, home workers have the chance to overcome challenges specific to the information sector such as insufficient worker rights, low dignity of work, no job security or social security.¹⁷

By expanding its programme portfolio, the organization has gradually moved from considering women as the primary beneficiaries to also serving other sections of the society. School and college students are now an important target group. Empower Pragati implements the National Skills Qualification Framework (NSQF) scheme to inculcate skilling into the education system in 84 schools across the states of Himachal Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana in the sectors retail, agriculture and information technology.¹⁸

4. Assessment and certification

Only 26 percent of trainers in India have a private sector or government certification, whereas 75 percent of training institutes request such certificate, according to the NSDC Need Assessment Report on Building Trainers' Skills.²¹⁷ Empower Pragati established a certification programme for the training of trainers in cooperation with the Indian Society for Training & Development (ISTD).

This programme, the first of its kind in India, is called the Certificate in Vocational Training (CVT) and is open to all secondary school graduates and above with or without industry experience. Participants complete an intensive training programme over three months. This time includes two months of part-time classroom training followed by a one-month internship to gain practical experience in areas such as learner mobilization, training delivery and centre management.²⁰ Centre managers receive 120 hours of training before they are given charge of the centre.

The approach is modelled along the International Labour Organization (ILO) norms. With two full batches of 30 trainers being trained, this programme is now a benchmark programme for skilling trainers in India. The course ensures a 100 percent placement to all candidates. Proficiency in developing trainers has added another business proposition for Empower Pragati. Servicing its government clients with trainers is a potential revenue stream for the company.²¹



Empower Pragati also offers certification to its trainees, which is issued with its SSC partners in the sectors healthcare, IT, retail and telecom.

In order to increase credibility and legitimacy of worker in the unorganized sector, Empower Pragati engages in the Recognition of Prior Learning initiative of the Government of India. The initiative gives recognition to this group by providing certification based on their skills.²²

5. Placement

Empower Pragati has placed more than 30,000 youth, including more than 2,000 being self-employed. The placement team operates at the national office and also at the local levels. The placement strategy involves the creation of tie-ups with local-level job markets, state/regional level employers and national level employers, made by the responsible placement teams at the regional, centre or national level. The national-level team based at New Delhi coordinates the placement process as well as provides support to the local teams. Company visits to the centres and interaction with youth are organized. This helps to build rapport and understanding of the challenges and aspirations of employer as well as employees. Industry visits and exposure to work places helps in easing the placement and retention process. During the placement process, Empower cooperates with various business partners such as Unilever, Tata Group or McDonalds.²³

A few courses, such as the agriculture training under the NSQF project, lead to entrepreneurship development rather than placement. In such cases, the candidates are trained for entrepreneurship to foster sustainable, context specific livelihoods for them.

6. Post- Placement

Empower Pragati concentrates on retention of students and also focus on their lifelong employability. Continuous interaction with alumni leads to better relationships and an understanding of their needs and requirements even after the programme is over. A call centre at the head office is staffed by Empower Pragati's alumni, to keep in touch with candidates as they leave the programme and enter the workforce. Wide use of social media such as Facebook and WhatsApp groups helps track student progress and also encourages alumni to learn from one another. All regional teams and project coordinators are encouraged to share case studies, pictures and news about their centres to provide up-to-date information and stay in touch.

Financing

Founded in 2010, the company formally launched its full-fledged operations in February 2011 in Delhi and Bengaluru. In terms of financing, NSDC was the main source of funds with 7.87 crore INR (\$1.15 million); the three directors further raised an amount of 1.27 crore INR (\$185,000) and became the first major shareholders.²⁴ Since 2011, available resources have been deployed in the planning and operation processes. Resource optimization was a key reason for the fast growth after the first year. The debt funding from NSDC has now become manageable with the working capital becoming more easily available with the funds from the various projects. A well-qualified human resources team combined with a strategic choice of projects and locations has enabled the company to grow



Source: B-ABLE website

steadily. Empower Pragati has managed to increase its turnover from projects from 0.14 crore INR (\$20,400) in 2010-11 to 11.13 crore INR (\$1,620,000) in 2013-14.²⁵

To ensure that the business remains financially sustainable, the company has remained 'asset light'. Asset light is a mode of operation where the company owns less of tangible infrastructure. However, the human assets are fully owned by the company. To succeed in this formula, Empower Pragati has innovatively partnered with individuals, foundations, corporate partners and the government for infrastructure investments. In these partnerships, it engages in the investment of training content. The partnering institution provides investment in the infrastructure and receives a monetary return on their investment.²⁶

Lean management principles also define Empower Pragati's financial success. The company has created a manpower plan which has optimized the multiple skills of the people into multiple roles that they could play. While cost-cutting was a critical success factor for Empower Pragati, ensuring the right pedagogy, superior quality of training inputs and effective communication between the Head Office in New Delhi and centres across 20 states has contributed to keeping employees motivated and has worked towards achieving its goals.²⁷

Challenges and solutions

Empower Pragati has faced challenges in its operations that have constrained its growth and impact.²⁸

Public perception: A public perception that views skilling as the last option only for those who have opted out or could not progress in the formal education system is a persistent problem for everyone involved in skilling. The bigger challenge is that even when skill development training has been made 'free' to motivate candidates, it has actually worked to lower its status also affected the quality of these training



programmes.²⁹To overcome this, Empower has set up 'state of the art' model training centres to attract students towards vocational training.

Low participation by women and girls: Despite its concerted efforts to increase the participation of women and girls in training programmes, the number who enroll for skills still remain very low. Bringing about awareness in the communities and impacting the male mindset to allow their wives and daughters and other women in the family to meaningfully engage themselves and to gain economic and social empowerment remains a monumental barrier. Moving ahead from the 'Home Managers' experience of working with women informal labour, Empower Pragati has made 'girls jobs' a focus area in its skill development activities. To ensure security and comfort for its women candidates, Empower Pragati provides separate residential facilities and female trainers to batches with higher female ratios. The company has also started working closely with local NGOs to jointly conduct discussions with the male family members to explain to them the benefits of the training for girls.

Attrition: The transition from training to employment is the hardest to make for students, especially when the job requires them to migrate or enforces different cultural or other practices alien to them. Ensuring job placement and minimizing attrition becomes a challenging task. Empower Pragati, with the support of its funding partners is exploring the creation of an 'enabling environment' that provides housing, emotional and psychological support to the first-time employees. In addition, all skill development courses have a strong module on 'job readiness' and related topics. Also, the use of social media, a call centre and a strong alumni network helps to create a secure system that keeps track of students and helps them when in need.

Scaling up: The biggest challenge in the skilling space still lies in reaching to the masses and scaling up while managing to keep costs low and ensure sustainability of the company. Empower Pragati might face this barrier even more being a recent and a niche player in the skill development ecosystem. The sustainability of its business comes from striking a balance between funded projects and paid courses. While keeping the social goal of generating sustainable livelihoods for vulnerable people remain high on its agenda, the money mobilized from other funded projects keeps the business going, ensuring a small but sustainable profit margin.

Results and conclusion

Box 2: Personal stories of trainees

"My training was very exhaustive, and everything that there is to learn about taking care of a household was taught here. But what I most cherish and find valuable is the manner in which Empower Pragati trainers drilled into us to be honest and maintain one's integrity at all times." — Sarmistaben, Trainee, Ahmedabad

"I enrolled for the STAR project by NSDC, under which training was being conducted by Empower Pragati in my town in Gujarat. I joined the one-month course for Retail Trainee Associate. Honestly, I had no expectations from the training as it was just a one-month course and I didn't think it would make any big difference. I started attending classes and was soon proven wrong as I entered the professional environment of the classroom. The trainers from Empower Pragati were very sincere and helpful. With the monetary reward [an incentive from the STAR scheme] and my trainer's motivation, I decided to venture into business after completing my training in January 2014. I have set up my own stationary shop in Naroda in February 2014. I want to give all the credit to Empower Pragati, my trainers and my family for believing in me. This is my first step towards self-empowerment and I see my future as a successful business women. I hope that other girls also get opportunities and guidance like this and realize their potential." —Bhumika, Trainee, Gujarat



RESULTS AND CONCLUSION

Since its founding in 2010, Empower Pragati has trained 75,359 people, conducted more than 1 million days of training, generated more than 2 million days of employment and \$8 million in revenue. Empower Pragati has expanded to over 20 states and 600 centres and created a revenue of 20 crore INR (\$303,000) and, through the STAR programme, channelled reward money to 19,000 students.³⁰ Each centre trains an average of 300 trainees per year to achieve the company's objective of training half a million people by 2017.

Empower Pragati has grown from three projects in fiscal year 2010-11 to 11 projects in 2013-14; and from operations in two sectors to 14 sectors.³¹ The desire to make the organization scalable and sustainable has led to further expansion plans. Empower Pragati looks with a renewed vigour to form CSR partnerships and reach out to newer territories. Recently, Empower Pragati has engaged in government projects such as Kerala ASAP to train 1,000 students in the retail and banking sectors. The project provides additional skills and career enhancement skills to unemployed youth in fast-tracking sectors. Through the NULM project, Empower Pragati will run a pilot in Himachal Pradesh to train 400 youth in the beauty and wellness sectors.³²

Empower Pragati's work with marginalized women continues. For example, it takes up training activities for SC and ST women in a government-corporate funded project in Odisha. The project has opened a fully-integrated residential centre in Bhubaneswar to provide adult literacy classes for women and skill training programmes on retail, IT and telecom. Empower Pragati is also one of the first Vocational Training Providers (VTP) to be associated with the SSCs in the sectors of retail and telecom. The organization will be responsible for upskilling and certifying other VTPs in these sectors. In recognition of its committed efforts and innovative vision, Empower Pragati has been recently awarded the Established Social Business – Urban Livelihoods Category by the ICICI Foundation and CNBC-TV18.³³

The future goals of Empower Pragati's leadership is to firmly establish its brand name in two to three proven employment-focused skilling courses for the vulnerable, uneducated, the physically challenged or the outcasts. The organization intends to set up at least one Empower Pragati vocational skilling centre in each of the 220 districts in the country, guaranteeing its reach to the people most in need of skilling. Also, to ensure training quality, Empower Pragati plans to train and certify at least 1,000 trainers each month to benefit the vocational skilling ecosystem in the country.³⁴

While being a for-profit venture, Empower Pragati works as a social enterprise. Its vision of generating livelihoods for the base of the pyramid remains strong. Its commitment and gained knowledge in skilling of female house workers is unique among training providers. Empower Pragati's light asset approach and management of double positioning within the organization allows it to operate at a low cost. It further allows the company to work in a flexible manner and to choose more independently in which sector to engage. Also, its unique service in the certification of trainers is used as a further stream of revenue.



¹ Empower Pragati presentation, “Transforming Lives, Skilling India”.

² UNDP-IICPSD website, 20 March 2015, news article.

³ Empower Pragati Case Writeshop (20 March 2015).

⁴ Empower Pragati website, Journey.

⁵ UNDP Business Call to Action website, About.

⁶ Empower Pragati website, Journey.

⁸ Empower Pragati website, Introduction, p. 3.

⁹ Empower Pragati website, Overview.

¹⁰ Empower Pragati Case Writeshop (20 March 2015).

¹¹ Empower Khabar Newsletter, p. 6.

¹² Skill Development Workshop, July 2015.

¹³ Empower Khabar Newsletter, p. 7.

¹⁴ Empower Khabar Newsletter, p. 1.

¹⁵ Empower Pragati, Case Study booklet, pp. 61-62.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Empower Pragati website, Home Manager.

¹⁹ NSDC Need Assessment Report 2011, pp. 23-27.

²⁰ Empower Pragati website, CVT.

²¹ Empower Khabar Newsletter.

²² Empower Khabar Newsletter, p. 5.

²³ Empower Pragati website, Employers.

²⁴ Empower Pragati presentation, “Transforming Lives, Skilling India”.

²⁵ Empower Pragati presentation, “Transforming Lives, Skilling India”.

²⁶ Empower Pragati Case Writeshop (20 March 2015).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Empower Pragati, submitted to IICPSD on results, 2014.

²⁹ National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015.

³⁰ Empower Khabar Newsletter.

³¹ Empower Pragati presentation, “Transforming Lives, Skilling India”.

³² Ibid.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Empower Pragati, reporting to IICPSD on results, 2014.

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