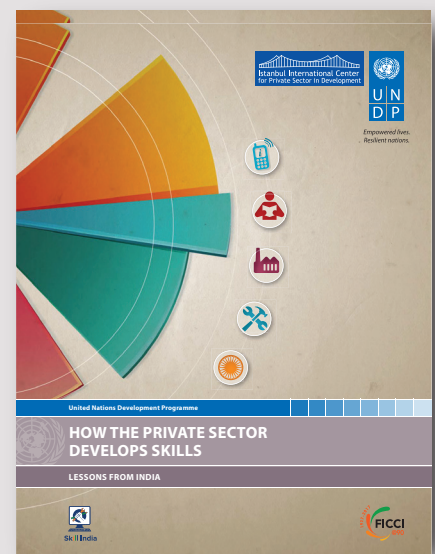




HOW THE PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPS SKILLS

B-ABLE: LOCALLY-RELEVANT SKILLS DELIVERY WITH DOMESTEIQ AND EYE MITRA

B-ABLE: LOCALLY-RELEVANT SKILLS DELIVERY WITH DOMESTEQ AND EYE MITRA

The findings, interpretations and conclusions expressed in this study are those of the authors and should not be attributed to the United Nations Development Programme, to its affiliated organizations or to members of its Board of Executive Directors or the countries they represent. Moreover, the views expressed do not necessarily represent the decision or the stated policy of the United Nations Development Programme, nor does citing of trade names or commercial processes constitute endorsement. The designations employed and the presentation of material on the maps in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations or UNDP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.

Editing: Beyond Jargon LLC

Design: Betelhem Messele, UN Online Volunteer

Copyright © 2017

United Nations Development Programme

Istanbul International Center for Private Sector in Development

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted, in any form by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying or otherwise, without prior permission of UNDP.



SUMMARY

AUTHOR	Prof. Abha Singh, Faculty of Applied Arts, Humanities, Journalism and Communication & Social Sciences, Amity University, Uttar Pradesh, India Prateek Jain, IIT Delhi, New Delhi, India
SUMMARY	B-ABLE is the skill development arm of BASIX Social Enterprise Group. It has been engaged in providing training to Indian youth since 2009, providing context- and industry-specific, hands-on skills to disadvantaged sections of society, especially women, to improve employability. Its objective is to create an environment for lifelong learning, economic empowerment and inclusive development through skills.
KEY FEATURES	B-ABLE became the first partner of the National Skill Development Corporation in February 2010. It provides skills training to the informal sector, especially women, through its DomesteQ initiative. It promotes lifelong employability by designing entry and exit skills training programmes, and promotes entrepreneurship skills among Indian youth through various partnership models such as the Eye Mitra project. B-ABLE has initiated green skills courses for rural youth in remote areas.
RESULTS	B-ABLE has provided training for 63,806 youth as of November 2015 – placing 16,984, up-skilling 19,720 and leading to self employment of 2,887 individuals. It has operated in 26 states in India. It has participated in the creation of a Sector Skills Council for domestic workers.



Summary

B-ABLE, the BASIX Academy for Building Lifelong Employability, was the first training organization to engage in cooperation with India's National Skill Development Corporation. NSDC and the National Skill Development Agency, which are part of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, want to create 400 million skilled workers by 2022 and cooperating with skill development organizations such as B-ABLE will help to achieve this target.¹ B-ABLE aims to contribute to this national goal and to support employment, economic growth and social development processes in the country. It is working towards its own target for 2020, which is to 'build an inclusive India by providing locally and globally relevant skills and attitudes to 1 million learners for their lifelong employability'.²

Mr. Sushil Ramola, B-ABLE co-founder and managing director, says inclusivity entails a focus on those who need skills most. "We believe skill training is most required in the semi-formal and informal sectors where it targets the less privileged and particularly school dropouts and links them holistically and step-wise with their aspirations. And real results will come only from taking a locally relevant approach to their doorstep and delivering it in doses they can absorb and realize benefits from," he says.³

Organizational setting

B-ABLE is under the umbrella of the BASIX Group, which was established in 1996 for promoting sustainable livelihoods in India with the vision of 'Skilling people, enhancing livelihoods, transforming lives'.⁴ BASIX is structured as several subsidiary companies that together provide a comprehensive set of livelihood promotion services including financial services and knowledge services to rural poor households. B-ABLE falls under the group's knowledge services⁵ and is the vocational training arm of the BASIX group. Established in Delhi, it focuses on developing the employability of youth through skills training. Guided by its core values 'Learner Centricity, Integrity, Collaboration, Ownership and Excellence', B-ABLE engages in skill development not only in urban areas but especially in India's rural areas to build a 'socially inclusive empowered society'.⁶

The organization operates its skill development initiatives through schools, government programmes and corporate-funded projects. With its acquisition of DomesteQ, a provider of training and placement for domestic workers, B-ABLE expanded its organizational structure. With the cooperation of NSDC, B-ABLE has set clear objectives to deliver training⁷ that targets underprivileged and skill-deficient youth – especially women and the poor – to develop locally-relevant and globally-demanded skills.

B-ABLE's network of diverse stakeholders has helped to expand its offerings throughout the country. It works with institutions such as the Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO). Its outreach has expanded from five states in 2010, to 16 states in 2011 to 20 states in 2012, including all states in the Northeast and Jammu and Kashmir as well as the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan. B-ABLE is continuously expanding its skills offerings and providing its services to different industries as well as to new geographic areas.



History and development

Mr. Vijay Mahajan, founder and chairman of BASIX, and Mr. Sushil Ramola, former President and CEO of Shri Ram Fibres (SRF), established B-ABLE in 2009. Their objective was to significantly mitigate the gaps in school education and vocational training systems in India. They had been engaged in the areas of livelihoods promotion, manufacturing and school education for a long time, and this gave them a sound understanding about good quality training and education and what benefits it can bring to improve the livelihoods of the people. B-ABLE was formed to connect skills to livelihoods as an integrated solution.

B-ABLE began with a model skill training campus in Dehradun Uttarakhand with the intention of building skills for rural youth with a hands-on training facility. It started as a privately managed organization, a for-profit social business entity. In February 2010, when they entered into cooperation with NSDC, the enabled them access to governmental soft loan funding linked to key goals: to harness inclusivity and reduce divisions in employment between male and female, rural and urban, organized and unorganized as well as between the traditional and contemporary workplace. In the future, B-ABLE anticipates further cooperation with Common Services Centres. It aims to expand the scope of its initiative to provide skills training through 1,500 CSCs and to offer training to an additional 20,000 students.²³



Source: B-ABLE website



Source: B-ABLE website

Business/operational model

The skill development component of B-ABLE uses an approach that is quality-focused and market-led to build lifelong employability. Primary activities include mobilization, training, certification, employment, with follow up retraining.

- **Mobilize:** While mobilizing future trainees, B-ABLE engages in awareness-building through youth activities and community-level interaction;
- **Train:** Courses chosen for trainees are not only based on their aspirations but also on the training's relevance for a specific geographic area. Training is highly practical, which serves to engage and motivate the youth;
- **Certify:** Certification activities are focused on specific skills, not education;
- **Employ:** Employment of the trainees is achieved through market linkages established through partnerships.



BUSINESS/OPERATIONAL MODEL

Figure 1: The B-ABLE approach: business and operational model



Secondary activities are conducted in the head office. The secondary activities include operational, enterprise resource planning (ERP), content development, partnership establishment, human resource, finance, accounting and administrative support. The content development support includes preparing basic content material to fit to the specific needs of its training centres. The human resource department finds eligible trainers, who play key roles in all of B-ABLE's main activities.⁸

B-ABLE's activities are further supported by its organizational structure. By being part of the livelihood promotion institution BASIX Group, it can use services and knowledge provided by other companies of the group, for example, leveraging experience in areas such as mobilization. In addition to skills development, B-ABLE provides skills training for entrepreneurs and offers the services of Krishna Bhima Samruddhi Local Area Bank Limited (Samruddhi Bank), which is also part of the BASIX Group and offers banking services, including affordable credit, to those not reached by formal financial institutions.⁹ Further, technology and partnerships play a key role for B-ABLE in fulfilling its value proposition.¹⁰

Types of training

B-ABLE takes a hands-on approach to skills training. Its services are provided in cooperation with diverse stakeholders and address diverse needs. It offers government programmes, school programmes, corporate/private sector programmes and informal/unorganized sector programmes. These programmes target below-poverty-line youth, school dropouts, women, minorities and other marginalized communities.



Government: In order to target specific needs in skill development, B-ABLE acts as the implementing body of government to conduct programmes initiated by state authorities. B-ABLE is working with authorities of the states of Assam, Bihar, Nagaland, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Sikkim.¹¹

- In Nagaland, B-ABLE conducts the skill development initiative scheme (SDI) of the government under which vocational training is provided to specific youth groups such as school leavers, existing workers and youth attending industrial training centres (ITI). One project will train 100 youth in the hospitality sector for 180 hours each.
- In Assam, with its initiative to train the unemployed, B-ABLE has trained 3,000 youth across the state since June 2013 and plans to train 3,000 additional unemployed youth in the coming years through nine newly established training centres. B-ABLE has also provided training since January 2014 for local youth specifically in retail sales and marketing, hospitality and 'barefoot optician' skills.¹² For this project, B-ABLE is required to place a minimum of 80 percent of trainees as trained workers in the organized or unorganized sector at local, regional or national level.

Secondary schools: Secondary schools: B-ABLE supports secondary schools under the initiative 'Revising of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation', which is operated within the National Skills Qualifications Framework (NSQF). B-ABLE helps schools to enhance their curriculum with industry- specific knowledge and to bring demand and supply of skills closer together. Expert lectures and industry exposure contribute to this aim. Employability education is integrated into school education. B-ABLE currently concentrates its school programmes to the areas of retail, agriculture, automobile and information technology (IT). Such programmes operate in three states: Haryana, Himachal Pradesh and Rajasthan.¹³

Private sector: B-ABLE also works as an operational arm of private sector training initiatives. For example, it offers programmes in key result area (KRA)-linked productivity enhancement for manufacturing and service industries; life skill and soft skill programmes; up-skilling programmes in the technical domain and apprenticeship or 'learn and earn' programmes for industries. B-ABLE provides assessment and certification programmes for industry workers for the recognition of prior learning, as well as placement-linked technical training programmes with government certification for youth.^{14,15}

Programmes delivered for the private sector target both existing industrial employees and new students. Up-skilling programmes for current employees address generic industrial practices such as industrial safety, maintenance, technical up-skilling and the Kaizen methodology.¹⁶ The organization undertakes industry needs-assessment and delivers tailored programmes on theoretical and practical skills.¹⁷ The combination of practical training and theory is innovative and important as the both approaches enhance each other.¹⁸ B-ABLE has also worked with the private sector on corporate social responsibility initiatives. Past clients include Shell India and other companies.

Informal/unorganized sector: Another area of training prepares workers for the informal/unorganized sector, a challenging area in India's efforts to provide more people with sustainable livelihoods. In 2012, B-ABLE acquired DomesteQ, a company that had placed and trained workers in domestic skills in a professional and socially responsible manner since 2007.¹⁹ B-ABLE developed DomesteQ as a social enterprise to provide training and enhance the skills of people working in the informal and unorganized



TYPES OF TRAINING



Source: B-ABLE website

sector, e.g. domestic workers as well as drivers, baby sitters, bearers, banking, housekeepers and office administrative staff.

Domestic workers themselves contributed to the development of 13 training curricula designed for illiterate or semi-literate workers who want to become drivers, cooks or provide child care or elder care. The aim of the project is to help households in areas of urban India that struggle to find quality domestic services and to assist domestic workers to obtain decent wages, acquire self-respect in the society and experience fair working practices as work.²⁰ Training caters to varying needs and levels of experience, including training for refugees from Afghanistan and Burma.²¹ The programme also verifies and documents domestic workers for all nationalities and in all economic brackets.

B-ABLE recently conducted a pilot study of 1,000 domestic workers in Delhi NCR in collaboration with NSDA as part of ongoing efforts to establish a separate Sector Skills Council for domestic workers.



Skilling value chain

B-ABLE carries out a number of activities to build value at every step of its service provision. Activities in a dozen areas are described in the following sections.

1. Sourcing

B-ABLE's trainings are tailored to the specific demands of the industry/sectors and the needs regarding local skills.²² First, a needs assessment focuses on the need of employers in each area as well as the needs interests and aspirations of learners. Next, the organization reaches out to prospective trainees through several channels. It partners with grassroots organizations and practices community mobilization including communicating with schools and institutes. B-ABLE contacts local government officials and local community stakeholders to spread awareness regarding courses. In rural areas, village heads or Sarpanchs are assigned to spread awareness about various skilling programmes. Marketing tools such as distribution of leaflets and area specific announcements are also used to provide information on the courses offered. NSDC and other partner institutions also help to identify people in need of skills training.

2. Training standards and content

B-ABLE has an in-house team for content development at the head office in New Delhi that designs curriculum based on industry requirements and standards in line with the National Skills Qualification Framework. It supports lifelong learning and continuous upgrading of skills and knowledge. Various training aids such as printed material, audio or video are prepared at the head office and are circulated to the training locations. On-site, trainers customize the content to the local needs if necessary.²³ B-ABLE remains in touch with the local industry and organizations, to ascertain the skills they require and customize its training programmes accordingly.

Trainees face significant hurdles during their career development path, namely unemployment-related stress, dropping out from school, the distance from working space to home, and lack of confidence and focus. B-ABLE recognized a need for soft skill development and developed DISHA, a specific life skills and behavioural training module designed to overcome those obstacles. The module teaches soft skill sets such as how to achieve success, career development, workplace etiquette, health and hygiene, working in a team, self-motivation, problem solving, respect, customer relations, the importance of saving, time management and the management of stress and anger.²⁴ The DISHA module is designed with interactive, role-playing and audio-visual components.

3. Training

Measures have been undertaken to ensure the quality of the programmes. Before admission, potential candidates are screened and a basic aptitude test is conducted, which for young applicants is done with the assistance of parents. This establishes the skills level of the candidates. Based on experience, B-ABLE has found that trainee retention and training outcomes improve when using residential courses rather than day courses.²⁵ Classes are held in groups of 25 to 30 trainees in order to be most productive.

B-ABLE administers 28 master courses and 100 sub-courses in the following sectors: agriculture and horticulture; industrial trade; travel, tourism, hospitality and services; animal husbandry; construction;



SKILLING VALUE CHAIN

automobile; retail; rural non-farm trades; IT and accounting; soft skills; electronics; customer service; and beauty and house assistance (DomesteQ initiative).²⁶ B-ABLE's trainings are intended to train for job placement as well as self-employment. Courses²⁷ range from two-day workshops to comprehensive independent vocational trainings from 1 to 12 months and school-integrated training up to four years.

Table 1: B-ABLE skill development programmes

MODEL	PROJECT	DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT
GOVERNMENT-FUNDED PROJECTS	VARIOUS PROJECTS ACROSS 14 STATES IN INDIA	Offering a wide range of training programmes in the formal sector and informal sector, and agriculture and farm-based training. B-ABLE implements many government-funded projects: Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana of Ministry of Skill Development – Central Government Scheme, Rajasthan Skill and Livelihood Development Corporation, Employment Generation Mission-Assam, DDUGKY Scheme of Ministry of Rural Development, National Skills Qualifications Framework for various states of HP, Haryana, Rajasthan and other states, NULM-Madhya Pradesh Scheme of National Urban Livelihood Mission, Department of Industries & Commerce – Assam, Sikkim Institute of Capacity Building, Employment and Craftsmen Training of Nagaland, Tourism Mission of Integrated Basin Development and Livelihood Programme Promotion – Meghalaya. Funding: By government agency, usually in a milestone-based manner. Token fee may be charged to candidate.
	EYE MITRA (RURAL OPTICIAN) TRAINING)	Offering eye technician/optician training to rural unemployed youth, with entrepreneurship coaching and on-the-ground handholding for six months. Some 420 youth have set up enterprises as rural-opticians or 'Eye Mitras' by becoming micro-franchisees of Essilor. The Eye Mitra training programme is a partnership with Essilor, a French lens manufacturing company. Funding: Essilor, plus a security deposit from candidates.
USER-FUNDED PROJECTS	INDUSTRIAL TRAINING	Offering training in industrial trades (e.g. fitter, welder and electrician) as well as enhancing life skills of the industrial workforce, primarily on industry premises. Funding: From industry through upskilling programmes (e.g. SHELL, Tata Motors, Fluor Daniel, Nalanda Foundation).
	DOMESTIC AND HOUSE-KEEPING ASSISTANT (DHA) TRAINING	Offering training and placement for domestic and housekeeping workers in households and in institutional settings. Funding: Through placement fees charged to households. Also from training fees charged to household/domestic workers and institutional clients.



Table 2: Overview of service areas covered by B-ABLE training programmes

ORGANIZED SERVICES	SMALL BUSINESS/SELF EMPLOYMENT-ORIENTED	INDUSTRIAL AND CONSTRUCTION	GREEN SKILLS
			
Retail sales & marketing Hospitality: food & beverage production Hospitality: food & beverage services Housekeeping BPO (business process outsourcing) Banking	Rural optician Mobile repair Advanced RAC Automobile repair Driving (LCV/HVC) Domestic services Tailoring	Fitter Electrician Welder CNC operator (computer numerical control) Masonry Formwork Carpentry	Organic farming Animal husbandry & livestock Floriculture Nursery management Eco tourism Paddy farming Diary management
OTHER COURSES: SPOKEN ENGLISH, PERSONALITY DEVELOPMENT, BASIC COMPUTERS, TALLY			
Source: B-ABLE website			



4. Green skilling

Jobs are being created at more than double the pace in the informal sector (i.e. grey and green collar jobs) as compared to the formal sector, yet training efforts are mainly aimed at preparing workers for the formal sector (i.e. blue and white collar jobs), according to B-ABLE founders.²⁹ B-ABLE focuses its attention on building skills for grey collar jobs such as informal manufacturing, repairs and services as well as green collar jobs such as agriculture, horticulture, livestock, forestry, renewable energy, recycling and eco-tourism.²⁹

Out of 484 million people of India's workforce in 2006/07, 273 million were working in rural areas, primarily in agriculture, while about 150 million were working in services and 61 million were working in manufacturing.³⁰ B-ABLE started to operate in the sector where skills were most needed: agriculture. To target the agriculture sector, B-ABLE worked on the pilot phase of the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojna (PMKVY) programme, focusing on existing farming practitioners. Projects implemented under this programme included SRIJAN Soyabean Cultivators' project (both in Rajasthan), the Ajagarh Social Circle project with training to create rubber harvesting technicians in Assam, and the PRADAN Dairy Farmers project. The PRADAN Dairy Farmers project was a unique green initiative that provided training to dairy farmers to promote entrepreneurship and increase their productivity. A private sector partner, Apni Saheli Producer Company Ltd, a member of the Farmer Producer Organisation, contributed funding after traditional insurance companies had failed to provide funds. Overall, the project has contributed to improving the quality of life for many farmers. Training programmes have also led to increased vaccination coverage and lower mortality rates due to awareness of health and nutrition practices. Under this project, a total of 3,057 farmers received training.

At present, the green skills courses of B-ABLE cover sectors including agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, forestry, fishing, green construction, processing and manufacturing.³¹ The programme has three objectives: engender green professionals to enable agricultural activities with low environmental impact; update farmers and agribusiness professionals with changing market and consumer needs; and encourage self-employment and entrepreneurship.

5. Entrepreneurship and self-employment

Compared to other training providers, B-ABLE places a greater emphasis on entrepreneurship and self-employment to improve the skills environment in India. By doing so, the organization contributes to the vision of the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 to 'promote an entrepreneurial culture, make it aspirational and encourage entrepreneurship as a viable career option.'³²

B-ABLE has developed a special curriculum for entrepreneurship programmes. It includes several modules:³³ Introduction to Entrepreneurship: Case studies for motivation, essential qualities for a successful entrepreneur and manager, successful Eye Mitra case studies;

- Sources of Capital: Various funding sources (formal and informal), advantages and limitations of each, how to initiate connections to local finance organizations;
- Shop Setup: Selection of location, field visit, furniture and fixture options with budgets;



- Money Management: Estimated investment, typical operating costs, typical revenue streams and distribution, simple P&L, breakeven analysis, record keeping;
- Customer Service: Basic principles of customer etiquette through videos and role plays with simple tips.

Eye Mitra programme: One of B-ABLE's innovative entrepreneurial endeavours is the Eye Mitra programme, which was launched in March 2013 in partnership with French company Essilor, one of the world's leading makers of ophthalmic lenses and equipment. Eye mitra means 'friend of the eyes'. The programme trains rural youth in vision screening and refraction in order to become Eye Mitra Opticians (EMOs) who can provide basic eye care services by setting up their micro enterprises in villages. The module is comprised of two months classroom training and six months on-the-job training, providing both theory and practical training. Students also receive training on entrepreneurial skills such as how to run a business, requirements for setting up their enterprise, tool kit procurement, supply chain linkages, promotional activities, etc. Candidates are encouraged to appear for the National Council for Vocational Training (NCVT) examination in order to be recognized with a Government of India certificate. B-ABLE extends its support to the entrepreneurs by providing hand-holding to all Eye Mitra Opticians for six months and connecting them to Essilor's division '2.5 New Vision Generation', which provides support to inclusive business models and provides them with a tool kit on free lease. The Eye Mitra pilot project was initiated in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan and trained a total of 576 EMOs. Expansion is planned in Madhya Pradesh and Bihar states in 2017 and 2018. B-ABLE is also exploring collaboration with eye hospitals to use their resources and expertise to strengthen the training programme.

6. Trainer focus

Another innovative aspect of the B-ABLE approach is the importance of the trainer, who unites many of its services. The trainer is responsible not only for training but also placement and retention of placed trainees, which are critical activities along the skill value chain. A rotational activity chain is maintained among the trainers whereby each trainer can assume different responsibilities and also take charge of the training centre itself. The standard for B-ABLE trainers is very high. All the trainers are employed under B-ABLE payroll. Around 70 to 80 percent of the trainers join through referrals from other trainers. They are selected as per their domain knowledge. Preference is given to trainers who possess practical industry experience. A three-stage process is adopted for selecting the trainers: screening by the human resources team, screening by the domain experts and, finally, evaluation by the quality team from the head office.

Once selected, trainers participate in a five-day module 'Training the Trainers' (TOT). The TOT delivers specially designed training modules with audio-visuals on training techniques, key results areas, soft skills and DISHA. Once field operations start, regular refresher courses are organized on a quarterly basis. Online courses are also made available for constant updating and career progression. B-ABLE encourages their trainers to upgrade their skills and assume the roles of a senior trainer and master trainer within the organization. The incentive structure is based on a trainer retention policy with competitive salaries that are of the industry level. Salaries are increased yearly on assessment of not only the trainers' performance



but also on the performance of their students and retention in their jobs for a duration of three months. After one year of a successful programme, a renewal bonus is offered to further maintain the quality of the training.

7. Use of technology

Rural youth tend to lag behind urban populations in digital literacy and, consequently, have poorer job prospects. B-ABLE provides IT-related training to improve digital literacy. B-ABLE has expanded the e-learning initiatives at Common Services Centres to encompass courses in functional English, mobile repair and optician training.³⁴

B-ABLE also uses technology in-house to deliver its training programmes. A studio at the head office is used to deliver lectures by experts and also conduct assessments of students residing in far-flung areas. Trainers can use Skype, a software application for spoken conversation over the Internet often using video, and a variety of online material to update curriculum and training delivery techniques. B-ABLE has designed a tablet application that is used by local mobilizers in the Eye Mitra project to track the EMOs and report on the progress made in the project.

8. Assessment and certification

B-ABLE conducts its own assessments through online papers and interviews that test candidates on their communication skills, technical and domain knowledge and also verify their placement/relocation readiness levels. These interviews used to take place from the head office through Skype, but now the Master Trainers are facilitating the process. Following the training, a joint certification is provided by B-ABLE along with the partner institutes and apprenticeship guides. B-ABLE offers 'certification with quality credentials from NSDC and other leading industry experts.'³⁵ E-learning training materials ensure training quality and a joint certification is offered by B-ABLE and Microsoft.³⁶

9. Placement

B-ABLE assists students in finding placements. There is a dedicated Placement Team at the head office in Delhi and regional teams at local level. Employment for trainees may be attained through B-ABLE collaboration networks and market linkages as well as through employment exchanges. A database of all the candidates trained by B-ABLE is shared on regular basis with the industry and local bodies. Financial assistance may be extended to trainees for establishing their own venture in the form of loan products provided by the parent microfinance firm BASIX or by arranging tie-ups with various banks and financial institutions. B-ABLE also offers support to its students after course completion and maintains an enduring association to ensure lifelong learning.

10. Post-placement

B-ABLE seeks to remain in touch with the trainees after they have completed their training programme, including through regular calls for follow-up. To ensure lifelong employability, the B-ABLEs training approach is a continuous process based on an entry and exit system. This means the system assesses the trainees' improvement in their chosen vocation and overall personality and offers skill upgrading if needed during



any time of employment. Also, when a person is placed, his/her progress is monitored and evaluated if s/he is able to do the job in the area or not. B-ABLE offers retraining modules to its alumni as well as other practitioners in their fields, which keeps trainees up to date regarding emerging techniques and technologies and expedites skill upgrading. Further, the organization maintains a strong focus on holistic development and facilitates students' employability by delivering life skills, language skills, placement retention modules, and enterprise and other employability-related skills. To improve the stature of base-of-the-pyramid jobs and motivate students, B-ABLE appraises trainees of their employment prospects and organizes industry visits as well as real-time apprenticeship opportunities.

Financing

B-ABLE operates as a for-profit, socially-oriented business enterprise. The main objective of its founders is to contribute to society in a meaningful way, thereby generating revenues necessary for its operations. B-ABLE obtained its soft loan funding support from the NSDC, which also acts as a finance provider to training companies. The partners from which B-ABLE has received project funding include the following government bodies: State Institute of Capacity Building, Sikkim; Development Support Agency, Gujarat; Rajasthan Skills and Livelihood Development Corporation; Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS); Odisha State Employment Mission Society; Madhya Pradesh Labour Welfare; JEEVIKA – Bihar Rural Livelihoods Project; Urban Development Department, Government of Jharkhand; and Employment Generation Mission, Assam. Further, B-ABLE's project in Durgapur, West Bengal, uses funds provided by the Essar Foundation.³⁷

B-ABLE also sources its funding from corporate and industrial bodies. It has tie-ups with various national and international companies for programme design and implementation for industry requirements and corporate social responsibility requirements. Corporate beneficiaries of its industrial training programmes include Jindal Steel & Power Ltd, United Breweries Limited and MM Aqua Technologies Limited. Various CSR activities of B-ABLE include Apollo Tyres Ltd, Godrej Group and Microsoft.

Quality assurance

Senior executives play an important role in the area of quality assurance. A project coordinator is responsible in each state for coordinating the training programmes. In addition, another coordinator works with trainers and students to ensure that the learning objectives are met and that they are able to perform the assessments successfully within the given time frame. Monthly review meetings are held either at centre level or at the headquarters to constantly update training needs and requirements. Assessments of skill development activities are typically tracked through the placement rates, placement retention, and conversion to Eye Mitra Opticians and EMO sales data. Though the organization has not conducted a detailed impact study, four members of Lufthansa airline's social impact project, LITS Global, will undertake an impact assessment at the organizational level in late 2015.



CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Challenges and solutions

Skill development is a fairly new sector and availability of information among both public and private sectors is low. While starting its operations, B-ABLE was faced with this challenge since there were no databases on previous initiatives or on the beneficiaries; it was difficult to operationalize or mobilize people based on the identification of skill gaps and market demands. B-ABLE conducted its own skill gap analysis in the process of trying to reach the most neglected populations, for instance in India's northeast. The analysis led B-ABLE to develop context-specific and market-oriented skill development training programmes in agriculture, horticulture and animal husbandry. The organization promoted green skilling as a skill development venture and also encouraged entrepreneurship as a training module. These activities were introduced by B-ABLE well before the National Policy for Skill Development and Entrepreneurship 2015 outlined them as essential features for the country's economic growth and sustainable development.

Partnerships are central to the B-ABLE operational model, both with government and the private sector. Initially, B-ABLE started with government projects. Timely and continuous operations, however, were heavily affected by late disbursement of government funding or bureaucratic nature of government projects. B-ABLE had to call off various activities and shut down centres. Over time, B-ABLE's engagement with private sector companies such as TATA Motors Limited, Godrej Group and WorldAce supported them in designing standardized modules for their skill development programmes. Funding from CSR and creating shared value (CSV) projects were utilized to balance the uncertainties of other project funding cycles. Operational expenditures were brought down by partnering with local non-governmental organizations and institutes and leveraging their resources and infrastructure. Rather than owning all the centres, they rented facilities, which managed costs and also expanded their reach geographically. Restructuring the head office by creating different verticals for government-sponsored programmes and corporate programmes also contributed to decentralization of roles and better planning and management of programmes.³⁸

Retention of trainers is a challenge that is common to most private skill providers. B-ABLE encountered this challenge and overcame it by making their trainers an integral part of the skilling value chain. A cadre of more than 200 trainers is carefully selected and maintained by B-ABLE with constant training updates, regular refresher courses and monitoring of their activities by human resources teams.

Trainers are incentivized with better salaries and bonuses based on their performances. B-ABLE envisions itself as a trainer-centric organization that promotes career progression of trainers, and encourages them to take up better roles within and outside the organization.³⁹

Student retention in jobs is affected by migration and other placement-related challenges like homesickness. B-ABLE found it difficult, for example, to place students brought from Jammu and Kashmir in programmes based in Delhi and other large cities, with alien surroundings and cultural differences. To address this situation, B-ABLE developed a placement retention module that prepares the candidates to face these challenges. In addition, students are screened at the beginning of the programme for interest areas and willingness to migrate. A trainer from B-ABLE accompanies students when there is a batch migrating for new employment and follows-up on accommodation and other support services to make sure the students are well placed.⁴⁰



Results

Operating in 26 states in India, B-ABLE has trained 63,806 people since its establishment in 2009. Of this number, it placed 16,984 trainees, up-skilled 19,720 and established 2,887 as self-employed entrepreneurs.⁴¹

Table 3: B-ABLE projects conducted for youth⁴²

PROGRAMME	TARGET AUDIENCE	SECTOR	TRAINEES TARGETED/ SKILLED	LOCATION
GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME				
Rajasthan Mission of Skill and Livelihoods Mobile Van	Youth	• Automobile • Electrical	550	Rajasthan
Rajasthan Mission of Skill and Livelihoods TADD	Youth	• Retail • Construction • Electrical	1,350	Rajasthan
Rajasthan Mission of Skill and Livelihoods Development Corporation	Youth	• Retail • Construction • Electrical • Hospitality	6,000	Rajasthan
B-ABLE and Employment Generation Mission	Rural youth		3,000	Assam
Multi-Disciplinary Skill Development (MDSD) Programme (Government of Assam)	Youth	• Retail • Sales • Marketing • Hospitality • Bare foot optician	210	Assam



RESULTS

Table 3: B-ABLE projects conducted for youth

PROGRAMME	TARGET AUDIENCE	SECTOR	TRAINEES TARGETED/ SKILLED	LOCATION
GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME				
Market Linked Skill Development, Training and Placement in Hospitality and Tourism State Rural Livelihood Mission	Youth	• Hospitality • Tourism	3,400	Bihar
National Urban Livelihood Mission	Urban below-poverty-line families	• Hospitality • Tourism & Travels • Construction • Food Processing • Tally • Four wheeler repairing • Front office receptionist • Masonry • Automotive • Electrical Sector		Bhopal Betul Ujjain Sagar Damoh Chattarpur Katni Datia
Kerala ASAP (Additional Skill Acquisition Programme) and Additional Skill Enhancement Programme	Unemployed youth	• Retail • Banking	1,000	Kerala
Skill Development Initiative Scheme	School leavers, existing workers and ITI graduates	• Basic IT • Agriculture • Life skills	64	Nagaland



PROGRAMME	TARGET AUDIENCE	SECTOR	TRAINEES TARGETED/ SKILLED	LOCATION
GOVERNMENT PROGRAMME				
State Institute of Capacity Building (Government of Sikkim)	Students	• Agriculture • Horticulture • Animal husbandry • Hotel • Hospitality and tourism sectors • IT sectors • Beautician & SPA • Electrical & home appliances Repairing • Automobile repair • Construction trades		Sikkim
SCHOOL PROGRAMME				
Revising of Centrally Sponsored Scheme of Vocationalisation of Secondary Education (Ministry of Human Resource Development)	Secondary education students	• Retail • Agriculture • IT • Automobile		Haryana Himachal Rajasthan
CORPORATE PROGRAMME				
Eye Mitra	Rural youth	Basic eye care services		Rajasthan Uttar Pradesh



CONCLUSION

Through its vast range of skill development programmes and innovative initiatives, B-ABLE has been able to reach out to vulnerable groups across the country. In the agricultural skills category, in a period of five years, B-ABLE trained a total of 69,495 youth including 16,191 female candidates; 16,779 youth from the OBC category; 10,584 Scheduled Castes and 12,113 Scheduled Tribes. Given B-ABLE's engagement with the informal sector and its focus on lifelong learning, the organization has been nominated to support the creation of Sector Skills Councils for Domestic Workers under NSDC and to support the first pilot for the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) under the NSDA.

Conclusion

B-ABLE has extended its outreach considerably since it opened its model skill training campus at Dehradun in 2009, and is now present in 11 states of India with 33 of its own centres. It has successfully provided livelihood opportunities for aspiring youth by offering skill training programmes to improve employment and self-employment for disadvantaged groups in India. It integrates the demand side by providing courses that concentrate on needs specific in the area in which it conducts training. One of the outcomes of this focus is the prioritization of skilling for the informal sector, especially women. B-ABLE's engagement with DomesteQ is a unique solution for providing skills to domestic workers, who are mostly women. B-ABLE's expansion of DomesteQ to include other vulnerable groups (e.g. elderly care givers, drivers, baby sitters and housekeepers) is consistent with its commitment to providing sustainable livelihoods to underprivileged groups. Another innovative approach is green skilling, in which B-ABLE is helping to shift the development of skills necessary for agricultural production from urban to rural areas, where these initiatives are needed most. B-ABLE has developed special content and curriculum to increase the relevance of training to rural youth and improve the sustainability of their livelihoods.

B-ABLE's commitment to lifelong employability is expressed in several ways. B-ABLE targets disadvantaged youth including school dropouts, integrates practical hands-on trainings that help its trainees remain employable, and applies an effective 'entry and exit' model that gives alumnus and other learners opportunities to engage in additional courses to build skills during their lifetime as employees. B-ABLE also tracks the performance of its participants, and encourages them to up-skill whenever necessary.

In the future, B-ABLE plans to continue collaboration with its valued partners and to add new partners with new infrastructure and technology. B-ABLE anticipated enhance support from the government, which will enable its operations and expansion plans into CSR and CSV initiatives.

¹ *Drishti IAS 2014.*

² *B-ABLE website, About us.*

³ *B-ABLE Case Writeshop (19 March 2015).*

⁴ *Basix India website, Overview.*

⁵ *B-ABLE presentation, "Basix Academy for Building Lifelong Employability".*

⁶ *B-ABLE website, About us.*

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ *Basix India website, accessed February 24, 2016.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹ *B-ABLE website, Government Programme.*



- ¹² Barefoot Optician: Describes a person living in a rural area who received basic health /optician training in order provide optician services and to improve the rural health service.
- ¹³ B-ABLE website, School Programme.
- ¹⁴ B-ABLE website, Corporate Programme.
- ¹⁵ Ibid.
- ¹⁶ Describes a strategic instrument with which through continuous small step corrections, the performance is improved.
- ¹⁷ DISHA-UNDP presentation.
- ¹⁸ B-ABLE, workshop session, "Skills for Inclusive Markets in India".
- ¹⁹ DomesteQ website, Who we are.
- ²⁰ B-ABLE presentatino, "Basix Academy for Building Lifelong Employability".
- ²¹ DomesteQ website, What we do.
- ²² B-ABLE, workshop session, "Skills for Inclusive Markets in India".
- ²³ B-ABLE Case Writeshop (19 March 2015).
- ²⁴ DISHA-UNDP presentation.
- ²⁵ B-ABLE website, About us.
- ²⁶ B-ABLE website, Green Skills.
- ²⁷ B-ABLE presentation, "Basix Academy for Building Lifelong Employability".
- ²⁸ Mahajan and Ramola 2015.
- ²⁹ B-ABLE website, About us.
- ³⁰ Chenoy 2012.
- ³¹ B-ABLE website, Green Skills.
- ³² National Policy on Skill Development 2015.
- ³³ B-ABLE website, About us.
- ³⁴ Ibid.
- ³⁵ Ibid.
- ³⁶ Ibid.
- ³⁷ Institute of Small Enterprises and Development.
- ³⁸ B-ABLE Case Writeshop (19 March 2015).
- ³⁹ Ibid.
- ⁴⁰ Ibid.
- ⁴¹ B-ABLE website, B-ABLE.
- ⁴² B-ABLE website, Our Programmes.

4 OCTOBER 2017

Acknowledgements:

We thank our UN Online Volunteer Betelhem Messele for her contribution to the design of this case study.

Contact Information:

Yilmaz Ergun Dinc, Research Analyst, yilmaz.dinc@undp.org



*Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.*

United Nations Development Programme

Istanbul International Centre for Private Sector in Development
Key Plaza, Abide-i Hürriyet Cad. Istiklal Sok.No: 11 Floor: 5

Şişli, 34381 Istanbul, Turkey

Phone: +90 850 288 2534

For more information: www.undp.org | www.iicpsd@org

*Copyright 2017, UNDP.
All right reserved.*