Empower Pragati is a social enterprise specializing in livelihood skill development that empowers India’s disadvantaged youth. The company focuses on meeting the needs of both the urban and rural poor, who lack the required education and opportunities for personal and professional advancement. Empower Pragati works closely with the National Skills Development Corporation (NSDC) – a Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) initiative that fulfills India’s growing demand for skilled workers. The NSDC has invested in Empower to implement projects which focus on training youth to work in information technology-enabled services (ITESs), business process outsourcing (BPO), tourism, agriculture, hospitality and retail.

Unemployment is a country-wide issue in India, and the nation’s youth are the hardest hit. A staggering one in four young Indians are unemployed according to ILO’s most recent statistics.¹ To help tackle this, Empower Pragati has committed to providing vocational training to 2 million low-income youth across 22 states, creating opportunities for them to lead productive, financially secure lives.

Empower Pragati’s business model focuses on delivering training courses that lead to job placements over the course of one year. The process starts with mobilization, where the first endeavor is to select the ideal candidate from the ground level. After mobilization, the student is enrolled on a course and is informed about job opportunities. The students who choose to continue on the course are trained in their selected subject, IT and soft skills for a period of three to six months. After this training, multiple job interviews are arranged with businesses related to the student’s specialism. After being hired by employers, Empower Pragati tracks students for 12-24 months (post-placement support).

Besides trainings India’s low-income youth for job placement, Empower Pragati also trains students for creating self-employment opportunities and mentors their entrepreneurial ventures.

Founded in 2010, Empower Pragati’s vocational and skills training programmes seek to create sustainable livelihoods for urban and rural poor, generating a revenue of about USD 38,125,000.
Key Stakeholders

Youth unemployment remains a key barrier to socio-economic development in India, where 25% of the population aged between 15 and 25 is currently unemployed. Presently, two-thirds of the Indian population live in rural areas, where access to quality education remains a challenge. Furthermore, India has struggled to define the importance and specific role of skills development as a driver of national growth. In fact, according to the 2019 India Economic Survey conducted by the OECD, public spending on education in India accounted for just 3.1% of GDP – lower than the average for countries in the same income bracket. The OECD Report also highlights that India is facing barriers to job creation due to complex labor laws, a limited number of high-quality jobs and restrictive employment protection legislation.

1. Assessing Readiness and Capacity

Empower Pragati joined Business Call to Action (BCtA) in 2013 with a commitment to develop skills of 2 million youth out of which half would be women in India by 2020. In 2015, Empower Pragati was one of the 21 companies that took part in BCtA’s Impact Measurement Services (BIMS), an initiative for measuring impact using lean data methods by conducting surveys with its stakeholders. The approach focused on bringing free of cost technical expertise and tools to carry out data collection in the field through surveys of employees, customers and other key stakeholders. An analytical framework was developed for businesses to establish the link between their business inputs, outputs and intended social outcomes with primary data collection through mobile survey tools. BIMS was the pioneer in the impact ecosystem with an impact methodology aligned with the SDGs. Empower Pragati joined BIMS to better understand the social challenges that affected its business, and the efficacy of its programmes in addressing them.

After completing BIMS, Empower Pragati was keen on operationalizing the lessons learned and adopted a culture of data-driven decision-making within the company embedding impact measurement into the roots of its inclusive business. For this purpose, Empower Pragati joined Impact Champions Programme to build a measurement system that incorporates regular feedback from students in order to understand the impact their company is having on their lives.

At the start of the Impact Champions Programme, Empower Pragati was found to have an advanced capacity for undertaking impact measurement and management because the company’s senior managers were committed to dedicating the necessary time and resources needed to effectively carry out impact management. Moreover, Empower Pragati had prior experience with using laptops, smartphones and enterprise resource planning software. Lastly, Empower Pragati’s field staff have some experience of collecting and using data for their daily operations and could allocate time to impact management.

Empower Pragati benefits from impact management as it allows them to:

- Build a social reputation by demonstrating social and environmental impact;
- Understand customers’ and users’ needs; and
- Design an effective product.

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3 OECD (2019), Economic Survey of India December 2019
2. Planning For Impact

I. Impact Value Chain

The Impact Value Chain is a visual map of how an organization’s strategy and operations contribute to its business value and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Impact Value Chain allows the organization to holistically understand the effects of its inclusive business activities on different groups and the environment.

Because of the government’s limited investment into public education, India’s education system has historically faced serious difficulties in guaranteeing quality education to its population. Schools often lack qualified teaching staff and there are no feedback or monitoring mechanisms in place to evaluate education standards in the country’s classrooms. Furthermore, the expectations that young students generate throughout their schooling years do not match the positions that are available in the job market.

As part of the BIMS exercise in 2015, Empower Pragati created an impact value chain to understand its pathway towards desired social outcomes. At the time, the company’s focus was to streamline operations by setting up computer labs, training teachers and offering career counselling. Four years on, the skills development ecosystem has matured and Empower Pragati has a larger influence on social outcomes at the national level and can advocate for the adoption of effective policies with governments, and industrial and corporate bodies.

As a co-founder that sits on the board of Alliance of Skill Training Partners (ASTP), Empower Pragati is part of the only advocacy body for skills development that has been encouraging policymakers to address the needs of recently unemployed workers. To address the problems within India’s education system, Empower Pragati improves training delivery through a “train-the-trainers” (TTT) programme, designs effective session plans, maps student lifecycles and engages youth and communities in focus group discussions. Empower Pragati also searches for ways to improve the life chances for young people before entering the job market by engaging employers and forging jobseekers’ industry connections.

As a direct result of Empower Pragati’s activities, course content is delivered in accordance with high-quality standards, trainings have become cyclical and organized processes, and students’ participation has increased as a result of placement drives. Furthermore, Empower Pragati establishes frameworks to gather inputs from students, the Government and potential employers, while guaranteeing that its advocacy strategy leads to policy meetings that are reshaping the Indian education sector.

In the medium term, Empower Pragati’s strategies and processes for delivering quality education lead to improved student performance (both in terms of attendance and grades), an increased percentage of students placed in a job and better alignment of training programmes with young peoples’ aspirations and market requirements. Through Empower Pragati’s advocacy agenda, policymakers gain awareness of on-the-ground implementation challenges, which are valuable when drafting educational policies.

In the long run, Empower Pragati current focus is on fostering greater employability, opportunities for self-employment, livelihood improvements and the overall empowerment of the youth through the provision of the skills necessary to access skilled job opportunities. Empower Pragati is also a partnership initiator, creating connections between the Government, employers, jobseekers and other stakeholders in the skills and training value chain.
### Empower Pragati’s Impact Value Chain

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems &amp; Opportunities</th>
<th>Inputs/Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of trained teachers / trainers</td>
<td>Improve training delivery through regular TTT programs</td>
<td>Scheduled calendar for TTT programs</td>
<td>Improvement in student performance in terms of attendance</td>
<td>Fostering greater employability and overall youth empowerment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of effective feedback and monitoring mechanisms</td>
<td>Design effective sessions plans</td>
<td>Standardized implementation of course content</td>
<td>Improvement in student performance in terms of pass percentage</td>
<td>Creating strong partnerships amongst Government, employers, job-seekers and other stakeholders in the skilling value chain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leveraging their current standing in the skills space to influence and advocate for policies with government, and industrial and corporate bodies</td>
<td>Map student lifecycles</td>
<td>Critical milestones identified for feedback</td>
<td>Improvement in student performance in terms of placement and retention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mismatch between youth aspirations and the jobs available in the market</td>
<td>Establish different timelines at which feedback is collected</td>
<td>Strengthened training delivery cycle</td>
<td>Better alignment of training programs to youth aspirations and market needs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Designing an inclusive and robust national policy on skills and employment</td>
<td>Conduct focus group discussions with youth for deeper community engagement</td>
<td>Improved student participation</td>
<td>Greater awareness of on-the-ground implementation challenges and consideration of policy changes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Decision-Making Questions

| Feedback provided on public policy in the TVET sector | Percentage of session plans mapped to the curriculum | Percentage of session plans being followed | Increased student attendance percentage | Number of students retained in their job for a minimum of one month |
| Feedback from students | Evidence of dashboards for stage-disaggregated feedback | Evidence of training programme being inclusive | Number of students selected for jobs | Increase in the number of youth people migrating within India |
| The existence of a written policy for gathering feedback over the student lifecycle | Reported effectiveness of session plans from students | Evidence of annual calendar for TTT programmes | Increase in pass percentage | Increase in the number of young people considering self-employment |
| | TTT feedback | | Number of job interview opportunities provided to students | Number of stakeholders reached |
| | Number of TTTs delivered | | Number of students who join post-selection | Number of forums attended/organized for/with different stakeholders |

### Indicators

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inputs/Activities</th>
<th>Outputs</th>
<th>Outcomes</th>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Feedback provided on public policy in the TVET sector

- Percentage of session plans mapped to the curriculum
- Evidence of dashboards for stage-disaggregated feedback
- Reported effectiveness of session plans from students
- TTT feedback
- Number of TTTs delivered
- Evidence of annual schedule for employer connections through placement drive
- Number of placement drives conducted
- Timeline for gathering data/feedback throughout the student lifecycle

### Decision-Making Questions

- What are the attributes of a good trainer?
- How can inputs/suggestions be given to policy-making agencies?
- What measures should be taken to increase training effectiveness?
- What are the youth’s aspirations and what kind of jobs are available to them?

### Inputs/Activities

- Improve training delivery through regular TTT programs
- Design effective sessions plans
- Map student lifecycles
- Establish different timelines at which feedback is collected
- Conduct focus group discussions with youth for deeper community engagement
- Identify how to engage employers and increase industry connections
- Make policy interventions and influence policymakers to address the needs of employers

### Outputs

- Scheduled calendar for TTT programs
- Standardized implementation of course content
- Critical milestones identified for feedback
- Strengthened training delivery cycle
- Improved student participation
- Increased participation in forums and events
- Framework developed to gather inputs from stakeholders
- Higher number of policy-level meetings attended

### Outcomes

- Improvement in student performance in terms of attendance
- Improvement in student performance in terms of pass percentage
- Improvement in student performance in terms of placement and retention
- Better alignment of training programs to youth aspirations and market needs
- Greater awareness of on-the-ground implementation challenges and consideration of policy changes

### Impact

- Fostering greater employability and overall youth empowerment
- Creating strong partnerships amongst Government, employers, job-seekers and other stakeholders in the skilling value chain

### Indicators

- Number of stakeholders reached
- Number of forums attended/organized for/with different stakeholders

### SDGs

- Quality education (4)
- Gender equality (5)
- Decent work and economic growth (8)
- Reduced inequality (10)
- Partnerships for the goals (17)
II. Understanding and Describing Impact

The Impact Management Project (IMP) is a forum for building global consensus on how to measure and manage impact. Through a series of consultations and convenings across the world with thousands of practitioners including investors and multilateral institutions, IMP has developed shared fundamentals on how to describe and understand through the lens of the five dimensions of impact. These five dimensions are: WHAT, WHO, HOW MUCH, CONTRIBUTION and RISK.

Business Call to Action integrates IMP’s shared logic in the Impact Lab to help companies plan for impact measurement and management starting with assessing their outcomes considering the five dimensions described above.

Empower Pragati is contributing to two distinct outcomes: 1) fostering greater employability and the overall empowerment of youth, and 2) creating partnerships between the Government, employers, jobseekers and other stakeholders in the skilling value chain.

Empower Pragati mapped each of these effects on the five dimensions of impact to understand better its significance and to be able to better manage and communicate impact.

Goal 1: Fostering greater employability and the overall empowerment of youth

- **What**: What is the importance of your goal to your stakeholders?
  - Suppliers and Producers
  - Not Important: Important

- **Who**: How underserved are your stakeholders in relation to the SDGs?
  - Suppliers and Producers
  - Underserved: Well-served

- **Contribution**: How does the impact compare to what is likely to occur anyway?
  - Because of our efforts, our stakeholders’ access to SDGs is:
    - Likely Worse: Same: Likely Better

- **How Much**: How significant is the impact that occurs in the time period?
  - Scale: Did the outcomes happen at scale?
    - Small Scale: Large Scale
  - Duration: Do the outcomes last for a long time?
    - Short Term: Long Term
  - Depth: Is your organization a deep driver of the outcome for these stakeholders?
    - Marginal Change: Deep Change

- **Risk**: What is the risk that the impact is not achieved due to external or internal factors?
  - Risk
    - Low Risk: High Risk
3. Monitoring Performance

The first round of BIMS survey work was implemented in 17 out of 25 schools in Himachal Pradesh, where Empower works with over 2,000 students. Survey questionnaires were developed to interview 9th and 12th grade students, parents, school teachers, trainers, education department officials, guest lecturers and industry partners.

During the Impact Champions Programme, Empower Pragati committed to integrate learnings from BIMS and establish a comprehensive data management system that generates feedback on an ongoing basis that the company can use for decision-making. This system has become an integrated part of every project that Empower Pragati implements across the country. The first round of feedback is taken during student counselling after onboarding them into the programme. An alumni-led Reach-Out Center (ROC) has been established in the head office in New Delhi which makes calls to all students once a month with a survey on quality of training, infrastructure, food and accommodation. The second round of feedback is at the end of the training as students are asked to fill a feedback form. In addition, when students get placed in jobs, a weekly call is made for the next 12 months to assess job satisfaction. This ensures continuous flow of data to improve the quality of training delivered and skills imparted. Lastly, Empower Pragati has impact managers that collate data every month and present it to senior management for decision-making.

As part of the Impact Champions Programme, Empower Pragati analyzed data of 170 students from 6 Indian states, monitoring their career paths over the course of a year after completing the social enterprise’s vocation and skills course. These courses largely train young students in the skills necessary to take one of three jobs: Retail Trainee Associate, Food and Beverage Service Steward, and Front Office Receptionist, which all require advanced customer service skills.

- **What**
  - Either after or during the course all 170 students found jobs.
  - The most common roles in which students were placed include Retail Trainee Associate (21%), Food and Beverage Service Steward (17%).
  - On average, students took less than four months to complete Empower Pragati’s course.
  - On average, it took less than two months (50 days) for students to find a job after completing Empower Pragati’s course.

- **Who**
  - Almost all students (169) had no income before joining the course as they were unemployed. One student had an income of USD 93 monthly.
  - From the students enrolled in the course, 24% were women and 76% men.
  - 32% had primary degree, 68% secondary degree.
### How Much

- The average attendance rate for the course was **81%**
- 162 students (95%) successfully passed the course
- **12%** of Empower Pragati’s students found a job during the course
- On average, candidates had only two unsuccessful interviews before being recruited
- **100%** of the students would recommend Empower Pragati’s course to family and friends

### Contribution

- **33%** found a job in their state of residence
- After six months in their jobs, students were earning on average USD 125 per month

- One year after finding a job, students were earning on average USD 137 per month – an increase of **10%** compared to the first six months

### Risk

- Even though Empower Pragati’s work also focuses on matching students’ aspirations to job market needs, the social enterprise still faces an alignment risk as it cannot influence job market needs
- There is a risk of drop-outs as students might decide to abandon the course or stop attending classes
- Being dependent on their partnership with the Government, Empower Pragati might encounter stakeholder participation risk if the Indian Government shifts its education strategies

### Table 1 – Indicators reported by Empower Pragati

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Results in April 2020</th>
<th>Results in May 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of session plans being followed</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of session plans mapped to the curriculum</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training quality score from the students (from 1 to 10)</td>
<td>7.55</td>
<td>7.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness of session plans reported by students</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>93%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of students passing in external assessment</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students providing feedback</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of youth willing to migrate for employment</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Empower Pragati is a partnership facilitator, creating connections between the Government, employers, jobseekers and other stakeholders in the skilling value chain. Empower Pragati also searches for ways to improve the life chances of youth entering the job market by engaging employers and developing industry connections with jobseekers.

Almost all students (169) had no income before joining the course as they were unemployed. The 162 students (95%) that successfully passed the course were not affected by their socio-economic backgrounds.

All 170 students found jobs either during or after the course. After six months in their jobs, students were earning an average of USD 125 per month, which rose to USD 137 over the next six months.

Empower Pragati improves training delivery through a “train-the-trainers” programme, designs effective session plans, maps student lifecycles and engages youth and the community in focus group discussions, contributing to a higher-quality education for Indian youth. 100% of students would recommend Empower Pragati’s course to family and friends.

Empower Pragati selects projects that include a gender lens. In most of the programmes, female students are required to make up at least 33% of the total and gender balance is a primary consideration across hiring processes. Additionally, Empower Pragati has been implementing CSR activities though projects like Kiran, which are particularly focused on female empowerment.
Lessons Learned

BIMS was the first time Empower Pragati deployed mobile phones for data collection and used surveys as a means to collect social impact data directly from stakeholders. At the time, the company was concerned with the costs of hardware hindering the roll out of data collection in other regions. Despite this constraint, Empower Pragati found impact management to be an effective tool for improving its business outputs and progressing towards its long-term goals. During the course of the Impact Champions Programme, Empower Pragati created the Reach Out Center – an in-house student support organization that is staffed by previously trained students. The Reach Out Center is CRM-enabled with a customizable interface and a call recording facility, with ten tele-counsellors together providing support in each of the seven languages used in their training center locations.

Empower Pragati has fully embraced an impact management culture by setting up a robust training monitoring system. As part of this, Regional Training Managers (RTMs) that are tasked with tracking and continuously improving the quality of training programmes have been hired. A 360 degree feedback mechanism has also been established, wherein each stakeholder (i.e. student, trainer, center manager, or RTM) rates the quality of trainers and the training programme on the basis of relevant parameters and provides a mechanism for grading and improvement.

The Impact Champions Programme motivated Empower Pragati to change their approach to a “holistic community development approach” where effort is made to impact each and every member of the targeted family via multiple skill development programmes, and continuous mentoring and hand-holding are considered key to the empowerment of individuals.

The most important lesson for both Empower Pragati and Business Call to Action is that impact measurement and management is an ongoing effort to gather feedback from stakeholders, understand types of effects being created both directly and indirectly, intentionally and unintentionally, and continuously strive to maximize positive impacts and minimize negative impacts and risks.

Empower Pragati started its impact management journey back in 2015 by taking part in the BIMS and renewed its commitment by joining the the Impact Champions Programme in 2019. These two programmes together have built the necessary capacity for Empower Pragati to track and report the impact the company is having on its relevant stakeholders and can be used as evidence of how impact management can become part of a company’s core strategy over time.
Way Forward / Next Steps

Anticipating post-COVID-19 needs, Empower Pragati has started working on a micro-entrepreneurship model, in which young people would be first trained for a period of three months in different specialisms like CCTV installation, beauty and wellness, etc. After training, Empower Pragati will help students to set up new business. The workspace, tools, kits and all basic necessities would be provided by Empower Pragati. Potential micro-entrepreneurs would also be trained in soft skills, customer handling, and basic tally, as well as other key skills. Once the micro-entrepreneur feels that they can manage the business on their own, Empower Pragati will evaluate the progress and the micro-entrepreneur will be left to operate independently.

The impact management system developed during the Impact Champions Programme has helped the company analyze areas of improvement and in turn drive performance. “Impact management has become critical in all our projects across Empower Pragati as it helps align our project strategies to meet our end objectives leading to better socio-economic progress of our students. It is also shaping company policies to serve our stakeholders better,” says Mohtashim Khan, Assistant Vice President at Empower Pragati.

More concretely, disaggregating data is helping the company improving gender balance. Furthermore, Empower Pragati will move the majority of their training programmes online or adopt blended learning approaches with the help of a robust Learner Management Information System (LMIS) and the Empower Plus App. Understanding current needs, Empower Pragati’s focus has shifted to online teaching, with online courses on digital marketing, social media marketing, website development, hairstyling, beauty, and stocks and investments being launched during the summer of 2020. Currently, there are between 400 and 450 enrollments per day and participants’ initial feedback has been particularly positive.

Empower Pragati is increasing its focus on local employment opportunities based on fresh insights from analyzing data being gathered in its impact management system. The company found that the numbers of students that are “willing to migrate” to take jobs has decreased substantially as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Considering this, their plan is to focus on local employers so that students don’t have to move states to find a job.