Our Mission

To empower under-served communities by leveraging their social capital
To promote better livelihoods, education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability.
Dear Friends of Asia Initiatives,

It was 25 years ago in Tokyo that a group of us founded Asia Initiatives. We committed that our work would be "Pro-women, Pro-Environment and Pro-Community" in the presence of Prof. M.S. Swaminathan, a true visionary whom we were privileged to call our mentor until we lost him in 2023. Renowned as Father of the Green Revolution, Prof. Swaminathan was recipient of some of the highest honors in the world. He was a true humanitarian, and his teachings will continue to inspire us and guide our work moving forward.

We have grown rapidly since our founding, moved our headquarters to New York in 2009, and now serve over **75,000 people** in five countries every year. This journey has been possible due to the enduring support of those who have been with us since our Tokyo days, and the invaluable new members who have joined us along the way.

2023 has been a year remarkable for Asia Initiatives. Our commitment to leveraging social capital of our communities through Social Capital Credits (SoCCs), our community currency for social good, has fostered transformational community engagement and empowerment. Adding to our previous awards, we were honored with the **AARP Purpose Prize Fellowship** this year, and received a substantial grant from the **Caterpillar Foundation** for our innovative Maker Labs with local partner Vidhyalay Udhyam, which serve 6,000 children in 20 low income village schools in Rajasthan. Additionally, **Clinton Global Initiatives (CGI)** cited our participation in a plenary panel as a highlight of their annual meeting, where we had presented our work with 9000 women in remote villages to establish vegetable gardens for food security and additional income.

**It is your belief in our mission** that fuels our resolve towards cultivating a world where everyone can thrive, empowered by the knowledge, skills, and support of their global family. For that, all of us at Asia Initiatives sincerely thank you for your support!

Geeta Mehta,
President, Asia Initiatives
Our Impact in 2023

Livelihood Initiatives

- 1,903 hours spent by youth in community empowerment
- 1,110 small scale farmers involved in rural policy making
- 31 village cleaning drives conducted

Environmental Initiatives

- 39,528 trees planted
- 19 new dams and ponds constructed
- 3,300 Vegetable Gardens established
- 14.5 tons of organic vegetables harvested

Cascades of Learning

- 3,598 students benefiting from Cascades of Learning
- 1,700 youth learning Digital Literacy
- 31,386 hours spent by parents to support children's education

Cascades of Upskilling

- 1,854 students in Cascades of Upskilling
- 55 youth launched their own businesses
- 1,100 farmers adopted climate smart agriculture
"During my tenure as Secretary-General, I always worked to make women’s empowerment a top priority, and I can see that Asia Initiatives is carrying on that legacy."

Ban Ki-moon, Eighth Secretary-General of the United Nations

Kiran Mazumdar Shaw
Pioneering Biotech Entrepreneur
Ban Ki-moon Award 2023

Mitzi Perdue
Anti-Mine Human Rights Advocate
Ban Ki-moon Award 2023
Manisha Upadhyay

Manisha, a youth leader from Azmabad in Madhya Pradesh, has transformed education and children’s motivation in local government run schools. Through community engagement, she has helped raise parental involvement in schools from virtually nil to an impressive 75%. Manisha is currently leading a youth group. Through this, she inspires strong values, meaningful social action, and challenges traditional gender roles that hold girls back.

Savitri Devi

Savitri has inspired several villages in the Koderma district of Jharkhand to achieve water security by digging rainwater channels and building secure water storage structures for both agriculture and domestic consumption. Savitri also led efforts to plant and conserve forests in the watershed area, which has led to improvements in the regional water table and temperature. She is now sharing her knowledge with the neighboring communities.
SoCCs (Social Capital Credits) received the “World Changing Idea Award” as well as awards from MIT SOLVE and others. It is a community currency innovated by Asia Initiatives to help individuals take charge of developing their communities and improving their lives. SoCCs are earned for performing acts of social good, such as waste management, planting trees, rainwater harvesting, and tutoring or mentoring youth. SoCCs can then be redeemed for critical resources like digital and financial skills training, healthcare, very low interest micro-credit loans, and livelihood support. Since 2015, SoCCs have been implemented successfully in over 26 sites across India, Ghana, Kenya, Taiwan and the United States.
SoCCs Projects and Prizes
Poverty is the result of an interlocking set of circumstances. To counteract this, Asia Initiatives’ projects take a multifaceted approach for sustainable development.
Technology has become synonymous with opportunity. Our digitally linked Learning Centers provide under-served communities access to cutting edge educational and digital learning opportunities that lead to better livelihoods.
The VIEWS Digital Literacy Project aims to reduce the digital divide in disadvantaged communities. Specifically targeting urban areas in Bhubaneswar and rural regions like Patisonapur and Podampeta in Ganjam, the project provides **advanced computer courses** to children who lack access to technology. These courses encompass a wide range of essential and advanced skills, including introductory programming through Scratch Coding. Moreover, the project doubles its impact through our **Cascades of Learning** program, helping young people mentor others in their communities.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **110** students trained in Scratch coding
- **375** students became proficient in digital literacy
- Supported **485** students who, in turn, peer-mentored **970** younger school students
- Mentors earned **60** SoCCs each through teaching activities
- Facilitated formal sector employment for **10** participants
Launched in 2018, this program aims to empower **girls aged 11-19** who have difficulty accessing education due to societal mores, early marriages, and poverty. This program helps cultivating life skills vital for personal growth and academic success, such as self-confidence, time management, and basic digital literacy. Over the span of five years, Udaan has improved the lives of **4000 girls**, providing them with the tools and support to navigate and transcend the barriers that have prevented them from attending and succeeding in school.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **900 girls** enrolled in Digital Literacy programs
- **85%** completion rate for digital learning and English conversation classes
- **54%** of students engaged in tutoring younger children
- **62%** became proficient in computer skills.
- **62%** became proficient in English grammar
“Karunodaya Foundation uses SoCCs in its library programs to transform the learning environments of government run schools. This helps foster crucial 21st century skills, social values, and leadership qualities. The program also includes digital literacy for students in Grades 6 - 8, encompassing computer basics and software like MS Office and Canva. Computer labs have provided over 50 hours of digital literacy instruction to each student in government middle schools. Active participation of SoCCs members in school activities and events has enhanced overall school experience for students.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **14** Digital Literacy Centers created
- Delivered **64** hours of digital literacy classes to **256** students
- **280** students mentored **560** peers in enhancing their reading skills, improving reading skills for **20%** of students from Grades 3 - 5
- **15%** improvement in attendance among students in Grades 6 - 8
Bridging the Digital Divide for Formerly Incarcerated Women

Partner: Hour Working Women
Location: New York City, United States

This program in Long Island City addresses the critical needs of formerly incarcerated women, a group facing an unemployment rate of 27%, which soars to 43% for Black women. Our services provide access to resources that prepare women for life after incarceration, and give them the support and skills to succeed in the workforce. This includes training in digital and financial literacy. We also incentivize the children of these women to meet grade-level literacy standards and develop a love for reading. This is done through the collection and distribution of grade-level books, SoCCs-powered reading sessions, and connections with mentors.

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

- 100 children gained access to grade-level reading materials
- 75 women learned digital literacy skills
- 5 digital softwares taught, including Google Suite, Microsoft Office, Canva, and ChatGPT
Maker Labs, a collaborative effort by Asia Initiatives and Vidhyalay Udhyam, are designed to **empower young learners** in remote and tribal communities of Udaipur, particularly those at risk of dropping out of school, child labor, and forced early marriages. The project aims to provide these young individuals with market-appropriate **21st-century skills**, fostering creativity, problem-solving abilities, and entrepreneurial capabilities through experiential learning modules. This initiative focuses on making learning resources, especially in STEM subjects, more accessible, especially to young girls in remote tribal areas.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **5** new Maker Labs created in the tribal block of Sarada, Udaipur
- Engaged over **650** young learners, over 50% of them girls
- Over **300** students built functional prototypes
- **30** students competed for seed funding at the annual Udhyam Fest 2023
- **5%** increase in language skills among participants
- **46%** increase in mathematics skills among participants
The SPARSH Program leverages SoCCs to transform the educational ecosystem in under-resourced government run schools. Youth leaders co-teach local children four days a week, enhancing their own teaching skills and earning SoCCs, which are redeemed for educational kits for the schools. This model has catalyzed significant community involvement, including contributions from parents and guidance from local leaders like the Sarpanch (village head) leading to infrastructure improvements including dependable electricity, boundary walls, functioning toilets, and drinking water. The project not only boosts attendance and learning outcomes, but also empowers students and teachers.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- 1,143 students now have access to quality education
- 131 students supported 256 peers through Cascades of Learning
- 31 teachers have adapted improved teaching techniques
- 891 students have received stationery kits
- 11 schools have built libraries
- 871 parents committed to supporting their children's education
Skills on Wheels buses are equipped with vocational training equipment and trained teachers. They visit under-served schools in remote areas to teach vocational skills to students. Older students teach younger children twice a week to earn SoCCs in the Cascade of Learning program, which they redeem for diverse educational activities, including Skills on Wheels sessions, leadership workshops, and community projects. This hands-on training improves the all-round performance of students. The modules taught include those on energy, environment, food processing, gardening agriculture, and engineering, helping students explore career possibilities and entrepreneurship after high school.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **128** students trained on food processing skills, agricultural, engineering and mechanical skills
- **128** students peer-mentored **236** younger children
- Students took leadership over **3** school infrastructure projects
- **5** schools now have access to upscilling courses in Ujjain district
This project provides advanced computer courses to students in schools and colleges in underserved rural areas of Yavatmal. The training includes Microsoft Office applications, and internet and email usage, with the goals of enabling future self-advancement and remote learning and work capabilities for young entrepreneurs. The initiative also supports gender equity by ensuring the enrollment of young girls in STEM fields, and appointing female trainers and coordinators so that girls have role models.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **350** students have earned SoCCs through the Cascades of Learning Program
- All students have gained access to digital training programs, including basic coding through Scratch
Libraries to Enhance Learning

Partner: Kalam Library
Location: Bihar, India

This project enhances basic language skills among students from rural schools through creation of small libraries. Our Cascade of Learning program is incentivized by SoCCs, our community currency for social good. Older students tutor and read books to younger students in the library, ensuring that they stay and succeed in school. Student tutors earn SoCCs, which can be redeemed for a range of educational benefits, including educational excursions to historical landmarks and museums, sports kits, and introductory computer classes.

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

- This initiative directly impacts 120 students
- Through SoCCs, that impact triples to reach 360 students
This initiative addresses the skill and employment gap faced by the youth, particularly women, in India. To bridge that gap, we provide **skill-based training** in digital and written communication, as well as job-readiness practices. We also introduce corporate practices and connect students to sector-specific opportunities.

This initiative caters to a diverse range of youth, from those who were forced to drop out from primary school, to youth with degrees who are struggling with unemployment. The initiative works with educational institutions, governmental bodies, private agencies, and industry partners to create opportunities for **apprenticeships** and **job placements**.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **20** students have been successfully placed into full-time jobs
- A total of **200** students have received training and short term job placements
This initiative focuses on enhancing foundational skills in **language and mathematics** among students from rural schools, leveraging the SoCCs system to foster peer learning. The SoCCs earned by older students can be redeemed for various educational benefits. This includes educational excursions such as: museum visits that expand students' cultural and historic awareness, sports kits to encourage participation in physical activities and team sports, and introductory computer classes that impart essential digital skills for education and future careers.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- This initiative directly impacts **150** students, who become mentors
- Mentors tutor **450** students through our Cascades of Learning program
MICRO CREDIT & LIVELIHOOD INITIATIVES

Women in Asia Initiatives projects are using the SoCCs program to secure low-interest loans to develop or expand their businesses, ensuring financial security for their families whilst advancing their sense of confidence and personal empowerment.
Moringa (drumstick) is a super-food that alleviates anemia, a rampant issue among rural women in India. While gram, another grain rich in protein, is well suited for this region, it is becoming increasingly scarce due to water shortage. This project provides comprehensive training to 600 women in sustainable agricultural practices, efficient water management, organic farming, pest control, and processing of moringa products. The initiative also established a processing, enabling women to add value to their produce and access new markets. Simultaneously, the Gram Cultivation Initiative equipped 175 women with skills for water smart agriculture.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- 600 women engaged in the Drumstick Cultivation Project
- 175 women trained in Climate Resilient Agriculture under the Gram Cultivation Initiative
- Gram yields increased by 50%
- 7% reduction in seed costs was achieved
- 42% reduction in fertilizer costs was achieved
- Incomes boosted by an average of 69%
This project has provided interest-free microcredit loans to 30 women in 2023. The purpose of loans is to start, improve or expand their “micro-businesses”.

These enterprises have included: chapati (type of bread) making, buying and selling second-hand clothes and school uniforms, micro poultry farming, knitting and crocheting, as well as selling ice cream, fish and vegetables. The success of this program hinges upon business training and one-to-one support provided to women by the Zuri Initiative. The SoCCs Earning Menu included attending training in financial literacy, business management, and other entrepreneurial skills. The repayment rates in the program have been high, as borrowers are motivated to maintain their credibility within the community.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- More than 50 women have become long-term entrepreneurs
- All the women in the program received reproductive healthcare training
SoCCs promote economic and environmental sustainability in communities through improved farming techniques, water conservation, reforestation and waste management.
Our initiative with TARI supports native tribes in balancing ecological sustainability with economic development. Through SoCCs, the project helps to foster water smart agriculture and economic success while preserving biodiversity. Wulali Tribe in Ruisui Township, Ceroh Tribe in Yuli Township and Songpu Tribe are among the participants with whom we address issues like water shortages, habitat loss, and a decline in bird populations due to intensive rice cultivation. People also earn SoCCs for teaching traditional culture, cuisine, costumes, and dances to younger members.

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

- **32** farmers were trained in eco-friendly farming and biodiversity conservation
- **40** bat boxes were installed in community areas and buildings
- **2,778** Ethnoplants were planted by the farmers
- **16** auto-cameras were placed in farmers' fields to monitor and protect wildlife
- **25** local students are learning English from mentors in Taipei
In partnership with Savera Foundation, Asia Initiatives has launched water conservation initiatives in Kodarma, Jharkhand to combat drought and water scarcity. **36 new water sources** were created across the region for both household and agricultural purposes. This conserved water allowed for the cultivation of additional crops like rice and maize, significantly **boosting local agriculture, food security, and incomes.** SoCCs engaged community members in earning activities such as constructing dams, maintaining sanitation around water sources, and planting indigenous trees and shrubs.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **2,455** women participated in SoCCs activities
- **302** new households adopted agriculture, enabling double cropping and enhancing nutritional intake
- **36** ponds were created across **19** villages
- **2,455** women benefited from new water security
This project was implemented through SoCCs activities, and has empowered farmers in the water-stressed Vidarbha region of Maharashtra through engagement in natural resource planning, sustainable farming practices and contributions to the People’s Biodiversity Register (PBR). In the program, farmers earned SoCCs for contributing to local biodiversity and switching to organic agricultural practices, then redeemed SoCCs to restore community water sources. This innovative approach has enabled farmers to actively contribute to environmental stewardship while securing sustainable livelihoods.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**

- **156** hours devoted to repopulating the ecosystem with indigenous tree species
- **3** natural water sources restored, bringing water for personal and agriculture uses
- **600** farmers switched to sustainable and climate resilient practices
Asia Initiatives has supported the formation of the Savitri Tribal Micro-credit Cooperative since 2019. With the cooperative now stabilized, support was provided for water conservation and livelihood through the formation of two village ponds. Two hamlets were selected based on the availability of land, presence of natural streams, and community support. The SoCC Earning Menu included setting aside monthly savings from sale of fish in individual micro credit accounts. The two projects were linked in order to strengthen the savings base and help tribals to take charge of managing their natural resources, as well as the reduce the need for migration to cities in search of jobs.

**SoCCs Multiplier Effect:**
- **1,002** members have participated in the Savitri Tribal Micro-credit Cooperative
- Microcredit cooperatives led to the formation of an independent pressure group of **57** tribal development thinkers
HEALTH INITIATIVES

Participants learn ways to improve their health and hygiene in the health camps we organize. Women and girls also learn about reproductive healthcare choices and resources.
Family Vegetable Gardens Project supports regenerative agriculture in rural areas, a shift from conventional chemical-based farming to organic methods. Women earn SoCCs for village cleanliness and learning to make organic inputs such as jeevamrut and dasparani extract, contributing to enhancing the overall health of soil and crops. Additionally, the initiative places a strong emphasis improving nutrition for women and their families, as well as additional income for the sale of excess produce.

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

- **3,000** Vegetable Gardens were created across **152** villages
- **213** tons of vegetables produced.
- Women in **151** villages learned about making organic manure.
- **132,356** kg of compost and **31,299** liters of natural insecticide was produced
- Over **3,000** tree planted.
- **64,738** seed balls for tree planting were spread
- **1,839** bird perches and **1,790** sticky traps for pest control installed
Vegetable Gardens for Improved Nutrition and Income: Odisha

By fostering participatory action among women farmers, this project addresses the micro nutrition deficiencies in rural populations, especially women, as well as helps increase incomes of women and their families. Over half of the women in this project had health complications from malnourishment, most commonly anemia, before this intervention. Through comprehensive training programs, 1,000 women farmers were equipped with the knowledge and skills necessary to prepare organic manure and maintain climate-smart vegetable gardens. They could trade their SoCCs for native variety seeds and other inputs.

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

- 2,100 vegetable gardens were sustained long-term
- Over 75 varieties of local and indigenous crops were planted
- Hosted one educational convening nutrition for all participants
- 2,100 women in 66 villages were trained to make organic manure
Through the Vegetable Gardens initiatives in the Koderma district of Jharkhand, 300 women and their families enhanced their nutrition and income. This region has a high incidence of anemia, making one of the priorities of our Vegetable Gardens to enhance iron intake. Alongside these efforts, community health drives were hosted to alert women and their families of the warning signs of anemia and other malnutrition-induced maladies. SoCCs activities included planting varieties of local trees and shrubs in exchange for organic seeds and equipment, both of which led to tangible community and environmental conservation efforts.

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

- 300 women and their families have enhanced their nutrition and income
- 150 kgs of vegetables were cultivated
- 200 families experienced an annual income boost of 2,500 INR
- 200 kgs of organic compost were created
With support from the Weyerhauser Family Foundation, AI and Parmarth Samaj Sewi Sansthan ran a multi-year program supporting micro loans for goat rearing in 16 villages in Uttar Pradesh, India. As funds were recovered, they were reinvested and loaned to others, continuing to benefit participating self-help groups (SHGs). In the past 5 years, 250+ loans were issued to purchase goats. 2023 marked a pivotal milestone with the formal registration of the Vedvanti Farmer Producer Organization (FPO), a government recognized entity, to enhance participants’ bargaining power and access to government schemes.

Over 210 goats have been insured, providing a safety net against the uncertainties posed by disease outbreaks and natural calamities.

5 goat camps held for vaccination and medical check-ups

A total of 77 cleanliness drives have been conducted in all participating villages

SoCCs Multiplier Effect:

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- 5 goat camps held for vaccination and medical check-ups
- A total of 77 cleanliness drives have been conducted in all participating villages
2023 Financial Update

2023 Revenues
- Gala: 66.73%
- Individuals: 18.81%
- Grants: 13.36%
- Other: 1.10%

2023 Expenditures
- Gala: 12.07%
- Consultants: 21.00%
- Program Funding: 65.58%
- Other: 1.31%
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