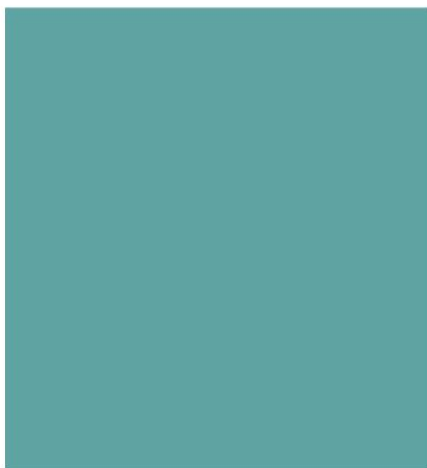


Disha

END TERM REPORT

Part B: Communication and Dissemination Phase



Final Report

(31-May-2021)

Status

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General Information

Organisation:	United Nations Development Program, India
Project Title:	Creating Employment and Entrepreneurship Opportunities for Women in India
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Total Grant Amount:	€12,902,929.00
Portfolio:	Employment and Entrepreneurship
Programme Manager:	Vandana Verma
Project Controller:	Surrani Kali
Reporting Period from:	1 January 2015
Reporting Period to:	31 December 2020

Overall Summary of Completion

- A. Implementation Period:** 1-Jan-2015 to 31st December 2019
- B. Communication and Dissemination Period:** 1-Jan-2020 to 31st December 2020

Part B (Communication and Dissemination Phase: 01/01/2020 – 31/12/2020)

In general terms, did you achieve what you set out to accomplish? Why or why not?

The year 2020 provided an enriching opportunity for reflecting on the Disha journey together with the extensive partnership base created as well as the broader development constituency. The project which was operationally (implementation) closed by end-2019, was allocated six months i.e., up to June 2020 to support the impact evaluation exercise by Dalberg and dissemination of project learnings, approaches, and evaluation findings. With the COVID-19 pandemic gathering momentum in March 2020, the project was further extended up to December 2020 towards more intensive efforts at dissemination of Disha models and mobilization of support and resources for their adoption and upscaling. The results of this intensive year-long disseminations and partnership-building exercise have been satisfying and productive. These are:

1. **New partnerships around Disha models with private sector** with SAP, Nayara Energy and Marico with a total resource envelop of USD 4.54 million. Similar partnerships are at different stage of discussion and negotiations with HDFC Bank, American Express, Amazon Inc, Intel, etc.
2. **Seamless operationalization of UNDP India's COVID-19 response with a resource base of USD 1 million.** Over 2,11,000 persons including Disha beneficiaries have been supported across states through economic recovery and rehabilitation programme initiatives. This shows the programme design and implementation capacity built up through Disha in the domain of pro-poor livelihoods and generally the robustness of the UNDP apparatus for all-India outreach.
3. **Momentum in existing platforms such as the MSDE/FICCI/UNDP Taskforce** on Career Guidance and Counselling and tapping of new opportunities such as an alliance of 14 partners "COVID -19 Economic Recovery Alliance (CERA)" in Uttar Pradesh and early discussion on setting up of an informal network on micro-entrepreneurship involving leading agencies such the World Bank and Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation.
4. **Deepening the engagement with key Central Government ministries** (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship; Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Textiles, NITI Aayog) **and 14 state governments** through Disha dialogue series consultations and interactions for institutionalization and adoption at scale of Disha solutions. A three-year agreement has been signed with NITI Aayog and Letter of Undertakings signed with 4 State Governments (Maharashtra, Karnataka, Uttarakhand, and Telangana). At the request of central and state governments, multi-year proposals for livelihood, entrepreneurship, value chain and employment promotion interventions have been submitted. While partnership with Karnataka and Uttarakhand government has been signed (for USD 3 million), other proposals are in advance stages of discussion for approval.
5. **Resource Leveraging** - UNDP managed to raise USD 8.54 million (inclusive of Disha scale-up and COVID-19 response) and engaged with over 1000 stakeholders through virtual consultation and webinars.

1. What and Why?

As agreed between IKEA Foundation (IKF) and UNDP, the year 2020 under the partnership was dedicated for rolling forward the outreach, dissemination and partnership building agenda emanating from the proof-of-concept phase of Disha project. Initially, a period of six month (January to June 2020) was to follow seamlessly the operational completion of Disha in December 2019 and the availability of the findings from the end term impact evaluation process. However, due to delay in the finalization of the evaluation report which ran into the first quarter of 2020 followed by the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic, the ensuing lockdown and uncertainty surrounding it, the project was given an extension up to December 2020 to pursue an intense agenda of ***“Sharing Disha’s knowledge and learnings to positively influence country level agenda and to advance the case for adoption at scale and institutionalization by skill and entrepreneurship ecosystem actors and to mobilise potential partners.”***

In the first quarter (January to March 2020), the impact evaluation report by Dalberg was finalized. The evaluation findings reconfirmed the pathbreaking work of Disha in career guidance and counselling towards education to work transition, value chain strengthening and micro-entrepreneurship. The evaluation findings along with the model based “learning and way forward documents” completed by IDF in March formed the essential tools for communication, knowledge dissemination and advocacy to build new partnerships.

COVID-19 lockdown between March to May 2020 and social distancing norms which continued through the year, prohibited planning and execution of the traditional offline/physical dissemination workshops and consultations with stakeholders. Therefore, Disha’s knowledge dissemination and partnership building agenda for scale up and institutionalisation had to be adapted to the “new normal” situation and shift to online content and delivery through digital medium.

Also, given the unprecedented situation, the focus of partnership building had to be adjusted to identifying specific partnership opportunities that would not only build on Disha learnings but also be in sync with the current priorities of the key stakeholders and potential partners on COVID-19 response and recovery.

2. How?

While the lockdown and social distancing norms challenged the usual communication and advocacy approach of direct interactions and physical workshops, it also presented an opportunity to quickly adapt to the “new normal” and pursue Disha’s 2020 agenda through digital channels and platforms. Accordingly, communication tools as well as stakeholder engagements for dissemination and partnership building were adjusted to include preparation of digital media friendly communication material and digital consultation, online community of practitioners and solution exchange platforms etc.

2.1 How have you documented and shared your learning from this project with others in the community?

In addition to supporting end term evaluation process, the focus during the first quarter of this phase was on preparing and finalising the knowledge products and communication collaterals. The knowledge products can be accessed on the [Inclusive Growth Website](#) under the Knowledge Products tab. The following key knowledge products were prepared and released for wider dissemination:

- a. ‘Learning and way forward’ documents for the 4 Disha models:
 - Education to Work Continuum for Women
 - The Employment Marketplace Approach to Enhancing Women’s Access to Jobs
 - Fostering Women Entrepreneurship
 - Enhancing Gender Equality in Value Chain

- b. Finalisation of “The National Framework on Career Guidance and Counselling”. The taskforce report was released jointly with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and FICCI on the 29th of May 2020 through an online panel.
- c. Youth Employability Services Centre: Standard Operating Manual
- d. Key messages for dissemination of Disha impact evaluation findings.
- e. State-specific case studies and documentation e.g. results from all the pilots in Karnataka were converted into a coffee table book and AV films for state level dissemination.
- f. Disha MIS platform has been leveraged and transitioned into permanent portfolio level knowledge management platform for UNDP India’s work in this domain.

2.2 What opportunities did you seize to influence your sector in meaningful ways as a result of this project?

While the dissemination of Disha learnings was initiated in second quarter, the efforts were intensified from third quarter onwards. The results of Disha evaluation report and knowledge products were shared and disseminated widely on various platforms primarily through digital channels of communication and concerted effort were made to advocate the case for scale up and institutionalization of Disha models with the Government, industries & private sector.

Dissemination of the learnings from the Disha Models

In partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship, a weeklong **#Bridgethegap Campaign** ran from 11th July - 19th July to celebrate the World Youth Skills day while engaging with policy makers and private sectors on relevant learnings from Disha. A panel discussion on **Reconstructing and Re-envisioning the livelihoods for youth and women: Need to focus on local and managerial capacity** with MSDE, MSRLM, MANAGE, ALC and Arya Collaterals brought together a cross-section of practitioners, development programmers and policy makers to share their experience in promotion of rural livelihoods and youth employability and learn from each other. **The campaign recognizing and celebrating Disha beneficiaries marked an outreach of 12.8 million people.**

A series of **technical webinars and online consultations** with various stakeholders – including government agencies at the national and state levels policy makers, private sector, educational institutions, Disha beneficiaries, training partners and implementing agencies were held to seek inputs and advance the cause of adoption and upscaling. **#DishaDialogues series** was launched and engaged over 1000 stakeholders & decision makers across 7 webinars on learnings from Disha, followed by a series of online meetings and consultations at national and state level for fostering partnerships; in the process, partnership opportunities were identified.

Theme	Date	Key Institutional Stakeholder
“Building the Managerial Capacity of Women’s Collectives/FPOs to Strengthen Market Access”	18-Aug-20	Ministry of Agriculture, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, World Bank
Building partnerships for creation of robust employment marketplace	20-Aug-20	Building partnerships for creation of robust employment marketplace
PPP based career guidance and counselling mechanism towards robust Education to Work Transition in Telangana	02-Sept-20	FICCI, Commissionerate of Collegiate & Technical Education, Government of Telangana, Telangana Academy of Skills & Knowledge, National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC), TATA Community Initiative, Microsoft, Apollo Medskills, GMR, Logistics Sector skill council, COIGN Consultants.
“Improving Market Access for Farmer Collectives: Role of Women Sourcing Managers”	03-Sep-20	Maharashtra State Rural Livelihood Mission, World Bank, IFAD, Arya Collaterals
Local solutions for career counselling and jobs for women through youth employability services centers	18-Sept-20	FICCI, Employment Department, Government of Haryana, MSDE, UNWomen, NSDC, Teamlease Services
“Empowering women through Sustainable Livelihood Opportunities: Scaling up the creation and growth of women micro-enterprises”	10-Nov-20	Ministry of Rural Development, World Bank, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, International Labour Organisation, Institute of Rural Management Anand
Roundtable on Sustainable Livelihoods Opportunities for Women Leading to Economic Empowerment	22-Dec-20	Ministry of Rural Development, Rural Livelihood Mission from 22 states.

The following **op-ed and articles** were published in leading print and online media platform:

Name of the Article	Platform	Link
How One Project has Empowered a Million Women with Skills to Start Their Enterprises	Better India	https://www.thebetterindia.com/233757/disha-project-women-empowerment-skill-training-entrepreneurship-undp-ikea-foundation/
Gender equality is a fundamental human right: leaders say at UNDP’s International Women’s day celebration	Yourstory	https://yourstory.com/2020/03/gender-equality-human-right-undp
It’s time to #BridgetheGap to build an equal world	Yourstory	https://yourstory.com/2020/03/bridgethegap-build-equal-world
Recovery from COVID-19 pandemic will be stronger if women are included as equal partners	Times Now	https://www.timesnownews.com/columns/article/covid-19-and-women-journey-to-recovery-from-coronavirus-will-be-stronger-if-women-included-as-equal-partners/611625
Raising women’s participation in the labour force to the same level as men can boost India’s GDP’	Times of India	https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/the-interviews-blog/raisin g-womens-participation-in-the-

		labour-force-to-the-same-level-as-men-can-boost-indias-gdp/
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Enhanced engagement with Central and State governments

UNDP systematically reached out to central ministries and state government departments to explore potential of integration and replication of Disha approach for enhancing access to employment and rural livelihood creations specifically for women and youth. The prime focus of the government engagement was centered around policy advocacy and institutionalization by embedding the Disha learnings through working groups/taskforce at national and state levels as well as in some cases funding and co-funding. Leveraging the partnership with the State Government in the Disha focused states of Haryana, Maharashtra, Karnataka, and Telangana and drawing upon the evaluation results, project learnings - collaboration and partnership discussion has been successfully expanded to other States especially Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and North Eastern states of Assam, Mizoram and Nagaland.

Central Governments

- The National Framework on Career Guidance and Counselling was finalized and launched with FICCI and MSDE to strengthen Career Guidance and Career Counselling with a focus on girls and women. This set the ground for state level consultations and State level Task force on 'Education to Work Transition' with the Govt of Telangana, UNICEF, FICCI & private sector; and with the Department of Skills and Enterprise Development, Govt of Maharashtra were established. As a follow up to the consultation, UNDP has commissioned *a Study on developing strategies for promoting education to work transition landscape in India* with the objective of developing a robust methodology for conducting diagnostic and analytical studies on Education to Work Transition that can be used for conducting a national level recurring study as well as prepare state wise case on education to work transition for 5 states Telangana, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Odisha, and Bihar.
- High level meeting UNDP and MSDE, Government of India co-chaired by **Mr. Praveen Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Skill Development and entrepreneurship, Government of India** and **Ms. Shoko Noda, Resident Representative, UNDP** resulted into identification of certain key areas for partnership. UNDP has submitted a brief note on the specific areas of cooperation/collaboration for development of a structured programmatic partnership between UNDP and MSDE.
- A three-year comprehensive partnership framework with **NITI Aayog** has been signed by UNDP. One of the partnership objectives is to enhance access to employment and sustainable livelihoods opportunities through scalable and innovative solutions to reduce socio-economic inequalities. National Scale-up of Business. Enterprises Leadership Management Program (Mini-MBA) and other solutions (Disha) for creation of rural managerial capacity for farm and non-farm value chain is one of the agreed activities. NITI Aayog is well poised to lead the adoption and integration for national roll out with technical support from UNDP. UNDP has also been invited to be part of the CSO Standing Committees constituted by NITI Aayog to work on different thematic areas contributing to National Development Agenda and Sustainable Development Goals.

A Joint policy brief with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation on engendering the farm value chain has also been submitted to the Ministry of agriculture, Government of India.

- In addition to MSDE and NITI Aayog, detailed discussion has been held with policy makers from the **Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Textiles, Ministry of Agriculture** to explore the partnership opportunities for scaling up the work in the different states within the framework of National Rural Economic

Transformation Project (NRETP), 1000 FPO and other national schemes. Ministry of Textiles, Government of India showed keen interest to join hands for building capacities of the weaver Producer companies formed by the Ministry in pan India on the lines of Disha model on handloom value chain. At the request of the **office of Development Commissioner (Handlooms), Ministry of Textiles**, a detailed multi-year proposal for skill upgradation and capacity building of producer organizations in the handloom value chain across 10 states has been submitted to the Ministry.

Non – Disha States

Subsequent to the sharing of Disha's four models with the Chief Operating Officer (COO) of **Tamil Nadu Women's Development Corporation (TNWDC)** in June 2020 and keen interest shown to adopt and replicate the Disha Models (specifically 1&2) in Tamil Nadu through TNWDC, partnership proposal for strengthening the Skill Centres in Tamil Nadu has been submitted to TNWDC.

Together with UNDP Uttarakhand team, discussions initiated with the **Dept of Skill Development, Govt of Uttarakhand** to replicate Disha models with necessary adaptation within the framework of world bank funded SANKALP project for ITI upgradation and promote career guidance, apprenticeship, guest lecture etc. Department has shown interest and detailed concept note has been submitted. Three-year partnership with funding of USD 500000/year has been agreed upon.

Engagement at the highest level of policy makers in Planning Department, **Uttar Pradesh** State Rural Livelihood Mission (UPSRLM), Department of Urban Development, Directorate of Employment & Training - Labour Department, State Skill Development Mission, Department of MSME & Export Promotion, Government of Uttar Pradesh has been established. Several rounds of meetings were held to present Disha's approach, learnings, and impact. UPSRLM and State Skill Development mission has shown interest to partner with UNDP and has requested UNDP to carry out pilot measures in few districts to show the results on ground.

The government engagement for livelihood promotion and Disha Dissemination was also organized in North Eastern Region in August 2020. This online interaction had participation from State Rural Livelihood Missions from **Meghalaya, Assam, Nagaland, and Mizoram** along with officials from Handloom, Handicraft and Agriculture from respective State Governments.

Virtual meetings were held with the Secretary, Department of Higher Education and Mission Director, State Rural Livelihood Mission, Government of Jammu Kashmir and Disha's 4 models were presented. The **Jammu and Kashmir** government also requested UNDP to submit proposals on the lines of Disha M1-M2 models to enhance employability skills and create entrepreneurship awareness among the college students and youth of Jammu and Kashmir.

Disha Focus States

Karnataka

Virtual and physical meetings were held with policy makers and senior officials of the Dept of Rural Development & Panchayath Raj, Karnataka Tribal Development Board, Department of Planning, Programming, Monitoring and statistics, PU Board, Govt of Karnataka, Karnataka Skill Development Authority (KSDA), Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Mission, Department of Minority Welfare, Karnataka State Rural Livelihood Promotion Society (KSRLPS) during the months of June – December 2020. As an outcome of these meetings, following areas of cooperation and partnership relevant to Disha's approach have emerged.

- Leverage the Gram Panchayat-level librarian network in offering career guidance and counselling and facilitate linkages of students and youth to skilling opportunities, YES Kendra and Disha E-Cell and other relevant support systems.
- Connect all Disha implementing partners in Karnataka to explore the partnership possibilities with KSRLPS.

Telangana

- A Statement of Intent has been signed between the Handlooms Department & UNDP on the National Handloom Day (August 7, 2020) to work jointly to facilitate promotion of improved livelihood opportunities for weavers & artisans in Telangana through skill upgradation and market linkages.

<https://www.newindianexpress.com/states/telangana/2020/aug/08/three-mous-signed-app-launched-in-telangana-on-national-handloom-day-2180683.html>

- **Telangana State consultation on Education to Work Transition** was held on September 2nd with the participation of government & private sector. It was agreed to form a **Telangana state Task force on Education to Work Transition under the leadership of Commissioner CCE, Govt of Telangana** with UNDP, UNICEF, FICCI, Tata Strive and 2-3 members from the private sector to take the agenda forward & also to strengthen the role of states & private sector in the national framework.

Karnataka SRLM partnership has translated into a 3-year programme funding of USD 3 million and discussion for providing technical support to Telangana Tribal Welfare Department, Maharashtra SRLM, Uttar Pradesh SRLM, Uttarakhand SRLM and Assam SRLM is ongoing. Over 20 State rural livelihood missions and national rural livelihood missions showed interest to cooperate in scaling up “enhancing women’s role in farm and non-farm value chain approach”.

<https://web.microsoftstream.com/video/2dc417d6-1bd1-49bf-a04c-322865255bf7>

- A consultative meeting was held by **Secretary Tribal Welfare Department, Govt of Telangana** on July 21st with UNDP, ICRISAT & UNICEF to discuss convergence on institution building of Tribal Farmer Producer Organizations (FPOs) and MSMEs through effective implementation of schemes of Tribal Welfare Department (TWD), Govt of Telangana. UNDP is in the process of preparing a proposal on developing a community cadre of rural business managers on Business Enterprise Leadership Management Programme (mini-MBA) training in tribal areas for submission to Tribal Welfare Department.
- UNDP has submitted a multi- year proposal on enhancing the productivity and market facing role of vegetables Farmer producer organizations (FPOs) in Telangana to **Society for Elimination of Rural Poverty (SERP), Government of Telangana** which is under review stage.

Maharashtra

- To take the results and learnings to the highest level of policy making, a visit of Smt. Yoshodhara Thakur, Hon’ble Minister **Women and Child Development, Government of Maharashtra** was organized on 21st/08/2020 in Dhamangaon (Morshi), Dist. Amaravati. Hon’ble Minister interacted with Biz-Sakhi’s and WSMs cadre, trained under project DISHA in partnership with Mahila Arthik Vikas Mahamandal (MAVIM) and got a first-hand experience of work done under Disha. Minister appreciated the work done by UNDP on women empowerment and has shown keen interest to continue and strengthen the partnership between UNDP and the Women and Child Department in Maharashtra.
- A strategic MoU has been signed between UNDP and the **Skill Development and Entrepreneurship Department (SDED), Government of Maharashtra** in October 2020 to create an institutional framework and implementation roadmap for digital counselling and career guidance, skill and entrepreneurship development and employability.

Basis the MoU, a state level working group under Commissioner-Skills has been convened by the Government to provide strategic and operational inputs to carry out CGCC, skill and entrepreneurship development activities by utilizing digital platforms. Further progress has been delayed on account of continued COVID pandemic in the state.

- Subsequent to the discussions with the department, a proposal has been submitted to **Department of Tribal Welfare** for creation of sustainable livelihoods opportunity for PVTG families of Raigad district of Maharashtra.

Strategic Engagement with the Private Sector

Strategic effort to engage with large private sector company and foundations to explore high impact and long-term partnerships that seek to build on or replicate the insights of the Disha project and the larger Inclusive growth portfolio specifically in view of COVID's devastating impact on Jobs and livelihoods was carried out during the year. Discussions with the private sector have been aimed at creating holistic partnerships that integrate the skill development, micro-entrepreneurship, and value chain work, especially in the context of much needed long-term recovery and resilience building measures. With the private sector, new partnerships around Disha models have been formalised with SAP, Nayara Energy and Marico with a total resource envelop of USD 4.54 million. Similar partnerships are at an advanced stage of discussions and negotiations with Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, HDFC, American Express, Amazon Inc, Intel, etc.

Leveraging Disha experience, UNDP took the lead in submitting a proposal for the global Data.org Inclusive Growth and Recovery Challenge. India Office's submission was shortlisted among the 17 finalists out of a total of 1600 submissions. Project is designed with a focus on overlaying a digital solutions architecture to Disha's work with the Women Collectives and micro-entrepreneurs to enhance efficiencies and impact.

In addition to bilateral meetings with private sector representative UNDP India organized an exclusive Roundtable on **"Accelerating Women's Economic Empowerment"** on 18th November 2020 with select private sector representatives. More than 22 heads and decision maker from private sector had joined the consultations. The discussions focused on how best private sector and the development sector can leverage their strengths and insights into strengthening the women economic empowerment agenda in the country. There was **consensus on the necessity and importance of strengthening women's economic participation** in the country. There was also a spotlight on the various initiatives and interventions underway among the various private sector representatives towards this end. It was recognized that there is a significant gap in **platforms and forums for knowledge sharing and exploring collaboration** for collective impact in this area among the private sector. UNDP can potentially play a convening role in enabling this. Post this Roundtable, UNDP is working towards creating an agile platform for discussion and collaboration among the participants of the Roundtable.

Extending socio-economic recovery support to Disha Beneficiaries during COVID-19

Simultaneously, Disha also remained at the forefront of UNDP's COVID-19 response and recovery coalition on livelihood to address the adverse socio-economic impact brought on by the unprecedented COVID-19 crisis, ensuring that the outcome results from Phase I of Disha are efficiently carried forward through partnerships and institutionalization towards women's economic empowerment as well as support Disha beneficiaries to build back better.

Under the COVID-19 response, UNDP's inclusive growth portfolio managed to raise resources which complemented Disha work in not only expanding the Disha constituency and partner base beyond 5 Disha states and ensuring livelihood as well as income for the people at the grassroot are restored and sustained but also provided an opportunity for Disha to get recognised in other sectors like green recovery.

Over 2,11,000 persons from marginalised communities across 10 states (including Disha beneficiaries in 5 states) have been supported under COVID-19 response and provided access to social protection and livelihoods restoration through career guidance, 21st century skills, skilling/re-skilling for employability, entrepreneurship, value chain management, financial and digital literacy skills; psycho-social support, market linkages including digital onboarding; and business continuity support for small businesses. In Haryana, the online guidance series, “Sach Hoge Sapne” (Hindi) has been adopted by the Govt of Haryana for wider dissemination and 2500 women received psycho-social and business advisory support during the pandemic period and assisted with enterprise creation. In Karnataka women MSMEs were enabled to access the Government schemes & digital market linkage program through UBUNTU and AWAKE.

These measures were primarily based on Disha’s tried and tested approach. In addition to extending immediate support to some Disha beneficiaries, these interventions also became instrumental in demonstration of Disha’s approach in new states, enabling possibilities of future co-funded partnership with the state governments.

3. Impact Unpacked

Disha project with focus on women economic empowerment, has been able to catalyse high impact and transformational partnerships with the central and state governments, private sector, foundations, industry bodies and civil society organisations to embed/scale/replicate the learning from Disha programme. Blending of demand side orientation in programmatic interventions have been appreciated and helped in bringing new partners on board.

Partnerships are in the process of being streamlined with various state governments. In **Telangana**, the Tribal Welfare Department has adopted the CGCC models and is implementing it in all Girls Ashram schools & degree colleges. In **Uttar Pradesh**, an alliance of 14 partners called “Uttar Pradesh COVID-19 Economic Recovery Alliance (UPCERA)”, has been created and partnership with the state government has led to the development of a digital matchmaking platform that would cater to 7 million youth/job seekers and 36,000 MSMEs. The partnership with **Uttarakhand SRLM (USRLM)** included developing cluster-based livelihood strategies for all districts, development of digital tools to facilitate the outreach efforts of USRLM and implementation of a pilot for the strengthening of the Growth Centre forward linkages. Another partnership to extend technical support for implementation of Skills Acquisition and Knowledge Awareness for Livelihood Promotion (SANKALP) Scheme, has been finalized. The partnership with the **Karnataka** state rural livelihood mission has been signed (USD 3 million) to provide technical support rural entrepreneurship and value chain strengthening for poor and marginalized specifically women.

With the private sector, UNDP has managed to generate a resource envelop of USD 4.54 million with SAP Labs, Nyara Energy and Marico around Disha models for project implementation over 3 years. With **SAP Labs** (USD 2.4 million), the partnership focusses on ‘Empowerment of Youth and Women for future employability skills and entrepreneurship’, With **Nyara Energy Ltd.** (USD 2.0 million), the partnership is anchored around skill development and entrepreneurship/ value chain development in select regions in Gujarat and with **Marico** (USD 0.14 million) the alliance emphasizes on enhancing employability skills of women & youth in Madhya Pradesh. Similar partnerships are at an advanced stage of negotiations with, American Express, HDFC Bank, Amazon Inc, Intel, etc.

A two-year partnership with the **Confederation of Indian Industries (CII)** have been initiated to promote the agenda of diversified workforce in the Indian manufacturing sectors. An initiative named “**women with machines**” will be working with the aim to support more women in the non-traditional job roles.

4. Learnings

UNDP, while focusing on the dissemination of the learnings from Disha, gathered the following insights in the due course of the process:

- **The intense engagement with stakeholders has resulted in enhanced visibility of the innovative solutions and approaches piloted by the Disha project.** Active participation and engagement of over 1000 stakeholders in Disha Dialogue series and dissemination workshops on virtual platforms when the world was reeling with the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic provided clinching evidence on the relevance of learnings and solutions under Disha to the livelihood reconstruction and women economic empowerment agenda.
- **Swift adaptation of technology and digital tools** to communicate and reach out to the stakeholders and communities in remote areas has been a key learning while planning for the dissemination activities for Disha and the COVID-19 response interventions during the pandemic.
- **Disha project with a focus on women economic empowerment, has been able to catalyze high impact and transformational partnerships.** This is evident from the institutionalization and scale-up efforts that have resulted in setting up of alliances and partnerships with diverse stakeholders as explained in the section above. These partnerships demonstrate the recognition of Disha's demand side approach and innovative solutions adopted for economic empowerment of women from marginalized sections as a scalable model by the public and private sector stakeholders.
- **Resource Leverage:** The concerted efforts and intense knowledge dissemination based largely on digital means has yielded high impact and strategic partnerships. UNDP managed to secure USD 8.54 million partnership for replication of Disha approach; engagement with over 1000 stakeholders as part of dissemination exercise and supported over 2.5 lakh people from the marginalized communities within the framework of COVID-19 response measures in the year 2020.

5. Managing the Risk

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 and its rapid spread in the subsequent months, adversely affected the planned dissemination roll out and partnership building process and challenged the conventional communication and advocacy approach. Communication tools as well as stakeholder's engagement for dissemination and partnership building were adjusted to include preparation of digital media friendly communication material and digital consultation. For Disha, UNDP adopted a lean knowledge dissemination phase based largely on digital means including the highly successful UN modality of Solutions Exchange.

This crisis adversely impacted the gains made by the Disha beneficiaries and their families over the last few years and their livelihoods were severely affected. UNDP swiftly shifted its livelihood priorities to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic and mobilized resources to provide support to the Disha and wider development constituency to restore their livelihood and/or resort to alternate/ diversified livelihood options. The network of women community cadre developed during Disha interventions was leveraged and they played an instrumental role in reaching out to the communities during the pandemic.

COVID-19 has not only severely affected planned dissemination and partnership building agenda for 2020 but also fundamentally changed the overall employment and entrepreneurship ecosystem. Given that the pandemic slowed down the economy and impacted livelihoods, resource mobilization was also severely impacted this year as the funds were diverted towards the immediate health emergency measures. Leveraging the growing recognition of Disha's

demand driven approach towards employability and entrepreneurship, UNDP intensified its engagement with the government and private sector through virtual platforms and re-aligned its partnership building strategy with the changed priority. Despite being a very difficult year, UNDP successfully mobilized USD 7.54 million around Disha models.

6. Reflection and Feedback

The Disha project with focus on women economic empowerment, has been able to form strategic partnerships thereby demonstrating recognition of Disha's innovative approach and solutions for economic empowerment of women from marginalized sections as a scalable model. The pandemic has further demonstrated the relevance of learnings and development products from Disha for human-centric livelihood reconstruction approach. Way forward envisaged is as follows:

- **Design new programmes and strengthen Govt linkages** through a deeper policy advocacy component and tap into new national initiatives: 10000 Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) schemes (Ministry of Agriculture); Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana 3.0 (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE)); UMEED (Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship); and Ministry of Rural Development, National Rural Livelihood Mission/State Rural Livelihood Mission).
- **Focus on Green Recovery:** Enabling policies, systems and institutional structures are strengthened to foster green recovery including access to green jobs and nature-based livelihoods and to protect and support the access and entitlement rights of the migrants and urban poor, underprivileged and disadvantaged.
- **Building knowledge platforms and alliances:** Leverage existing knowledge, recognition, and partner networks to build / be part of alliances and platforms (knowledge and implementation) on livelihoods and women economic empowerment, with a focus on future of work and green jobs.
- **Strategic partnership with the private sector and industry bodies** towards strengthening the existing ecosystem and more support to MSMEs to build resilience to future shocks and economic slowdown.
- **Policy Advocacy:** Advocating/influencing policies on women's economic empowerment, education to work continuum, enhancing women's agency and leadership positions in building sustainable livelihoods and helping communities to "*build forward better*".

Thus, the time is apt for an ambitious scale-up, also keeping in view the relevance of Disha solutions for the livelihood reconstruction agenda in the post COVID scenario. UNDP with its rich experience, trust and strong convening power is in the best position to carry on the scale-up and institutionalization agenda as originally conceptualized in Disha. Scale up / adoption at scale journey has been initiated during the year with the new partners onboarded during the year.

7. Management and Coordination

As proposed for the No Cost Extension period, the Disha project team was rationalised at the end of implementation in December 2019. Since January 2020, project operated with a lean team (both at the central and state level), to implement outreach, dissemination, and partnership building activities. The project team through 2020 included:

1. Programme Lead (1)
2. Thematic Lead Experts (2)
3. Operation Team (2)

4. Communication Officer (1)
5. Private Sector Expert (1), and
6. State Project Officers (4) – one per state.

Overall supervision and guidance were provided by the Senior Management, UNDP. The time-period of January to December 2020 was primarily used by the project team on a) extending support for the impact evaluation process; b) development of model-based learning and way forward documents; and c) strengthening the existing partnership and developing new partnership.

8. Conclusion

The conclusions emerging from the intensive engagement with a range of stakeholders over the year 2020 are:

1. The Disha approach is highly valued across stakeholders, despite a narrow definition of economic empowerment (limited to income generation) adopted by Dalberg in the impact evaluation study. Disha, through its proof-of-concept phase, has identified strategies that enable girls and women to become economically self-sufficient so that they, their families and future generations could have better opportunities in life. The project also demonstrated that investing in empowering girls and women and building their self-confidence and agency increases the likelihood of success in their finding and keeping a job or starting a micro-enterprise. Towards economic empowerment, Disha has done exceedingly well in building women agency and increasing confidence levels to enable them to make informed choices.
2. Many of the Disha initiatives and partnership had found roots and blossomed. These strategies proved to be invaluable while UNDP focused on livelihood recovery during the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, the agri-value chains established under Disha enabled rapid resumption of this vital supply line in as seamless manner. Similarly, the Delhi model of career guidance pioneered by Disha was leveraged by UNICEF for career guidance support to students across 13 states.
3. Overall, one powerful message was clear from the above engagement process. Disha being a highly ambitious initiative had piloted a range of useful development products. Henceforth, the underlying learning and partnership base has much deeper potential that needs to be harnessed. The critical evaluation of the project outlined more opportunities for UNDP to focus on the policy change and upscaling process, emphasizing on a forward-looking outlook. The engagement process over 2020 helped in leveraging the opportunity for partnerships with various private sector players to replicate the successful interventions piloted as part of Disha.
4. The interest in collaboration from a wide range of stakeholders was palpable. The COVID-19 crisis has set back development gains and substantially disrupted jobs and livelihoods. While Disha's approach in socio economic empowerment of women as been appreciated by both the state governments and private sector organisations, COVID-19 has adversely affected the availability of funds for multi-year partnerships.