

At The Same Table™ - Ahmedabad, June 2018

On 28th June, 2018, EdelGive hosted its first ATST in Ahmedabad on **Growing Rural Economy: Focus on Women Collectives**, at the Indian Institute of Ahmedabad (IIMA). The event was supported by the Centre for Innovation, Incubation and Entrepreneurship (CIIE), IIMA and witnessed strong representation especially from the business community of Ahmedabad, who joined the conversation with CSR Foundations, non-profit organisations and senior delegates of the IIM-CIIE.

The meeting was tremendously interactive, with the participants tabling multiple, occasionally divergent but undeniably pertinent concerns faced by philanthropic professionals – both at the funding (“investing”, for EdelGive) and implementing ends of the spectrum. A State research paper *Philanthropy for Impact in Gujarat* commissioned by EdelGive, developed by Sattva was released at the event.

Key highlights of the conversations that ensued are given below.

1. The role of philanthropy in creating social impact

After extending a formal welcome to the participants, EdelGive CEO Vidya Shah described EdelGive’s journey highlighting the Foundation’s dual-priority approach towards philanthropy. EdelGive prioritises funding support to implementing organisations as well as organisational capacity building to optimise their internal systems and strategies for improved functioning.

- The team from ANANDI - an NGO working towards building leadership of rural women in Gujarat described the multiple levels at which women empowerment programs need to be structured. They entail informing the women about the rights they are entitled to, convincing and capacitating them to avail their entitlements as well as to withstand the repercussions they’ll face in that journey.
- Representatives from corporate entities admitted that that women are excluded from productive economy not by default but by design and acknowledged that this inhibits and adversely impacts the national growth as half the country’s population is not contributing to the economy.
- The group also discussed the difference between charity and philanthropy with the latter focused on addressing the root cause of the developmental concerns.

2. Needs for intervention in Gujarat – insights from *Philanthropy for Impact in Gujarat* paper

- State with highest GDP growth between FY13-17 but plagued by concerns like low sex ratio, poor learning outcomes and higher dropout rates among girls.
- Female workforce participation rate is at 23.4%, lower than national average (29%)
- 54.90% women in the state suffering from anaemia.
- Funding is biased towards the education and health sectors, gender, among the most poorly funded.

3. Equipping women to embark on their empowerment journey by building capacities

- For women who have been marginalised since generations by virtue of their gender, and then grown further entrenched in vulnerability thanks to their caste, community and lack of economic status; empowerment means equipping them with the knowledge, skills and confidence to rise about these barriers.
- Philanthropic strategies of corporate and non-profit funders need to acquiesce the fact that building such leadership requires years of behavioural and systemic change.
- Holistic women empowerment is incomplete without economic empowerment. Social and economic empowerment of women are equally crucial to overcome vulnerabilities and effect agency.
- Corporates, with their gamut of resources can devise livelihood solutions tailored to address challenges that prevent women from accessing the economy.

4. Understanding expectations, aligning perspectives; crucial for collaboration

- Corporates implementing CSR seek immediate, demonstrable results which are sustainable.

- Implementing organisations that demonstrate credibility, clarity of outcomes, commitment and quality of reporting are likely to qualify the eligibility criteria for CSR funding.
- Programs with need-based, timely interventions that facilitate immediate relief as well as sustainable impact require time to yield demonstrable results. Therefore, program reporting strategies may have to be a blend of process-output indicators and impact assessments.
- Last-mile impact, at a larger scale and in a sustainable way, will be possible if all stakeholders pool their strengths and resources to design programs.

Way forward

Towards the end of the session, participants conveyed that they had enjoyed hearing the “other side” and lauded the diversity of conversations enabled. In the months to come, EdelGive will leverage the insights gained from the ATST and strengthen its engagement with different stakeholders