

At The Same Table™ - Kolkata, 31st August, 2018

On 31st August, 2018, EdelGive hosted its first At The Same Table™ in Kolkata, at Taj Bengal on **Investing in capabilities through philanthropy**. The event witnessed strong representation from the business community of Kolkata, who joined the conversation with philanthropic Foundations, CSR professionals and non-profit organisations.

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 West Bengal* commissioned by EdelGive, developed by Sattva was released at the event.

Key highlights of the conversations that ensued are given below.

1. Going beyond financial sustainability through building capability.

Often, conversations on sustainability veer towards financial sustainability. However, solutions for social impact can be truly sustainable if the community owns it. EdelGive's CEO Vidya Shah shared that EdelGive's portfolio organisations Samaritan Help Mission (SHM) and Sanjog demonstrate the importance of working with communities to augment and sustain the impact they create with the primary service-recipient groups they work with. SHM ensures the children of Tikiapara slum in Kolkata have the means to rise above their vulnerability to crime and poverty through English-medium education in formal schools. Sanjog works to mainstream rescued survivors of trafficking within communities rather than promoting institutional rehabilitation.

2. SHM's story – Building capabilities through education.

SHM's founder Mamoon Akhtar traced the trajectory of the SHM endeavor and shared that the school that began with six children, is now catering to 5600 children. Key lessons and strategies shared included:

- Children's retention in the education system was possible only because SHM also engaged their families in the process.
- SHM worked to address other concerns in the community – poor livelihood opportunities, insufficient health infrastructure, and access to financial institutions.
- Working with the Government to strengthen their reach and quality of service – SHM has activated a defunct school that has ensured another school available to the community.

3. Sanjog's story – Building leadership capabilities of survivors of trafficking.

Sanjog's Executive Director, Uma Chatterjee shared that its work revolves around strengthening the policy and law related to trafficking, and their implementation; and direct work with over 2000 survivors of trafficking. Key lessons and strategies shared included:

- Sanjog through its network of community based organisations offers mental health and physical health support to survivors and through a peer leadership training (Utthan) enables them to participate in their care planning and need-based advocacy.
- To sustain the impact being created at the survivors' level Sanjog also prioritises awareness building of their families and the community.
- Sanjog's Taftish program focuses on breaking the nexus of traffickers. Sanjog insisted on the importance of leveraging technology in such work.

4. Needs for intervention in Kolkata– insights from *Philanthropy for Impact in West Bengal* paper.

- West Bengal ranks 11th among all states in India in CSR funding- there was a 123% increase in CSR funding from 2015 to 2016. Education, Healthcare (including WASH) and Art and Culture attracted and absorbed majority of the funds.
- Need for more initiatives in collaboration with other funders and the Government
- Need for increased focus on projects aimed at increasing women's access to land ownership, education, workforce participation, safety and security and addressing child marriage prevention.

5. Understanding expectations, aligning perspectives; crucial for collaboration.

Representatives of corporates and NGOs discussed their respective challenges in investing in women empowerment projects. Key points that emerged during the discussion were:

- NGOs shared that any inference to 'trafficking' becomes a hurdle in fund raising.
- Corporates shared that the hesitation to fund projects addressing trafficking are owing to the ambiguity of legal compliance, replicability and scalability.
- The group however acknowledged that “women empowerment” as described in Section 135 of the Act, can be inferred to include prevention and rehabilitation from trafficking.

6. Working at the source to address the cause and working with communities for a win-win.

- Sustainable impact results from solutions implemented at the source of the issue.
- Corporates with operations at the source areas can strategise their CSR to meet these needs.
- Community ownership of any development initiative is core to its sustainability.

Way forward

Towards the end of the session, participants conveyed that interactions with grassroots players like Sanjog and SHM have helped them gain crucial insights that will guide them in planning their philanthropic investments. In the months to come, EdelGive will leverage the insights gained from the ATST and strengthen its engagement with different stakeholders.