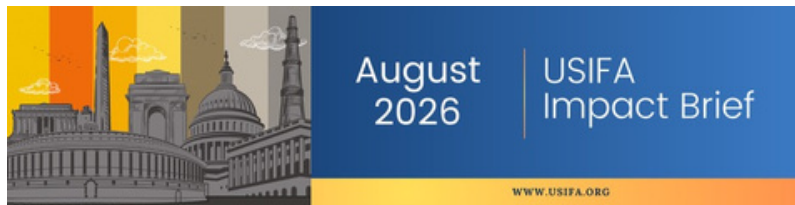


*The U.S.-India Friendship Alliance (USIFA) is
the philanthropic arm of the U.S.–India
Strategic Partnership Forum.*



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01 | USIFA Program Spotlight: ANUSHILP



*Dr. S. Jaishankar, Hon'ble Minister of External Affairs and the USISPF and ANU
teams examining the products developed during the ANUSHILP program.*

The US-India Friendship Alliance was pleased to support the ANUSHILP Project, implemented in partnership with Anant National University (ANU). The program emerged as a pioneering initiative

to revitalise traditional crafts and craftsmanship for contemporary product development in the Narmada district of Gujarat. Through an artisan residency program, ANUSHILP trained artisans in Gujarat's Narmada district to develop market- ready crafts products while also supporting them to plan and organize their own training workshops.

Participant Spotlight:

- Kalpana, 32, is a young widow from Ranipur who participated in the program. In addition to upskilling her technical skills, the program instilled a newfound confidence in Kalpana, increasing her self-worth and helping her envision new directions.
- Rameshbhai, from Dabka village of Narmada district, learned bamboo craft from his family growing up. The program's upskilling efforts helped him refine his techniques and bridge traditional craftsmanship and modern demands, leading to a twofold increase in his income post-residency.

To learn more about the program, visit the program website, read the testimonials, or contact friendshipalliance@usispf.org.



ANUSHILP team with women's group members at Dabka village



Photo Credits: Mahindra Foundation

Mahindra

Project Nanhi Kali, established in 1996 by the K.C. Mahindra Education Trust (KCMET) and aligned with UN Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 5, empowers underserved girls through education in India. Jointly managed by KCMET and Naandi Foundation, the project has continuously redefined its approach by embracing change and innovation. It supports girls in Grades 6 through 10 enrolled in government schools through 21st-century skills training in digital literacy, financial literacy, life skills, and gender awareness; sports leadership development; and the Nanhi Kali Kit containing sportswear and feminine hygiene material.

Since inception, the project has reached over 940,000 girls across 15 states in India, improving attendance, reducing dropouts, and enhancing learning outcomes. Seventy percent of beneficiaries are from rural India. Donors receive Nanhi Kali's profile and annual progress report. International supporters can contribute through Mahindra Foundation USA or Mahindra Foundation UK with tax-efficient giving, where applicable. To know more about Nanhi Kali, [click here](#).



Photo Credits: Cargill

Cargill

Cargill has launched a two-year Integrated Dairy Development Initiative in Maharashtra's Ahilyanagar district, in partnership with Syngenta Foundation India and Digital Green India, to strengthen livestock health, dairy productivity, and farmer resilience. With an investment of over INR 2.3 crore, the program will benefit more than 8,000 smallholder dairy farmers across 140+ villages through a combination of last-mile mobile veterinary services, AI-powered advisory support via the FarmerChat app, and extensive farmer capability-building programs.

The initiative aligns closely with the Government of India's priorities around livestock modernization, digital agriculture, and rural income enhancement. Through the Pashu Arogya Mitra (Mobile Veterinary Van) service, over 3,000 farmers in Ahilyanagar's Rahuri, Rahata, and Shrirampur blocks will gain improved access to animal healthcare, while an additional 5,000 farmers will receive digital advisory services and training.

By leveraging technology, partnerships, and on-ground support, Cargill aims to enhance dairy productivity and create more sustainable livelihood opportunities for farming communities across Maharashtra.

03 | Expert Interview: Venkatesh Raghavendra

USIFA is pleased to feature an interview with Venkatesh "Venky" Raghavendra.

Venky is a social entrepreneur with nearly four decades of experience in philanthropy and international development. He advises organizations on fundraising and partnerships and currently works with Safe Water Network to expand access to safe water for underserved communities.



1. The Safe Water Network addresses a longstanding water access challenge for communities across India. How have you mobilized partnerships to create effective solutions at the community level?

Communities, social entrepreneurs, corporations and governments are increasingly aware of the importance of safe water and the cross-cutting nature of this issue. It is an economic, equity, gender and climate issue and most importantly a quality of life and survival issue for millions of people. By underscoring this, Safe Water Network has been fortunate to gain the support of leading corporations – both US companies as well as Indian companies to rally behind this issue.

2. Having worked on both sides of the U.S.-India philanthropic relationship, how do you see this corridor evolving?

When I first began working across the U.S.-India philanthropic corridor in the late 1990s, the relationship was largely defined by the flow of resources, and a lot of it flowing from the US to India. What has been remarkable is how profoundly that relationship has evolved and become a two-way exchange. As India's economy, institutions, and social sector have expanded, so has its contribution to the world. Today, India is generating ideas and innovations in areas such as digital public infrastructure, entrepreneurship, financial inclusion, and climate resilience that have global relevance. I've also watched the Indian diaspora evolve from giving back to building lasting bridges. To me, what is exciting is how the future of U.S.-India philanthropy is being defined not just by the movement of philanthropic capital, but more by shared learning, partnerships, and a common commitment to solving challenges together.

3. You've trained senior bureaucrats at India's Ministry of Finance, advised the National Skill Development Corporation, and Karnataka's Ministry of Social Welfare and continue to actively engage with state and national

governments. What does effective philanthropy and government collaboration look like in practice?

One lesson I've carried with me throughout my career is that philanthropy works best when it doesn't see itself as a parallel effort to the government, but as a partner to it. Governments bring reach, continuity, and legitimacy. Philanthropy brings flexibility and the ability to test new ideas. When those strengths come together with mutual respect, the results can be remarkable. Effective collaboration requires greater empathy towards government structures, frameworks and processes. It is also about finding allies and building long-term relationships with policymakers and decision-makers in government.

4. What gives you the most optimism about the next decade of U.S.-India collaboration, and where should the next generation of social entrepreneurs focus their energy?

What gives me hope is that I see more and more young people choosing purpose alongside professional success. They are asking different questions, bringing fresh perspectives, and using technology as a lever for change in ways my generation couldn't have imagined. That's incredibly encouraging. My recommendation to the up-and-coming social entrepreneurs would simply be this: don't think too narrowly about solving problems. The challenges we face today, whether it's livelihoods, climate, education, or public health, don't fit neatly into one sector. The best solutions come when people are willing to listen, collaborate, and build bridges across disciplines. I've learned over the years that relationships often create more lasting change than any single project ever can.

- **Key findings from Giving USA 2026: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2025** shows that giving to U.S. charities increased to an estimated \$617 billion in 2025, a 5.7% increase (3.0% adjusted for inflation).
- **Bequest giving in 2025 increased nearly 20%** (adjusted for inflation) over 2024, the largest increase of the giving sources: individuals, bequests, foundations and corporations.
- **Education, public-society benefit, and environment/animals** had the largest annual growth over the last five years, increasing by over 10%.

Source: [Giving USA Foundation/Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy](#)

Invest in India's AI-Ready Workforce

As artificial intelligence transforms India's workforce, USIFA is launching a series of state-level policy dialogues to help shape practical, inclusive solutions for the future of work. These convenings will bring together leaders from government, industry, and academia to identify workforce priorities and policy opportunities.

USIFA is seeking anchor funders to help launch this initiative and drive lasting impact. If your organization is interested in advancing AI readiness and workforce development in India, we'd welcome the opportunity to connect. Contact us at friendshipalliance@usispf.org.

Join us in building stronger ties between the United States and India through impactful programs, partnership, and people-to-people connection. Whether you're looking to collaborate, invest, or learn more, we welcome the opportunity to connect.

Reach us at friendshipalliance@usispf.org, visit us at usifa.org, and follow our work on LinkedIn.



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