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Investing in Change: How Hindustan Zinc's Smart CSR Strategy is Creating Lasting Impact

By [Ruchika Kumar](#)



Interview

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We believe in social investments that are not just significant but also scalable and replicable

Priya Agarwal Hebbar

Chairperson, Hindustan Zinc



Move over, traditional mining giants – Hindustan Zinc is rewriting the narrative. Their commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is nothing short of extraordinary. From empowering over **1.72 million** lives across **237** villages to exceeding CSR mandates by a staggering **INR 276.34 crore**, the numbers speak for themselves. But the story goes far beyond statistics. Hindustan Zinc has pioneered impactful programs in education, healthcare, skilling, and women's empowerment, leaving a lasting footprint on the communities they serve, all while aligning their efforts with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDGs).

Leading this transformative journey is **Ms. Priya Agarwal Hebbar, Chairperson of Hindustan Zinc**. Under her vision, the company not only surpasses CSR mandates but also adopts innovative strategies to address evolving community needs, which are scalable and replicable.

Q&A

Q. Can you provide a detailed overview of the company's current CSR initiatives, delving into the specific strategies employed for education, sustainable livelihood, healthcare, and skill development, and the unique impact observed in each of these areas? If Hindustan Zinc's CSR initiatives were a narrative, what would be the pivotal chapter that symbolizes the essence of its transformative journey in positively impacting communities?

A. At Hindustan Zinc, our journey is woven with a commitment to **Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)**, a cornerstone of our growth strategy that aligns seamlessly with the **UN Sustainability Development Goals**. Our dedication to inclusive growth is vividly reflected in a spectrum of initiatives spanning education, sustainable livelihoods, women's empowerment, health, and more.

In the fiscal year 23 and the first half of fiscal year 24, we reached out to an impressive **2.3 million lives across 2800+ villages**. At the grassroots level, we've empowered communities through institution development, fostering three unique brands— **'Gauam'** for dairy microenterprises, **'Daichi'** for food products, and **'UPAYA'** for the textile segment. **The Heart with Fingers (HWF)**, an umbrella marketing body, supports our products, and we've established legal institutions as Farmer Producer Companies and Federations.

Our unwavering focus on sustainable livelihoods is evident in projects like **Samadhan**, benefitting **184 villages** through integrated farming and livestock development, and **Zinc Kaushal**, providing market-led skill training. We touch the lives of **0.59 million people** in our communities through such initiatives.

Embodying our commitment to women's empowerment is the **Sakhi** project, recognizing its pivotal role in long-term sustainable development. Education is a pillar of our holistic progress philosophy, and we've undertaken targeted initiatives like **Khushi Nand Ghar, Shiksha Sambal, Unchi Udaan**, and women empowerment programs like **Sakhi self-help groups and microenterprises**, impacting **0.32 million people**.

Our efforts address persistent challenges, reaching **1.33 million** individuals through community development initiatives encompassing health, water and sanitation, community asset creation, environment and safety, and the promotion of culture. The **Zinc Football Academy**, a marquee initiative, captures the local communities' passion for sports in Rajasthan and strives to identify and harness the potential of Indian football for growth. As we celebrate one year, our commitment to creating positive change remains at the heart of our journey.

Q. The expansion of CSR program outreach by 3.4 times since FY 2019-20 is impressive. What strategies has Hindustan Zinc employed to achieve such significant growth, and what challenges were overcome in the process? What motivated Hindustan Zinc to invest more than the mandated CSR spending, allocating INR 276.34 crore to transformative programs?

A. Our commitment to community development goes beyond mere numbers; it's about creating a tangible impact that resonates with our philosophy. We believe in social investments that are not just significant but also scalable and replicable, aiming to benefit communities and create lasting value. Choosing to exceed mandated CSR spending, we've allocated a substantial **INR 276.34 crore** to transformative programs, driven by our aspiration to go above and beyond.

Since FY 2019-20, our remarkable 3.4 times expansion has roots in our core values— *responsible corporate citizenship, ethical business practices, and an unwavering commitment to sustainable community development*. We understand the unique needs of the communities we serve, implementing innovative and tailored programs that specifically address their challenges. Strategic partnerships with NGOs, government bodies, and local stakeholders enhance the reach and effectiveness of our CSR initiatives.

This collaborative approach allows us to decode relevant issues, guiding the implementation of projects that bring about positive change. Our motivation to invest beyond mandates stems from a belief in the power of purposeful CSR.

A. Our commitment to CSR initiatives extends to nurturing their long-term sustainability and self-sufficiency. We believe in empowering communities to take ownership of their development journey. Collaboration plays a crucial role in our sustainability efforts, as we actively engage with local institutions, government bodies, and NGOs, ensuring our initiatives align with broader socio-economic frameworks and local development plans.

To cultivate a culture of ownership and leadership, we've established community-based institutions such as **Federations, Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and Anganwadi Management Committees (AMCs)**. Capacity building is at the core of our approach, where investments in skill development, education, and entrepreneurship programs empower individuals for lasting positive change. For example, our **'Sakhi'** initiative focuses on enhancing women's livelihoods through microenterprises, creating a ripple effect of sustainable impact. Under the **Khushi Aaganwadi project**, Anganwadi Working Committees have been established to manage and sustain **Khushi Nandghars** post our support withdrawal.

Moreover, our recent campaign, **#ZincCity**, serves as a testament to our ongoing commitment to community development and environmental sustainability. Launched on the foundation day of Hindustan Zinc, the campaign aims to celebrate the cultural spirit of Udaipur and beyond through a series of initiatives focused on communities and the environment. It encompasses events such as Music Festivals, Marathons, and Football Tournaments, among others, all designed to bring people from diverse backgrounds together and promote cultural exchange. Moreover, Zinc City will actively engage in community development initiatives such as Sakhi Utsav, Bird Festival, and National Youth Day, while also focusing on environmental initiatives around World Water Day and World Environment Day.

Our initiatives are not just about immediate impact; they aim to create a legacy of self-sufficiency and empowerment deeply woven into the fabric of the communities we serve. **As we celebrate one year, our journey is marked by a steadfast commitment to building a resilient and empowered future for all.**

Q. Given the shift towards digital inclusion in education, how is Hindustan Zinc leveraging technology in its CSR programs to enhance the quality and accessibility of education in the communities it serves?

A. We recognize the pivotal role of technology in transforming lives, and seamlessly integrating it into our CSR programs is at the heart of our mission to enhance the quality and accessibility of education in the communities we associate with. Under the **Zinc Football** initiative, we've established a cutting-edge player performance analysis center, employing **F-Cube technology** for interactive and intelligent football and fitness training. This revolutionary device quantifies, monitors, and enhances various mental and physical parameters in real-time, providing valuable insights through an online digital platform.

In our **Sakhi** initiative, digital platforms are used for transparent financial tracking managed by rural women armed with tablets and the **"Safal Saral"** software. Leveraging technology in our **'Jeevan Tarang'** initiative empowers visually impaired children, with over **100 children** trained using devices like **DAISY players, smartphones, and computers, fostering inclusivity and digital skills development.**

Digital literacy takes center stage in our **Sakhi** initiative, with **12 Sakhi Sewa Kendras** improving digital literacy among rural women, providing access to government schemes, online bill payments, and form fillings. The **Zinc Kaushal Program**, dedicated to youth skill development, embraces technology through the **Sikandar Portal/LMS, online sessions on defensive driving, E-Dukaan for entrepreneurship, and virtual mobilization and placement interviews.** These initiatives not only embrace digital inclusion but also empower individuals in the communities with the skills and tools needed to thrive in an increasingly digital world. As we celebrate one year, our journey is marked by a commitment to leveraging technology for positive and sustainable change.

Q. With a focus on women empowerment, how does Hindustan Zinc ensure the sustained impact and continued growth of initiatives, fostering a lasting positive influence on the lives of women and children in the targeted areas?

A. We believe that the progress of our nation is closely tied to the empowerment of women. It's not just a corporate social responsibility (CSR) strategy for us; it's a crucial part of our commitment to long-term sustainable development.

government schemes, facilitate online bill payments, and assist in filling out forms. The efforts have resulted in over **1,500** digital transactions amounting to **INR 37+ lakhs**.

Our Sakhi self-help groups and microenterprises are tailored programs supporting sustainable livelihoods and empowering women from underprivileged areas. What began as individual microenterprises, such as beauty parlours and tailoring units, has grown into collective ventures. Women now manage production units for pickles, spices, pulses, and have created successful brands like '**Upaya**' in textiles and '**Daichi**' in food. To date, **290+ women** have been engaged in the program, generating a total income of INR 33.37+ lakhs by selling a range of 200+ products, including textiles and food items.

Education is a key element in our focus on creating improved living conditions through model villages, with initiatives like Khushi Nand Ghar, Shiksha Sambal, Unchi Udaan, Scholarships, and company-run schools. We've reached over **2,27,000** children, making children's welfare one of our largest CSR verticals and reflecting our dedication to fostering holistic development from an early age.

Through these initiatives we are in the process of laying the foundation for a brighter and more sustainable future for the children in our targeted areas.

Q. How have collaborations and partnerships, including key and fruitful alliances, contributed to accelerating your CSR initiatives? Can you name some important partnerships in this regard?

A. At Hindustan Zinc, our CSR initiatives are successful because we collaborate with others. We use three main ways to make things happen: collaborate with other organizations, do some things ourselves, and team up with groups that share our goals. Here are a few examples:

We team up with government bodies, NGOs, companies, and international groups to achieve long-term CSR goals. For instance:

- **Government Collaborations:** We work with the Government of India and the Ministry of Women and Child Development, as well as the Government of Rajasthan and the Department of Women and Child Development. Together, we provide support for a child's entire life journey, from birth to higher education. This includes education programs like Shiksha Sambal, healthcare, and infrastructure, in partnership with state and local governments.

- **Sports Development:** We've joined forces with the Rajasthan Cricket Association to build the Anil Agarwal International Cricket Stadium in Chonp, Jaipur. Once finished, it will be the third-largest stadium in the world, promoting cricket and sports not just in India but globally.

- **Livelihood and Agriculture:** Our collaborations with BAIF Institute for Sustainable Livelihoods and Development (BISLD) and Sparsh Trust focus on advanced vegetable cultivation, changing traditional farming methods. We also partner with the State Agriculture University and State Bhilwara Dairy to improve cattle breeds through Sorted Semen Insemination in Bhilwara.

These partnerships show our dedication to making a positive and lasting impact on the communities and environments where we operate. They are not just partnerships; they play a crucial role in achieving the big goals we set for our CSR impact.

Q. Given the evolving landscape of sustainable development goals, how does Hindustan Zinc stay ahead in identifying emerging priorities and adapting its CSR strategies to address new challenges and opportunities? What is the future roadmap like?

A. Hindustan Zinc isn't just about mining and making metal; it's a company that cares deeply about making the world better. For more than twenty years, we've been actively involved in education, helping people earn a living sustainably, providing healthcare, ensuring there's enough water, and helping people develop skills. We've become a guiding light, bringing positive changes to the communities we work with. Our impact isn't just words; you can see it in the real improvements in the local economy and people's lives.

Every three years, we check how well our programs are doing with Third-Party Baseline, Need & Impact Assessments. We go even further every year, conducting in-depth assessments as per the CSR Amendment, 2021. Beyond that, we also do a Perception study every year.