

PROJECT BINDU



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1. Abstract

This case study, “Project Bindu” by Maya CARE Foundation showcases the outstanding journey of need-driven innovation and empowerment, with a focus on entrepreneurship and growth. Team of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs), who had managed to flip the equation of dependence, are economically empowered, supporting families while serving the elderly. Founded in 2009 by professionals from middle-class backgrounds, Maya CARE initially depended on their personal salaries to provide services for the elderly in Pune, Mumbai, and Bangalore. However, by early 2020, the organization faced a discouraging dilemma: limited funding for elderly care and founders nearing retirement age. This case narrates how Maya CARE leveraged innovation, technology, and the commitment of Persons with Disabilities (PWDs) to expand its reach globally.

The transformative journey disclose as Maya CARE embarks on a mission to empower more than 1200 PWDs, training and mentoring them to become leaders equipped with the skills, knowledge, and resources to manage a sustainable global organization. Project Bindu is a innovative initiative, not only addresses the needs of the elderly but also paves the way for PWDs to play integral roles, breaking barriers in the workforce. The results are unique, with Maya CARE becoming the world’s sole organization providing free services to the elderly in 72 Indian cities and 4 cities in the United Kingdom, driven by a leadership team primarily composed of PWDs.

This case underscores the audacious vision of inclusivity, extensive investment in training and nurturing PWDs, and the resulting impact on turnover and corporate grants. Notably, Maya CARE establishes a Business Process outsourcing (BPO) division, managed by PWDs, ushering in financial sustainability. The journey towards long-term sustainability is marked by Maya CARE’s ability to secure income from corporate grants, ~~making a significant milestone in their growth.~~

2. Keywords

Maya CARE Foundation, Person with Disabilities (PWDs), Elderly Care, Innovation, Sustainability, Empowerment.

3. Highlights in Bulleted Form

- Transformation of Maya CARE Foundation through need-driven innovation.
- Empowering 120 PWDs to become leaders in elderly care.
- Innovative solution to address the funding dilemma.
- Achievements during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Maya CARE’s unique role in providing free elderly services globally.
- The audacious vision of inclusivity in the organization.
- Investment in training and nurturing PWD’s.
- Impact on turnover and corporate grand’s.
- Establishment of a Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) division.
- The journey towards long-term sustainability.

4. Introduction

Maya CARE Foundation, established in 2009 by the dedicated visionaries Manjiri Gokhale Joshi and Abhay Joshi, embodies a powerful commitment to addressing the needs of two often marginalized communities within our society: the elderly and Persons with Disabilities (PWDs). Embedded in a mission of empathy and service, Maya CARE has been on an inspiring journey to provide essential support to these segments of the population, nurturing both their well-being and personal development.

Maya CARE’s unique and holistic approach revolves around providing free intellectual/logistical/medical and emotional support to the elderly, whether they reside in care homes or the comfort of their own homes. The heart of this organization beats with the

enthusiasm and dedication of volunteers (who receive basic compensation for their time and conveyance), who extend generations, ranging from students to retirees and homemakers. These volunteers selflessly deliver a wide range of services, from companionship and assistance with hospital visits to helping with paperwork and enjoying free time activities with the elderly.

What makes Maya CARE truly remarkable is the integral role played by persons with disabilities (PWDs) in its operation. These individuals, who have accomplishment over various forms of disabilities including locomotor, neuromotor, learning disabilities, visual impairment, speech, and hearing impairments, are at the core of the organization's activities. Maya CARE's beliefs revolve around empowering PWDs to learn, earn, lead, and build careers, demonstrating their potential in contributing to society.

Throughout its 14-year journey, Maya CARE Foundation has encountered numerous milestones and challenges, and it continues to stand strong in its mission. This case study explores the organization's transformative path, emphasizing its flexibility and adaptability in the face of adversity, and the positive impact it has had on the elderly and PWDs alike. Maya CARE is a shining example of how innovation, inclusivity, and unwavering dedication can lead to transformative change and empowerment within our communities.

5. Literature Review

This Literature Review is an elaborate study on the economic empowerment of disabled people and their scope for employment, across India. A thorough research of various articles on the very subject, showcases the current situation of the aged people in our country and the support available to them.

5.1. Caring for Diverse Population (Reference 1):

This study gives an in-depth picture of the kind of help and care available to a wide section of our society, comprising people from different communities, slum dwellers, senior citizens and helpless widows. The findings from this reference, highlights the relevance of these insights in fostering entrepreneurship and growth in various care-giving sectors.

5.2. Dependency on Caregivers for very old people (Reference 2):

The second reference highlights the positive effects of care-giving on the old and fragile urban population for their well being. In the modern day scenario, most families are nuclear and small in size. As children grow up and leave their nests for job prospects, their aged parents are left alone and helpless, with nobody to look after them. Under such a scenario, some helping hand or support becomes a vital aspect for the aged. This reference stresses on the importance of care-giving help-lines at their own residences.

5.3. Challenges in Dementia (Reference 3):

Elderly people suffering from Dementia, face many challenges in their daily routine. This is primarily due to the absence of any particular cure and the protracted nature of the condition. Caring for such patients is rather difficult. The third reference shows the importance of non-

pharmacologic management and the need for suitable caregivers who will understand the disease. Effective care can lessen the need for drug interventions.

5.4. Innovative Strategies for Disability Employment (Reference 4):

This reference examines the strategies of NCPEDP, an advocacy group in India, aimed at increasing employment opportunities for people with disabilities. It provides valuable insights into their holistic approach, including Disability Awards. Census campaigns, and collaborative networks with disability organizations. The article offers a valuable lesson to various NGOs who are interested in employing a wide range of people from all walks of life both for the private and public sector set-ups. This study portrays the limitations and the advantages of the NCPEDP strategies, beneficial for employment purposes.

5.5. Inclusive Workplace Practices (Reference 5):

Reference 5 reviews the empirical investigations conducted between 2011 and 2019 on the inclusion of Disabled people in the regular organized workplace sector of our country by categorizing the work in 3 levels, viz. as an organization, as a group and as an individual. The article highlights the influence of contextual factors on workplace treatment and experiences, which is pertinent for fostering entrepreneurship and growth with an inclusive approach.

5.6. Challenges in Employment for Persons with Disabilities (Reference 6):

Despite various affirmative action's and policies, employment for persons with disabilities in India continues to face challenges. Reference 6 reveals that although employment opportunities may have increased, yet the resultant outcome is greatly influenced by social prejudice against people with disabilities and various Reform policies. This article is an ardent call for a detailed research on these issues which is important for fostering entrepreneurship, capacity-building and inclusive growth.

6. Research methodology

Project Bindu, means "Focus" in Sanskrit, a innovative initiative by the Maya CARE Foundation, it addresses the barrier faced by the elderly and persons with disabilities (PWDs). This initiative takes a ground-breaking approach, recruiting individuals from diverse regional backgrounds who often lack prior experience, adequate education, or exposure. Through intensive training, skill development and practical involvement in live projects, these individuals undergo a transformative journey, gaining a sense of achievement and self-reliance.

The initiative operates through three specialized teams, each representing spirit of social innovation. The methodology for this ground-breaking initiative can be described as follows:

- 1. The Data Team:** Comprising speech and hearing impaired, proficient in reading and typing, the Data Team skilfully manages data-related tasks, including email communication, database records, and schedule organization. Their dedication and skills are crucial in keeping the organization's administrative activities running smoothly.

2. **The Voice Team:** Comprising visually impaired individuals with excellent verbal communication skills, manages helplines, both internally within the organization and externally with partners, across India and the UK.

3. **The Power Team:** Representing individuals with diverse disabilities such as polio, cerebral palsy, and paraplegia, actively coordinates projects, leads teams, and collaborates with external stakeholders, all while overcoming their personal challenges. Their determination and commitment are instrumental in driving the organization's projects and initiatives forward.

The seamless coordination among these three teams runs the entire administrative activities of the organization. This includes the vital elderly care visits conducted by volunteers at every Bindu location. The organization operates within the boundaries of the KRA Key Resource Area, and each team has its own set of targets and works intensively to achieve them.

7. Data Analysis

Maya CARE Foundation's Project Bindu demonstrates the significant impact of their innovative approach to addressing the challenges faced by the elderly and persons with disabilities (PWDs) in India. Here's a data analysis of the key points presented in the case study:

7.1. Geographic Coverage:

7.1.1. Maya CARE operates in 72 cities in India and 4 cities in the UK, reflecting its extensive reach.

7.1.2. Over 21,533 free visits to the elderly have been conducted, demonstrating the extensive support provided.

7.2. Empowerment of PWDs:

7.2.1. More than 1200 PWDs have been engaged through Project Bindu, signifying the scale of impact.

7.2.2. 30 PWDs are leading teams, indicating leadership development within the PWD community.

7.3. Comprehensive Support:

7.3.1. Maya CARE offers logistical, intellectual, and emotional assistance to the elderly, enhancing their well-being.

7.3.2. A holistic approach is taken by providing training, mentoring, and career guidance to PWDs, ensuring their economic independence.

7.4. Innovative Use of Technology:

7.4.1. The use of technology, including tools like voice-to-text, text-to-voice, screen readers, talkback features and subtitles, enables PWDs to perform their roles effectively.

7.4.2. Salesforce integration is used for data management and coordination across 72 cities in India.

7.5. Transformation of PWDs:

7.5.1. Notable success stories, such as Abhijit Mali, who uses a stylus on his mouth to operate computer and looking after his family, highlight the transformation of PWDs from dependence to financial independence.

7.5.2. Project Bindu focuses on skill development, making PWDs job-ready and capable of thriving in professional environments.

7.6. BPO Unit Sustainability:

7.6.1. The BPO unit, managed entirely by PWDs, serves corporate clients, contributing to the sustainability of Maya CARE.

7.6.2. This initiative enables PWDs to earn competitive salaries, supporting their financial independence.

7.7. Unique Approach to Elderly Care:

7.7.1. The organization's unique model integrates PWDs to provide free services to the elderly, promoting inclusivity and meaningful work.

7.7.2. Free support benefits the elderly in care homes or at home, ensuring their well-being.

7.8. Replicable and Expansion:

7.8.1. Maya CARE's goal is to expand to 100 Indian cities by the end of 2023, indicating plans for continued growth.

7.8.2. Project Bindu's replicable model has been implemented for donors in different geographies and organizations, showcasing its adaptability.

7.9. Funding Sustainability:

7.9.1. The organization has established sustainable funding sources, including CSR donations, BPO operations, and paid placements of PWDs in other corporations.

7.10. Sustainable Impact:

7.10.1. The case study highlights the long-term vision of enabling PWDs as productive members of society by providing livelihood opportunities.

7.10.2. Sustainability measure in terms of team development, performance management, and funding sources ensure the long-lasting impact of Maya CARE and Project Bindu.

8. Results

Maya CARE Foundation and its innovative initiative, project Bindu , showcases the remarkable result of their unique approach to supporting the elderly and empowering PWDs. Hence are the key results and outcomes of this transformative initiative:

8.1 Empowerment of PWDs: Project Bindu has successfully empowered over 1200 PWDs, many of who had limited work experience and were facing socio-economic challenges. Through training, mentorship, and practical experience, PWDs have become skilled professionals and leaders in their respective roles.

8.2. Economic Independence: PWDs who were previously dependent on their families have found meaningful work and economic independence through Project Bindu. This has not only improved their financial well-being but also boosted their self-esteem and confidence.

8.3. Sustainable Employment: The initiative provides to PWDs, enabling them to gain real-world experience and build confidence. This experience prepares them for corporate jobs or freelance work, increasing their employability and breaking down barriers to meaningful employment.

8.4. Inclusive Workforce: Project Bindu collaborates with various industries, corporates, public sectors, and charities, integrating PWDs into the mainstream workforce. This fosters inclusivity, equality, and diversity in workplaces.

8.5. Free Services to the Elderly: The initiative offers inclusive support to the elderly, including medical/logistical/intellectual and emotional assistance. It conducts over 21,533 free visits to the elderly in 72 cities in India and 4 cities in the UK till date by having a helping in every regional language. This struggle isolation, enhances communication, and improves the well-being of the elderly.

8.6. Digital Inclusion: Project Bindu equips PWDs with essential tech skills like MS Office, Google Drive, video conferencing, and communication tools, enhancing their employability and connectivity. This digital inclusion ensures that PWDs can participate fully in a technology-driven society.

8.7. Comprehensive Development: Maya CARE's focus on comprehensive development ensures that PWDs receive ongoing support, training, and fair compensation. This holistic approach makes PWDs integral and contributing assists in the organization.

8.8. Sustainable Funding: The introduction of a Business Process Out sourcing (BPO) unit run entirely by PWDs offers a sustainable funding avenue. This ensures that PWDs receive competitive salaries, and the organization can continue its mission of empowering PWDs and supporting the elderly.

8.9. Global Impact: Maya CARE Foundation's unique model serving over 2500 elderly beneficiaries, 1700 volunteers, and global support groups. The model has also been replicated in different geographies, further extending its impact.

8.10. Digital Transformation: The organization leverages technology extensively, enabling remote work, effective communication, and collaboration among team

members with various disabilities. This digital transformation has been a significant enabler for PWDs' success.

9. Discussions

Maya CARE Foundation is world's only organization with a dual mission: offering empathetic support to the elderly in totally free of cost and empowering persons with disabilities (PWDs). Their distinctive approach goes beyond conventional elderly care, providing free services that address emotional well-being and companionship. At the same time, they initiated economic empowerment for PWDs through paid work opportunities, training, and holistic support, with a worldwide outlook a focus on technology, and a commitment to inclusivity, Maya CARE bridges the gap between these two critical demographics. This combine of empathy and empowerment defines their transformative impact in social entrepreneurship.

10. Conclusion

Born within the strength to overcome, each time we fall, we fail, we innovate, tackling challenges in our stride and moving forward. Maya CARE Foundation's Project Bindu not only empowers PWDs and supports the elderly but also embodies the entrepreneurial spirit of innovation, adaptability, and inclusivity. By addressing limitations and focusing on areas for improvement, the organization can continue its remarkable journey of transformative social impact and lasting growth.

11. Limitations and Future Studies

The World Economic Forum (2021) highlights the significant global presence of 1.3 billion individuals with disabilities (IWDs). Despite this vast number, The Valuable 500 report (2020) indicates that disability inclusion remains underrepresented on the agendas of organizations, with a startling 57 percent of organizational leaders acknowledging this oversight. Furthermore, the report underscores the lack of representation of IWDs in positions of power.

(I) (PDF) Leaders with disabilities: a boardroom challenge. Available from:

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/365579384_Leaders_with_disabilities_a_boardroom_challenge [accessed Oct 16 2023].

On the other hand, there is no corporation for elderly cause. To address these issues, Maya CARE Foundation's project Bindu, should consider diversifying its funding sources beyond donor support and corporate donations. The organization should actively engage in advocacy efforts to raise awareness about the importance of PWD inclusion and the needs of the elderly. These efforts can lead to increased funding and support from a wider range of stakeholders.

Expanding projects Bindu's reach to rural areas is crucial to ensure that PWDs and elderly individuals in remote regions also benefit from the program's services. This expansion might require collaborations with local community organizations, leveraging technology for remote consultations, and training local caregivers to extend the program's reach effectively.

Conducting longitudinal studies on the impact of PWDs' participation can provide valuable data to demonstrate the effectiveness of Project Bindu. Such research can be instrumental in attracting funding and support from organizations, policymakers, and the public.

In addition, investing in accessible technology is essential to enhance the services provided by Maya CARE Foundation. This includes developing user-friendly apps, assistive devices, and communication tools that cater to the unique needs of PWDs and the elderly. These technological innovations can increase the reach and efficiency of Project Bindu's services.

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