

Impact Assessment Report - Web version: Support towards higher education and holistic development of 20 underprivileged youth in Sonapat, Haryana (2020-23)

SBI Life Insurance Company Limited

September 2025

Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP

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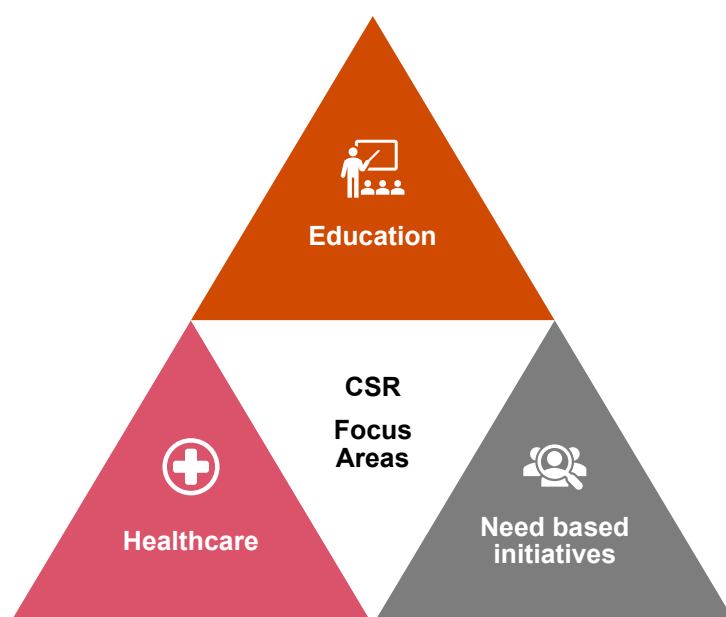
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1.1. About SBI Life Insurance Company Limited and its CSR

SBI Life Insurance Company Limited (SBI Life), established in October 2000 and registered with the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) in March 2001, is one of India's leading life insurers. Along with maintaining a strong financial performance, SBI Life actively engages in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives to drive inclusive growth and positively impact communities across India.

Through its CSR programs, SBI Life has impacted thousands of lives across India, reinforcing its commitment to social responsibility. The company has been recognised for its contributions and has garnered awards for excellence in CSR initiatives, reflecting its dedication to creating meaningful changes in society. SBI Life remains committed to its mission to contribute to the nation's progress by fostering community development, improving lives, and driving sustainable growth. Below Figure (figure 1) depicts key CSR focus areas of SBI Life aligned with the company's CSR vision.¹

Figure 1: Key CSR focus areas



1.2. About the project under assessment²

Access to quality higher education in India remains a challenge for students from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. Many capable and ambitious young individuals are unable to pursue their aspirations due to financial constraints, lack of guidance, and limited exposure to holistic development opportunities. Recognising this need, SBI Life, under its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiative, partnered with the International Foundation for Research & Education (IFRE) to support 20 underprivileged students from across India through the project – **'Support towards higher education and holistic development of 20 underprivileged youth in Sonapat, Haryana (2020–23)'** at Ashoka University.

This initiative aims to enable access to a globally benchmarked, full-time residential, multidisciplinary **three-year undergraduate programme at Ashoka University**. Through this partnership, **SBI Life** provides financial assistance to selected students in the form of **scholarships**. The selection process is based on a comprehensive need-based assessment that considers factors such as financial resources available to their immediate family, including current income, savings, investments, and education loans, to finance the expected educational cost.

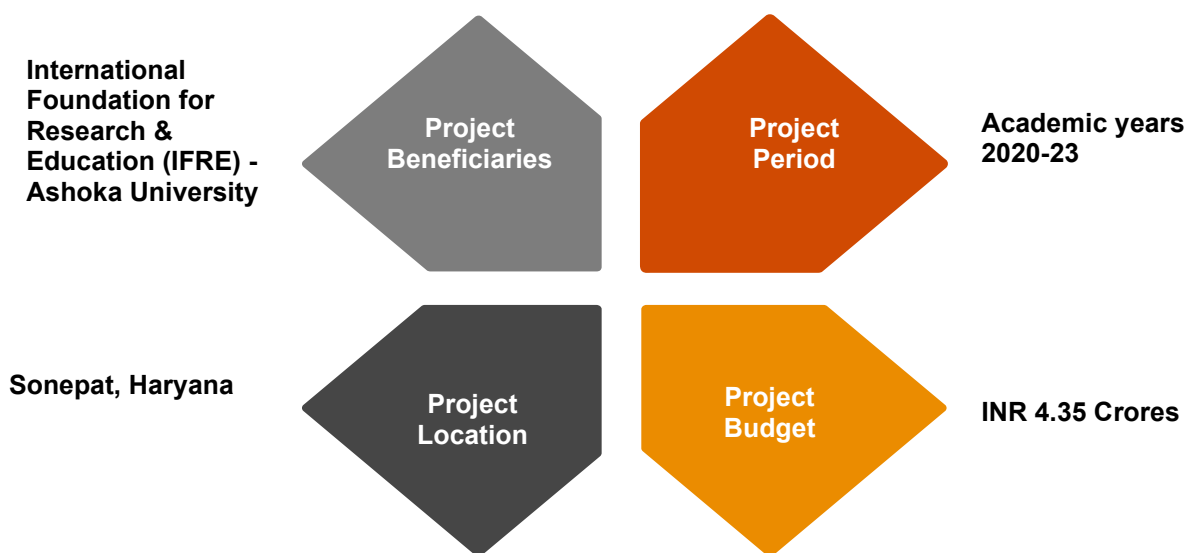
¹ Source: <https://www.sbilife.co.in/en/about-us/corporate-social-responsibility>

² Project documents shared by SBI Life

In addition to academic support, the project also emphasises the holistic development of students. It provides safe accommodation, nutritious meals and opportunities to engage in co-curricular activities such as sports and arts, along with mentorship, thereby nurturing well-rounded individuals.

Through this CSR initiative, SBI Life contributes meaningfully to promote inclusive growth, social equity, and the long-term empowerment of youth from marginalised communities in India.³

Figure 2: Schematic Representation of Project Specifics



1.3. Assessment Methodology

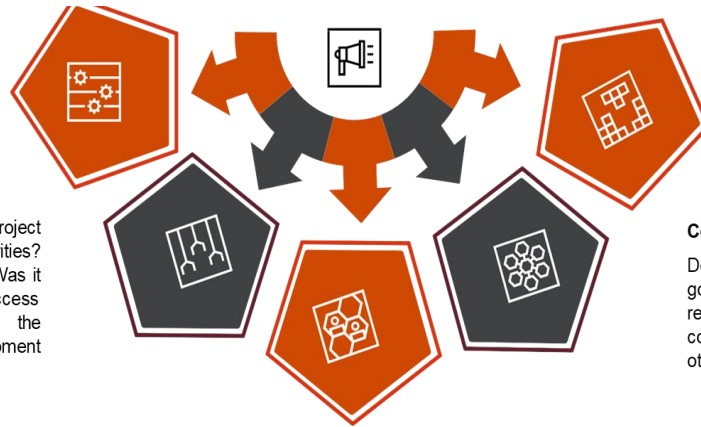
SBI Life engaged Price Waterhouse Chartered Accountants LLP (PWCALLP) to carry out the impact assessment of its CSR project – ‘Support towards higher education and holistic development of 20 underprivileged youth’ with the objective of evaluating the impact created on the youth through the activities undertaken during the project period. The scope of work included desk review of the project documents, stakeholder mapping, development of research methodology and assessment parameters to review the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) defined by the management of SBI Life, to assess the outputs, outcomes, and overall impact. This is a web version of the report created basis the impact assessment undertaken and a detailed report has also been submitted to the management.

For the assessment, **IRECS framework** (Inclusiveness, Relevance, Effectiveness, Convergence, and Sustainability) was adopted, and recommendations have been provided based on the project’s performance for further evaluation and consideration. **Difference-in-Difference (DiD) method (case-control group comparison)** was utilised to evaluate the CSR project. A **mixed-methods approach** incorporating both quantitative and qualitative data collection techniques was employed to gather the inputs. This approach was finalised based on discussions with SBI Life.

³ Source: Project documents shared by SBI Life
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Figure 3: IRECS Framework

Ability of different stakeholders, particularly poorest and most marginalised - to access the benefits of activities



Relevance

Are the services /inputs in the project able to meet community priorities? How was the planning done ? Was it participatory ? How were the success indicators developed? Was the community involved in development of project indicators?

Do communities feel ownership over the assets created by the activities and/or will the Project initiated community interventions sustain even after the exit of the funding agency. Has an exit strategy been drafted?

Convergence

Degree of convergence with government/other partnerships; relationship between individuals, community, institutions and other stakeholders

Effectiveness

Have the activities been able to effectively address community expectations? How efficiently have the resources been deployed, monitored and utilised?

The assessment was carried out in four stages, as illustrated below:



Stage 1: Kick-off meeting and Desk review

- A detailed understanding of the project was obtained through a kick-off meeting held with the SBI Life team. SBI Life’s expectations were understood, and the scope of work was agreed upon. This was followed by a detailed call with point of contact from Ashoka University.
- A desk review of project documents received from SBI Life and Ashoka University was undertaken which facilitated the design of the study.
- Mapping of project stakeholders was undertaken in consultation with the SBI Life team based on the desk review and the interactions with Ashoka University during the initial meetings.
- The control group was selected purposively from different universities which are not covered under the project however have students with similar socio-economic profiles.

Stage 2: Assessment Planning and tool preparation

- As part of the study design, a structured sampling plan was developed.
 - For **quantitative survey**, a total of sample of **30 students** was selected, comprising of **20 beneficiary students (case group)** from Ashoka University and **10 non-beneficiary students (control group)**. Sample size for case group (beneficiary students) was selected by considering the entire population of **20 beneficiary students**. Additionally, a **control group** (non-beneficiary students from same/ similar universities) **of 50% of the total sample size for the case group i.e., 10** was selected from students with comparable academic and socio-economic backgrounds but not supported under the project or by similar initiatives. This sampling approach ensured representation of both project beneficiaries and a comparable control group to support the Difference-in-Difference analysis.
 - As a part of the **qualitative assessment**, the interactions (Table 1) including IDIs and FGDs with different stakeholders were planned to collect holistic feedback on the project activities.
- The data collection plan was finalised in consultation with the SBI Life team.
- Key indicators and tailored research tools were developed to capture comprehensive insights of the project and were finalised after incorporating the feedback from the SBI Life team.
- The final quantitative tool was digitised.
- A field visit plan was developed in consultation with SBI Life and Ashoka University.
- The field data collection team was trained on the tools for data collection.

Table 1: Qualitative sampling (planned vs actuals)

#	Type of interactions	Type of interaction	No. of planned interactions	No. of actual interactions
1	Case Group (beneficiary) students	FGD	1	1
2	Control Group (non-beneficiary) students	FGD	1	0
3	Parents of beneficiary students	IDI	4	0
3	Faculty from Ashoka University	IDI	2	2
4	Ashoka University Representative	IDI	1	1
5	SBI Life CSR Representative	IDI	1	1
	Total		10	5

Stage 3: Field visit and Data collection

- The field data collection process was initiated by the data collection team. However, the team was not able to conduct the planned set of interactions with the stakeholders due to limited mobilisation support from the implementing partner.
- **A total 21 surveys** were conducted, comprising **14 beneficiary students (case group)** and **7 non-beneficiary students (control group)**.
- Qualitative interactions were conducted with all the stakeholders as stated above.

Stage 4: Data analysis and report writing

- The data captured during the data collection stage was analysed and the key findings were noted.
- The IRECS framework helped in gauging the efficiency in terms of achievement of the desired project outputs with reference to the inputs.

1.4. Beneficiary Profile

This section outlines the profiles of the beneficiary (case group students) survey respondents.

Gender and Educational Degree of the respondents

- Among the beneficiaries surveyed, **78.6%** were boys with the rest being girls.
- 50% of the respondents earned a B.A., 21.4% earned a B.Sc. while the rest of the respondents were the part of the Young India Fellowship (YIF) programme.
- As reported during the interaction with the Ashoka **University** representative, these beneficiary students were from underprivileged socio-economic backgrounds, highlighting the intervention's focus on underprivileged communities.

1.5. Summary of the Impact Created

The tables below provide an overview of KPI wise comparison among case group, control group and performance/availability of infrastructure/facilities at universities at national level.

Table 2 : Comparative parameters between case group and control group

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Comparative performance / Availability at Ashoka University	Comparative performance / Availability at institutions of control group students
Access to quality education:		
Students incurring expenses	35.70%	57.10%
Curriculum taught in English	100.00%	85.70%
Improvement in language skills	92.90%	57.10%
Participation in competitions/events	57.10%	28.60%
Increased confidence levels	85.70%	42.90%
Global Learning Opportunity	7.10%	0.00%
Enrolment to higher studies	71.40%	14.30%
Average Attendance (2020-23)	92.00%	81.30%
Average marks scored (2020-23)	82.80%	81.20%
Placement drive at institution	100.00%	71.40%
Course outcomes:		
Mean annual salary post course completion	INR 6.72 lakhs	INR 4.41 lakhs

Table 3: Comparative parameters between case group and nation-wide universities

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Comparative performance / Availability at Ashoka University	Comparative performance / Availability across nation-wide universities ^{4 5}
Access to quality education:		
Average Pupil Teacher Ratio	10	23 - 24
Infrastructure*:		
Playground	✓	91.00%
Auditorium	✓	86.00%
Theatre	✓	53.00%

⁴ NITI Aayog, Expanding Quality Higher Education through States and State Public Universities

⁵ Ministry of Education (Government of India), All India Survey on Higher Education 2021-22
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Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Comparative performance / Availability at Ashoka University	Comparative performance / Availability across nation-wide universities ^{4 5}
Library	✓	98.00%
Laboratory	✓	88.00%
Conference Hall	✓	96.00%
Health Center	✓	81.00%
Gymnasium Fitness Center	✓	80.00%
Indoor Stadium	✓	56.00%
Common Room	✓	89.00%
Computer Center	✓	93.00%
Cafeteria	✓	91.00%
Guest House	✓	85.00%
Separate Room for Female	✓	84.00%
Solar Power Generation	✓	70.00%
Ramp Attached to classroom Library	✓	83.00%
Skill Development Center	✓	71.00%
Classrooms and Seminar Halls	✓	100.00%
Computers for Academic Work	✓	100.00%
Separate toilets for females	✓	98.00%
Separate toilets for disabled females	✓	57.00%
Clinic First-Aid Room	✓	89.00%
Disaster Management Facilities	✓	77.00%
Support mechanisms:		
Grievance Redressal Mechanism	✓	93.00%
Vigilance Cell	✓	76.00%
Opportunity Cell	✓	73.00%
Sexual Harassment Cell	✓	94.00%
Counsellors for Students	✓	86.00%
Self Defense Class for Female	✓	53.00%

Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Comparative performance / Availability at Ashoka University	Comparative performance / Availability across nation-wide universities ^{4 5}
Anti-Ragging Cell	✓	93.00%
Incubation Centres	✓	100.00%
Capacity Building and Training Awareness Programme(s)	✓	71.00%
Vulnerability Assess Checks	✓	57.00%
Mock Drill Rehearsal Programme(s)	✓	59.00%
IQAC (Internal Quality Assurance Cell)	✓	68.00%

* The data collection team was not able to undertake the complete tour of Ashoka University due to the constrained data collection schedule offered by the implementing partner. Hence, the status of infrastructure mentioned in the report is based on the information shared by the implementing partner.

The following section outlines the diverse impact of the project on the lives of the target beneficiaries. While all students at Ashoka University have access to the same facilities and resources as those in the case group, this assessment focuses on the holistic impact of scholarships for case group students, considering the opportunities these resources provide.

1. Access to quality education

- The project significantly **improved the access to quality education** among students from **socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds** through its comprehensive end-to-end model by providing exceptional aid scholarships with **100% waiver on tuition, residence, meals** and additional support of stipend for miscellaneous expenses (INR 3000 monthly) and stationery (INR 5000 annually).
- Only 35.7% of case group students had to bear the expenses for studying at Ashoka University as compared to 57.1% control group students for studying at their respective universities. This displays that the Ashoka University students were subjected to lesser additional economic burden.

2. Improved language skills

- As per the discussions with the students, faculty and the Ashoka University representatives, select students, once admitted, before the start of the course, undergo an **Academic Bridge Programme (ABP)**. This programme is designed to enable the students to cope up with the university-level academic rigor after having graduated from high school. It provides a specially curated **English language communications and academic writing course** for select students in the incoming undergraduate cohort. This provides the students with the requisite support in written English for academic purposes and further develops their communication skills to enable them get smoothly integrated into campus life.
- **All the case group students reported** that Ashoka University followed the **curriculum in English** thereby breaking the language barrier for the students from the vulnerable socio-economic backgrounds who typically come from vernacular medium education. From the control group, only **85.7% students** reported that their academic institution followed the curriculum in English.

- **92.9% case group** students reported **experiencing improvement in their language skills** during their course while only **57.1% control group students** responded the same. This reflects the effectiveness of the initiatives mentioned above.

3. Improved attendance and academic performance

- Students supported by the project reportedly exhibited **increased academic engagement, better attendance, and improved academic performance**. Between the academic years 2020–23, the **average attendance** among case group students was **92.0% as compared to the average attendance** among control group students being **81.3%**.
- The **case group students** reported scoring a mean of **82.8% marks (for 2020-23)** as compared to a mean of **81.2% marks for the control group** students.

4. Counselling support, extracurricular opportunities and increased confidence

- Centre for Well-Being (CWB) at Ashoka University provides counselling services to the students, which helps the students in dealing with stress and anxiety arising from the change in their environment, and the pressures of academic life.
- Ashoka University provides the necessary infrastructure for the students to participate in extracurricular activities. **57.1% of the case group** students reported **participating in competition/events** during their course as compared to **28.6% of the control group students**.
- These enablers lead to improved confidence among the students. **85.7% case group** students reported **noticing increased confidence levels** as a result of their course while only **42.9% control group** students responded the same.

5. Opportunity for global learning

- **7.1% case group** students reported **getting an opportunity of global learning** (through summer/semester abroad initiative) during their period of study at Ashoka University while no such opportunity was reported by control group students.
- **71.4% case group** students reported **enrolling for higher studies post the completion of their educational degree** while only **14.3% control group students** got a similar opportunity.

6. Access to career progression

- All the case group students reported that **a placement drive was organised at the campus** while only **71.4% of the control group students reported placement drives** being organised at their campus.
- The **case group students reported a mean annual salary of INR 6.72 lakhs** as compared to the mean annual salary of **INR 4.41 lakh** for the **control group** students.
- The **case group students** reported the utilisation of their earnings **primarily towards loan repayment, improved healthcare and education** while the **control group** students reported the utilisation of their earnings primarily towards **improved nutrition, improved healthcare and education**.

1.6. IRECS analysis

Basis on the interactions with the key stakeholders and desk review, the impact of the project was also assessed on the IRECS framework parameters. The IRECS analysis summary has been presented in the table below:

Table 4: IRECS Analysis

Parameter	Assessment from Study
Inclusiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project supported students from poor socio-economic background through the scholarships. 35.7% of case group students had to bear some expenses for studying at Ashoka University as compared to 57.1% control group students for studying at their universities.
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All the case group students reported that Ashoka University followed the curriculum in English while only 85.7% control group students reported that their academic institution followed the curriculum in English. This breaks the language barrier for the students from a vulnerable socio-economic background. 7.1% case group students reported getting an opportunity of global learning (summer/semester abroad) during their period of study at Ashoka University while no such opportunity was reported by control group students. All the case group students reported that a placement drive was organised at the campus while only 71.4% of the control group students reported placement drives being organised at their campus.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 92.9% case group students reported experiencing improvement in their language skills during their course while only 57.1% control group students responded the same. 57.1% case group students reported participating in competition/events during their course while only 28.6% control group students responded the same. 85.7% case group students reported noticing increased confidence levels during their course while only 42.9% control group students responded the same. 71.4% case group students reported enrolling for higher studies post the completion of their educational degree while only 14.3% control group students got a similar opportunity. Between the academic years 2020–23, the average attendance among case group students was 92.0% as compared to the average attendance among control group students being 81.3%. The case group students reported scoring a mean of 82.8% marks as compared to a mean of 81.2% marks for the control group students. The case group students reported a mean annual salary of INR 6.72 lakhs as compared to the mean annual salary of INR 4.41 lakh for the control group students.
Convergence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The structure of the project does not present an opportunity for convergence.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project laid a strong foundation for long-term sustainability by empowering students through imparting quality education at Ashoka University. The future of the project is dependent on continued funding from SBI Life. However, Ashoka University plans to engage with other funding partners in absence of support from SBI Life.

1.7. Recommendations

The following recommendation is based on valuable insights shared by different stakeholders along with our own understanding of the sector. These can be considered for further improving the effectiveness of the project (or similar projects) in future.

Target alumni groups

It is recommended to establish a targeted alumni group for students who have received support from IFRE through donor funding. This group will facilitate connections among individuals from similar socio-economic backgrounds, allowing them to learn and grow together with mutual support. Additionally, the alumni group will offer sustained career guidance to both its members and current students, promoting long-term success and development within the community.

1.8. Study Limitations

During the interactions, case group students suggested that although the project already provides a fixed stipend for the scholarship recipients, the amount for the same is not adequate. Given the campus environment and the related out-of-pocket expenses, it is recommended to reconsider the stipend amount to help scholarship recipients cover these costs without financially burdening their families.

- The team was not able to conduct the planned set of interactions with the stakeholders due to lack of mobilisation support from the implementing partner. For the quantitative interactions, the data collection team was only able to get 21 responses (14 from case group students and 7 from control group students) as compared to the desired 30 responses (20 from case group students and 10 from control group students). Also, the team was unable to conduct any qualitative interactions with the control group students (1 FGD) and parents of the beneficiary students (4 IDIs).
- The data collection team was not able to undertake the complete tour of Ashoka University due to the constrained data collection schedule offered by the implementing partner. Hence, the status of infrastructure mentioned in the report is based on the information shared by the implementing partner.

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