



The Ambuja Cement Foundation.

There's a wealth of hidden resources in the India of small towns and villages.

The Ambuja Cement Foundation (ACF) was formed in 1993 with the mission to energize, involve and enable the communities around Ambuja Cement facilities to help them realize their potential.

Working in locations surrounding Ambuja Cement's manufacturing sites in the country, ACF has found, time and again, people rising above their circumstances, eager to learn and create better futures for themselves. With the support of ACF's professional network of committed teams, amazing transformations are taking place.

We laid the foundation. But what built the dream was a spirit, a driving force. As the stories that follow show, there is great power in two little words



No shortage of determination

The greater the shortage of water, the stronger the resolve to find a solution.

ACF has partnered with local agencies and, most important, the community, to find answers to the acute water shortage around Ambuja plant locations.

The construction of Roof Rain Water Harvesting Structures has made potable water available to villagers. It took the determination of one woman to start a movement. Now many villagers are constructing Roof Rain Water Harvesting Structures and benefiting from year-round availability of water.

Check dams have been built for better percolation and water harvesting. Ponds have been deepened and salinity pushed back by increasing the underground water buffer. Appropriate changes have been made in irrigation systems to help conserve water. Cultivation of crops that are less water-intensive or water-resistant to salinity has been encouraged.

Technology and the human will have proved to be a formidable combination in dealing with each major crisis.



Helping women help themselves

Self-Help Groups (SHGs), set up at all Ambuja locations, are making a difference, particularly in the lives of women.

Micro-finance has been a valuable tool in enabling women to lift themselves out of a life of poverty and dependence, towards independence and self-respect.

Self-Help Groups do away with the red tape and hassles of formal lending. Money is lent through a simple procedure and the recovery rate for loans is close to 100%. Among the income-generating activities that SHGs make possible are nursery cultivation, dairy farming, milk processing and marketing, soap and detergent making, manufacture of organic manure, retailing, stitching garments, embroidering and goat rearing.

With their new-found confidence in their abilities, village women are proving to be a valuable resource. The spirit of 'I Can' is evident among these village women, who have taken their destinies in their own hands.



A skill learnt is a future earned

In the remote villages of the country, opportunities for skill development are limited.

As population increases and land holdings become smaller, people need to look beyond agriculture for gainful employment.

ACF has stepped in by setting up Skill and Entrepreneurial Development Institutes (SEDIs) at various locations. These institutes have well-equipped classrooms, professional trainers and space for hands-on training. The programs cover employable trades such as welding, turning, fitting, computer hardware, driving, housekeeping, masonry, security duty, carpentry, household electrical work and beauty management. Some of the courses have government certification.

After the training, ACF provides support to those interested in starting their own small enterprises or joining existing set-ups. Most of those trained augment their earnings immediately, helping their families move out of the poverty bracket



The magic of understanding

The heart has its reasons.

Ambuja Manovikas Kendra, managed by Ambuja Cement Foundation, is a response to a heart-felt need. A team of dedicated professionals from various disciplines (including special educators, caretakers and therapists) come together to help mentally challenged children overcome their disability to the greatest extent possible.

An important part of the program is working with parents. As the main care givers, parents play a key role in the child's development. Ambuja Manovikas Kendra conducts special workshops for parents of the mentally challenged.

It's the children who teach us a lesson: we don't want your pity, we want your understanding.



Planting a better life

For generations India's farmers have labored in the field – getting poor returns for their toil and sweat.

ACF believes their livelihoods can be improved through modern agricultural systems and technology.

A Krishi Vigyan Kendra (KVK), or Agriculture Science Centre, has been set up in Kodinar, Gujarat, as a result of a public-private partnership between the Government and ACF. A team of experts from various disciplines of agriculture provide services to farmers from seven blocks, covering over 70 villages. To encourage the adoption of best agricultural practices, on-campus as well as off-campus training sessions are held. These cover topics like plant protection, agriculture extension, agronomy, home science, horticulture, fishery and animal husbandry. ACF also runs a phone help-desk for farmers.

Experts from ACF visit the fields regularly and offer advice and solutions to agricultural problems. Manuals on crop management in the local language are provided.

Farmers across ACF's locations have also been introduced to organic farming, which reduces the use of chemical pesticides and fertilizers and restores soil fertility. Advice on appropriate farming techniques, micro-irrigation, multi- and mixed cropping, through horticulture and vegetable cultivation, has also helped improve soil conditions and augment the farmer's income. Where there are fragmented or barren land holdings, wadi or orchard cultivation has been initiated, making farming viable.



Spreading health and happiness

ACF has invested in a host of healthcare initiatives that often make the difference between life and death, specially in remote villages where medical help is not easily available.

A team of Village Health Functionaries is trained to provide primary healthcare. They have been beneficial to the whole community in general and to new and expectant mothers in particular. The Foundation also runs mobile dispensaries and organizes health camps in villages. In addition, HIV/AIDS programs have been initiated at various locations to give the right information about the disease and ensure preventive care. The results have been encouraging.

ACF believes that there can be nothing greater than the gift of good health



improving village education

ACF took up the challenge of improving educational facilities in the remote corners of the country. Here tradition still held sway. While people might agree that education was a good thing, it was quite another matter to actually send their children to school.

Children were useful hands in the field and helped add to the family income. So what was the point of sending them to school?

ACF realized that a breakthrough was needed in traditional mindsets. The Foundation began involving village education committees, who were really the gatekeepers for this mission. Once they agreed, the rest would fall into place. And it did. With the support of village education committees, villagers began sending their children to school.

ACF improved the infrastructure of the schools and made the learning environment more comfortable for the children. Teacher training sessions were organized to improve and upgrade teaching skills. Quality education was the focus of all the activities.

A quiet revolution began to take place. Education opened doors for children in the communities. Things would never be the same again.