To empower underserved communities by leveraging the power of social capital to promote healthcare, education, and sustainable development.
Dear AI Family,

This is an excellent moment to look forward with 20/20 vision to imagine the kind of world we want to live in and how Asia Initiatives can contribute to making that world a reality. A world where all women are treated with respect, where no person has to go hungry because of drought or poverty, and where every child born into the world is nurtured to reach their potential and get the empathy and the basic resources they need, not just to survive—but to thrive.

To realize our audacious ambitions, we are setting in motion a transformation of our organization. Our signature community currency for social good: SoCCs (Social Capital Credits), already changing lives in India, Ghana, Kenya and the United States, is now going digital. This year we are launching the SoCCs App and Web platform, so project participants and local partners can automatically record, analyze, and trade SoCCs faster and more efficiently than ever before. In November, Asia Initiatives was the regional winner of the MIT Inclusive Innovation Challenge for using tech to improve lives and end poverty. Empowered both with our new app and growing statistical evidence, we are expanding our reach with two new projects and increased scale for four others, including the Lucknow Girls Empowerment Program and the Tribal Microcredit Program.

We are honored that the Eighth United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon continues to support our mission and came for the third time to our annual Gala, held this year at Mandarin Oriental in New York. He personally presented the Award for Women’s Empowerment to Cecile Richards (Planned Parenthood and Supermajority), Kathy Matsui (Goldman Sachs) and Dr. Madhura Swaminathan (M.S. Swaminathan Foundation). As a member of the United Nations ECOSOC, we also co-hosted the conference on UN Sustainable Development Goals in Cities at Columbia University to raise awareness of the value of social capital in urban design.

Asia Initiatives is known for its innovation, commitment, teamwork, and compassion. Most important though is the strong support of our donors, friends, and local partners, for which we are so grateful. We invite more people to join us on this wonderful journey of hope.

Geeta Mehta, PhD, AIA
President, Asia Initiatives
2019 Impact

12,000 trees planted

1,200 girls empowered with digital skills and health knowledge

1,200 tribal members formed the first ever tribal microcredit cooperative

450 women established kitchen gardens

200 women received low interest microcredit to start poultry enterprises

70 women received low interest goat loans to start micro-dairy enterprises

130 adult women mastered functional literacy

100 craftswomen were incentivized to deliver world-class handicrafts

4 digital literacy centers established in underserved communities

3 villages in drought-prone regions became water secure

50 farmers started organic floriculture

100 farmers received cattle loans to supplement farm income
“During my tenure as Secretary-General, I always worked to make women’s empowerment a top priority and I can see that Asia Initiatives is carrying on that legacy.”

— Eighth United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon
“The [Goat-Rearing] program is a boon for me as I don’t have to go to cities any more for labour...This business will help me to bear the expenses of education of my children. Their future is secure and so is mine.”

— Jasoda, Rajpur Village

“I have respect in my family today and all of us are moving toward a new direction, increasing our confidence by learning to read and write along with poultry-rearing.”

— Pooja, Shohratgarh Village

Kiran Devi, the treasurer of her SHG, helped the group plan for savings. Now they are growing vegetables and saving Rs. 50 every week and providing fresh and nutritional vegetables for their families.

— Shramjivi Janata Sahayyak Mandal, local partner
SoCCs (Social Capital Credits) is an award winning community currency that helps people take charge of developing their own neighborhoods and improving their lives.

SoCCs are earned for performing acts of social good, such as water and waste management, planting trees, tutoring or mentoring youth.

SoCCs can be redeemed for critical resources like school fees, healthcare vouchers, or skill empowerment training. Since 2014, SoCCs have been implemented successfully in over 15 sites across India, Ghana, Kenya, and the United States.
COSTA RICA
Curridabat, SoCCs program for neighborhood safety designed at the request of the office of the Mayor

KENYA
Kisumu, Manyatta Neighborhood improvement Project with Alice Visionary Foundation Project and WomenStrong International

GHANA
Kumasi, Bantama Market project with Women’s Health for Wealth and WomenStrong International

UNITED STATES
Portland Summers project promoting STEM education for adolescents with Girls Lead Washington D.C., empowering women through financial literacy, skill building and health workshops with WomenStrong International

INDIA
Ahmedabad, Self Employed Women’s Association Project with PepsiCo Foundation
Ahmedabad, adolescent girls and women’s empowerment project with Center for Development
Bundelkhand, food security through kitchen gardens with Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan
Beed District, rainwater harvesting with Save Indian Farmers
Bhubaneswar, digital literacy for children with VIEWS Odisha
Bori Sinh, cattle loans and check dams for rainwater harvesting with Save Indian Farmers
Dehradun, biodiversity preservation and livelihood support for tribal communities with Friends of Doon Society
Delhi, women’s financial inclusion project with Ruaab Self Employed Women’s Association
Kolkata, nurse’s assistant training project with Avenue Welfare Society
Lucknow, micro-poultry farming and empowering girls through digital literacy with Shohratgarh Environmental Society
Madurai, Vaigai river restoration project with Dhan Foundation
Mahad, micro-poultry farming with Shramjivi Janata Sahayak Mandal
Villupuram, Vinayagampet & Pudukottai, Biovillage program, well-desilting, enhancing livelihood with M. S. Swaminathan Research Foundation
Yavatmal, digital knowledge center with Deendayal Bhauuddeshiya Prasarak Mandal
Engaging Youth in Biodiversity Preservation

Location: Doon Valley
Partner: Friends of the Doon Society

AI has launched a program to promote more greenery within the Doon Valley. The Valley plays a significant role as a large watershed area in the Ganga Basin. Forests in the region influence the climate of many small cities around it and support biodiversity of birds, flora, and wildlife. This project focuses on educating youth from 25 schools about nature conservation and its importance of the ecosystem for our future survival. Students earn SoCCs by attending environment awareness sessions and participating in tree plantation drives, which have resulted in over 12,000 trees planted so far by 942 students.
Water Conservation for Drought Affected Farmers

Location: Bundelkhand
Partner: Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan

This project works with farmers in the Bundelkhand region to solve issues related to droughts and floods where unseasonal weather patterns have resulted in high poverty levels due to low crop outputs. This year, we began work with our local partner to restore traditional water harvesting structures like tanks and check dams. Over the course of 2019, three villages have become water independent, meaning they are no longer dependent on expensive water imports for irrigation and drinking water. Participants earn SoCCs for their labor to build communal water infrastructure projects like check dams and water tanks. SoCCs are redeemed for access to resources like funds for construction and agricultural demos.
AI has recently doubled the size of its Skill Empowerment for Girls program to help adolescent girls who live in informal settlements and cannot obtain adequate education, facing issues related to gender inequality and poverty. AI has set up thirteen Gender Resource Centers, which now provide 1200+ girls access to reading and learning materials, recreational equipment and information sessions on healthcare, financial literacy and more. These Centers use the Strong Women, Strong Girls modules provided by Women-Strong International, which are interactive sessions to girls with confidence, skills and knowledge. The program is continuing to expand, and is currently also partnering with a government program to match 200 girls with Indian companies once certain skill courses are completed. The girls earn SoCCs by tutoring three children younger than themselves on a weekly basis and can redeem SoCCs for school supplies, sanitary products, English speaking sessions and computer classes.
In 2019, AI added three new branches to its Digital Knowledge Center program to teach digital literacy to students and community members, which is a crucial skill to become competitive in the workforce. The children earn SoCCs for providing homework help to younger children and redeem SoCCs for computer lessons taught by qualified teachers. The computer courses consist of basic computer and systems overview, Microsoft Office usage, and internet familiarity. The program now includes adult women, as well as school students.
Asia Initiatives has launched a Kitchen Gardens project in 13 Katkari Tribal hamlets of Mahad block of Raigad district, Maharashtra. The initiative aims to alleviate tribal poverty by providing food security in the form of regular vegetable supply to families through kitchen gardens. 453 tribal women participated in the program. Every women’s household also constructed waste and compost pits to improve environmental conditions and to develop organic fertilizers. Participants earned SoCCs through activities such as participation in training programs and spraying plants with bio-pesticides to deter spread of diseases. SoCCs are redeemed for seeds and equipment needed for the kitchen gardens.
AI has launched a program to support 1000+ Tribal members in Maharashtra through low interest loans. Community members successfully raised enough capital, micro poultry farms and fishing nets and started the first ever tribal microcredit society in Maharashtra, named Savitri, after a river nearby. SoCCs are earned through regular school attendance, attending microcredit meetings, and making contributions towards shared capital. SoCCs are redeemed for low interest loans which can be used for income generating assets, education, healthcare and smokeless stoves that decrease a woman’s risk of respiratory disease, which is common in the area.
SoCCs for Goat-Rearing

Location: Uttar Pradesh, India
Grantor: Weyerhaeuser Family Foundation
Local Partner: Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sansthan

The “SoCCs for Goat Rearing” project in Uttar Pradesh supports women’s leadership and livelihoods by establishing a revolving loan fund for 70+ women to increase their income and improve the health of their families by purchasing goats that produce milk and kids. SoCCs have been implemented in this project to build social capital and encourage participants to engage in activities that support their communities. Participants earn SoCCs for attending Self Help Group meetings, attending hygiene awareness sessions, and planting trees. They redeem SoCCs for low-interest goat loans. Each beneficiary is provided a SoCCs booklet and records activities and earnings as needed.
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Asia Initiatives—Domus YEP! (Youth Empowerment Program)
Location: Stamford, Connecticut
Partner: Domus Kids

Asia Initiatives has partnered with Domus Kids, a local non-profit based in Stamford, Connecticut that lends support to disadvantaged youth in Connecticut. With our SoCC program, the participants of this 5-week pilot program learned essential life skills like resume writing, developing a budget and goal setting. AI firmly believes that it is vital for every child to receive equal opportunities to succeed in school and beyond. After attending lectures, participants completed a variety of tasks including developing a personal budget, creating a resume and setting three goals for themselves. They redeemed their SoCCs for vouchers for school supplies. They also pooled their CommSoCCs for a group outing.
The Zuri Social Capital Initiative

Location: Nairobi, Kenya
Funding Partner: FrauenPower, Germany
Implementing Partner: The Zuri Initiative

The Zuri Initiative launched a program in two locations in Kibera, Nairobi using our SoCCs methodology. The Zuri Initiative empowers women by training them in producing and selling natural hair products. SoCCs can also be earned by participation in a feeding program for the needy elders in the area and passing down The Zuri Initiative’s training to other women. SoCCs can be redeemed for items/activities such as health insurance, hair products, and deposit needed to get Zuri products to sell. The credits from a group of women can be combined and used to acquire something “big”, such as sewing machines or other items which can be shared by the community or group.
Asia Initiatives has partnered with SEWA (the Self-Employed Women’s Association) to promote economic empowerment and drive education initiatives by improving literacy for women weavers in Delhi. SEWA is the world’s largest organization of informal workers and the largest nonprofit in India, with over two million members. Ruaab is a women’s garment producer cooperative that is managed and run by the workers themselves. Asia Initiatives implemented SoCCs with over 200 women to help them gain skills that will enhance their ability to gain profit and success. Women earn SoCCs for timely delivery of products embroidered without mistakes, community cleaning drives, and attending SHG meetings. Women redeem SoCCs for Adult Literacy classes.
Asia Initiatives has launched a Kitchen Gardens project in 13 Katkari Tribal hamlets of Mahad block of Raigad district, Maharashtra. The initiative aims to alleviate tribal poverty by providing food security in the form of regular vegetable supply to families through kitchen gardens. 453 tribal women participated in the program. Every women's household also constructed waste and compost pits to improve environmental conditions and to develop organic fertilizers. Participants earned SoCCs through activities such as participation in training programs and spraying plants with bio-pesticides to deter spread of diseases. SoCCs are redeemable for seeds and equipment needed for the kitchen gardens.

As part of our push for women economic empowerment, Asia Initiatives has partnered with the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) to help farmers start floriculture businesses. Floriculture is the practice of cultivating decorative flowers, which enhance farmer income, since flowers are more profitable than subsistence farming and traditional cash crops. Farmers earn SoCCs through participation in the creation of organic farming inputs, community building programs, and taking classes on organic farming. SoCCs are then redeemed for low interest loans to start floriculture businesses. Over 30 farmers have participated in this program.
We were honored to be selected as Regional Winner of the MIT Inclusive Innovation Challenge. The challenge recognizes organizations that are revolutionizing the future of work through powerful tech solutions. Dr. Mehta traveled to Taiwan to receive the Asia Region award. One of the jury members wrote, “SoCCs is one of the boldest and strongest ideas that I have seen in recent times. The impact to the bottom of the pyramid is scalable and evidence based. The project is a remarkable idea of some of the best minds in the world supported by a strong team. While the idea itself has merit to impact million of lives, it also creates a new ecosystem of goodwill.”
The Urban Thinkers Campus was held on November 13—14, 2019 under the banner of the UN Habitat at Columbia University. As a United Nations ECOSOC member, Asia Initiatives was proud to co-host this event to present ideas for action in real world scenarios on how to meet the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals for an urban context. The central question of the event was how can we accelerate the SDGs along with other sustainability agendas like the Green New Deal? The event featured lectures, panels, and breakout sessions that presented our projects as examples of how to accelerate SDGs via SoCCs.
Ban Ki-Moon Award for Women’s Empowerment

In 2019, we were honored to host the Eighth Secretary General for the third year for his annual presentation of the Award for Women’s Empowerment in his name. This year, the distinguished honorees were Cecile Richards (right of SG Ban), of Planned Parenthood and Supermajority, Kathy Matsui (right of Cecile Richards) of Goldman Sachs, and Dr. Madhura Swaminathan (left of SG Ban) of the Indian Statistical Institute and the M.S. Swaminathan Foundation. The event was held at the Mandarin Oriental Hotel in New York, and attended by over 300 people.

Pictured above from Left: Kylie Schuyler of AI Board; Madame Yoo; Anita Bhatia, Dy. Exec Director of UNWomen; Madhura Swaminathan, Chair of M.S. Swaminathan Foundation (Honoree); SG Ban Ki-moon; Cecile Richards, founder of Supermajority (Honoree); Kathy Matsui, Vice Chair of Goldman Sachs (Honoree); Kratma Saini Sood, AI Gala Chair; Geeta Mehta, AI President.
Financial Statement

WE ARE GROWING!

2019 Revenue
Net Revenue: $569,235
58% Gala Donations
33% General Donations
6% Grants
3% Other (Investment Income, Art Sales, Consulting Revenue)

2018 Revenue
Net Revenue: $446,613.85
52% Gala Donations
21% General Donations
20% Grants
7% Other

2019 Expenditure
Total: $373,858
Programming: $273,718
Admin/Office Expenses/Management: $66,760
Fundraising: $33,380

The Zuri Initiative launched a program in two locations in Kibera, Nairobi using our SoCCs methodology. The Zuri Initiative empowers women by training them in producing and selling natural hair products. SoCCs can also be earned by participation in a feeding program for the needy elders in the area and passing down The Zuri Initiative’s training to other women. SoCCs can be redeemed for items/activities such as health insurance, hair products, and deposit needed to get Zuri products to sell. The credits from a group of women can be combined and used to acquire something "big", such as sewing machines or other items which can be shared by the community or group.
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