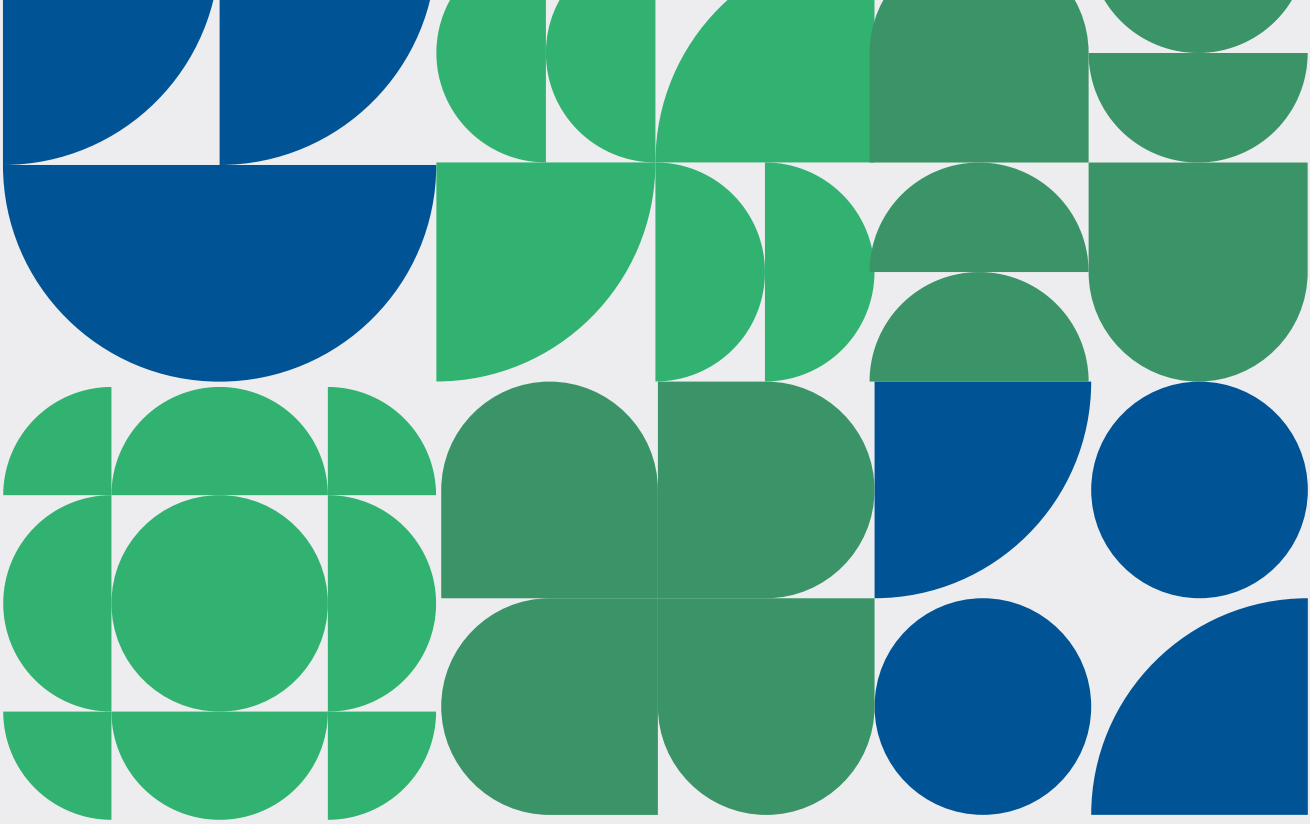

Financial Management Service Foundation
Promoting Accountability
fmsf

Accelerating Leadership Development for a Sustainable and Vibrant Civil Society in India

DRIVING CHANGE- CULTIVATING LEADERS-TRANSFORMING SOCIETY

Context & Need:
Leadership in the Development Sector

India's voluntary sector stands on the foundation of remarkable achievements and a legacy of visionary leadership. Over the decades, passionate individuals and organizations have driven transformative social change, tackling complex challenges with resilience and determination.

Yet, even as the sector reflects on its many successes, it now faces unprecedented challenges – from deepening funding crises and heightened regulatory pressures to growing scrutiny of its developmental relevance. Among these, one issue stands out as particularly critical: the lack of effective and sustainable leadership. This gap has a cascading impact on the sector's long-term viability and its ability to adapt to changing times.

The civil society has been fortunate to have leaders who devoted their lives to advancing social change. Their contributions have shaped the progress so far. Today, however, the sector stands at a pivotal juncture, where nurturing the next generation of strong, visionary leaders is essential to sustain and deepen its impact.

The environment is evolving rapidly, but the emergence of a robust second generation of leaders has not kept pace. Many organizations continue to depend heavily on a small group of senior leaders, with leadership development remaining largely informal and unstructured. This weak leadership pipeline affects not only individual organizations but the entire sector's ability to engage meaningfully, respond effectively, and influence policy discourse.

Leadership succession is often seen as simply passing the baton. However, even the most capable professionals require adequate preparation before assuming leadership roles. In the absence of structured development opportunities, transitions tend to be unplanned and experiential, which can affect the organization's long-term stability and sustainability. Without deliberate efforts to cultivate new leaders, the voluntary sector risks diminishing its capacity to shape India's development trajectory. This gap is not insurmountable, but it demands collaborative and systemic responses from all stakeholders to create an ecosystem that supports capable leaders, providing them with visibility, access to resources, and meaningful opportunities for professional growth.

"Leaders are not born, they are made. And they are made just like anything else, through hard work." – Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam

Response – Program at a Glance

The “Accelerating Leadership Development for a Sustainable and Vibrant Civil Society” program is a strategic response to the urgent leadership challenges within India’s social development sector.

This one-of-a-kind initiative, built from within the sector, is carefully designed to address real-world challenges through an integrated approach that balances external competency building with internal transformation. Driven by seasoned sector veterans and accomplished leadership coaches, the program delivers unparalleled insight and practical wisdom, offering a 360° perspective on what it truly takes to lead and thrive in the social development sector.

Over nine months, the program combines structured learning with deep self-development, recognizing that effective leadership emerges from both technical expertise and behavioral evolution. Unlike conventional leadership programs, it develops leadership through two closely integrated dimensions:

The Outer Edge:

Leadership Competency Building – Structured masterclass sessions offer in-depth knowledge and applied learning through thematic modules tailored specifically for the development sector context. These aren’t generic management frameworks; they’re grounded in real sectoral challenges:

- Strategic planning in resource-constrained environments
- Entrepreneurial thinking within mission-driven contexts
- Stakeholder engagement across diverse ecosystems
- Communication, fundraising and networking that drives collective impact
- Management and governance models that work for civil society

The Inner Edge:

Personal Leadership Transformation – The mentorship component goes deeper, focusing on the behavioural dimensions and mindset shifts that truly differentiate effective leaders. Through one-on-one guidance from experienced sector leaders, combined with peer learning, participants develop:

- Leadership mindset and emotional intelligence
- Adaptive capacity in complex, uncertain situations

- Self-awareness and reflective practice
- Collaborative leadership approaches
- Resilience and purpose-driven decision-making

The integration of these two dimensions ensures that technical capabilities gained in masterclasses are translated into personal leadership behaviors, while mindset shifts through mentorship are applied to real organizational challenges.

This program isn't just about developing better leaders. It's about cultivating a leadership movement that transforms how our sector thinks about, develops, and sustains leadership for lasting social impact.

Building on the success of the first cohort, FMSF now launches the second cohort of this program.

Who Should Join?

This program is designed for individuals who are part of their organization's senior management team. In order to ensure the program supports individuals who are well-positioned to lead transformative change, applicants must meet the following criteria:

- **Experience:** Currently part of the senior management team, with a minimum of 10 years in the sector, including 3+ years in leadership or managerial roles.
- **Communication Proficiency:** Fluent in at least two languages, with the ability to engage diverse stakeholders clearly and confidently.
- **Domain Expertise:** Deep knowledge in their field, with a strong understanding of sectoral challenges, trends, and effective practices.

Participants should demonstrate openness to learning, a willingness to collaborate, and a reflective approach to leadership. Participants will be assessed both as individuals and in the context of the organizational environment they represent. Leadership does not evolve in isolation, it needs the right ecosystem to grow, influence, and sustain change.

Organizations from across India are invited to nominate such individuals based on their potential and commitment. The program will prioritise gender inclusivity and follow a selection process that is sensitive to diversity, including geographic representation, socio-economic background, ethnicity, and lived experience.

What Benefits Await?

Participants:

- Provides a structured space for reflection, learning, and self-discovery as a leader.
- Offers opportunities to engage with experienced guides and sector experts.
- Builds confidence to navigate complex challenges with clarity and conviction.
- Strengthens leadership presence and ability to influence within and beyond the organization.
- Encourages peer exchange and long-term connections with a diverse leadership network.

Nominating Organizations:

- Helps in strengthening internal leadership capacity.
- Strengthens the organization's ability to respond strategically to change.
- Enhances team dynamics and staff motivation by supporting professional growth.
- Brings in fresh perspectives, tools, and frameworks.

Program Structure

This is an intensive 9-month hybrid leadership journey, designed so that technical learning and personal leadership development run in parallel, complementing each other for a comprehensive integrated experience. Following a successful pilot with our first cohort of 15 participants, the program's second edition builds on key learnings to deliver an even stronger experience.

Participants 20 per batch

Mentorship **1 mentor for every 4 participants**

Learning Approach

1. Peer group learning for collaborative problem-solving
2. One-on-one mentoring for personalized guidance

Engagement

The program combines onsite and online learning, alternating across the journey to create a flexible yet immersive experience.

- **Onsite (Physical):** 120+ hours, featuring interactive workshops, hands-on exercises, and engaging sessions
- **Online (Virtual)**: 100+ hours, including live labs, discussion forums, self-paced learning resource material, etc.

This design ensures that participants apply learnings in an integrated way, with mentorship, peer learning, and practical sessions reinforcing each other for maximum impact.

Program Investment: **Course Fee: ₹ 75,000/-**

This includes:

- All masterclass sessions (virtual and in-person)
- Personalized mentorship sessions
- Learning materials and resources
- Sector immersion experiences
- Access to the alumni network and ongoing learning events
- Participation in Annual Leadership Conclave

Subsidy in Fee

FMSF recognizes that access to financial resources varies across individuals and is committed to making this program accessible to a wide and diverse group of participants from the social development sector. Designed exclusively for the sector, the program values diversity as a core strength that enriches collective learning.

Applicants seeking a fee reduction may write to us at **fmsf@fmsfindia.org** at the time of applying, specifying the reason and the amount of subsidy requested. The extent of subsidy offered will depend on the number of applications received, the merits of each case, and the availability of funds based on the number of full-paying participants.

Note: Participants are required to bear their own travel costs for in-person engagement sessions (approximately 4 sessions over the nine-month period). Any and all other program delivery costs are covered by FMSF.

Learn from the Best

A key strength of this Leadership Program lies in the opportunity to learn directly from diverse and experienced sector leaders.

Mr. Gagan Sethi – Seasoned sector leader with countless years of experience in organizational development, capacity building, and advocacy; a recognized sector leader, mentor, and trainer, founder of multiple development organisations, and contributor to policy initiatives nationally and internationally.

Mr. Satyakki Bhattacharjee – Recognized as a global authority in leadership development with nearly 35 years of experience across corporate and development sectors, and has facilitated over 38,000 hours of sessions worldwide.

Dr. Sanjay Patra – A stalwart of the development sector with over 3 decades of experience, a leading expert and author on financial management, governance, and legal compliance, having facilitated numerous global workshops and serving on the boards of some of the most influential national and international organizations.

Ms. Amita Puri – A role model to aspiring leaders, with experience across national and international organizations, policy influence, and capacity building, having driven transformative work in child rights, gender, livelihoods, and philanthropy, and pioneered programs that empower communities and advance social change.

Mr. Shwetank Mishra – Social sector professional and economist by training, with 15+ years of experience in organization development, program design, grant management, and grassroots engagement. Skilled in communications, fundraising, leadership mentoring, and capacity building, with a distinctive approach to nurturing emerging leaders.

Ms. Nalini Paul – Social sector leader, passionate about youth-led development, disability inclusion, and expanding opportunities for young girls. Engages with government, international agencies, donors, and corporates, championing the organization's vision and believing in the transformative power of young people.

Mr. Sandeep Sharma – Powerhouse of innovation and inspiration, a seasoned trainer, with over 20 years in the development sector capacity building. Has facilitated numerous global workshops, authored key works on NPO governance and compliance, and is a recognized thought leader in the social impact space in India.

Curriculum Highlights

The curriculum is thoughtfully designed to build a strong foundation in leadership by integrating sectoral knowledge, practical tools, and behavioral development. It includes intensive Masterclass Sessions and focused Mentor Modules, enabling a well-rounded learning experience.

Leadership Competency

These sessions are designed to offer in-depth knowledge and applied learning through thematic modules:

- Broader Sectoral Perspective: Understand key trends, challenges, and opportunities in the development sector, including intersections with governance, policy, and sustainability.
- Governance & Management: Gain practical insights into organizational structures, project management, compliance frameworks, and effective governance systems.
- Communication, Fundraising & Networking: Learn to communicate with clarity and confidence, build professional relationships, and leverage networks for greater influence and collaboration.
- Entrepreneurial Mindset & Strategic Thinking: Develop the ability to think innovatively, take initiative, and align actions with long-term vision and mission.
- Stakeholder Engagement: Explore strategies to engage meaningfully with internal and external stakeholders, build trust, and promote collective ownership.

Behavioural-Change Self work

This component focuses on personal leadership transformation, helping participants examine their behaviours, mindsets and responses, and develop greater self-awareness and adaptability through:

- Leadership Mindset & Behavioral Growth: Cultivate self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and resilience to evolve into an impactful leader.
- Adaptive Leadership in Challenging Situations: Learn to navigate complexity, embrace uncertainty, and make informed decisions under pressure.
- Team Management & Collaborative Leadership: Strengthen your ability to lead diverse teams, strengthen collaboration, and nurture inclusive work cultures.

These components will be tied together through mentoring, providing participants with guidance to connect their learning, reflect on their development, and apply it to their leadership journey.

Beyond the Program

The journey doesn't end here. Participants become part of a thriving leadership collective that continues to engage, collaborate, and grow together well beyond the program's close.

- Alumni Network Activation: Ongoing connection through an alumni platform, facilitating continued collaboration, sector-wide dialogue, and shared initiatives.
- Ongoing Peer Support: A dedicated communication channel (e.g., WhatsApp group) remains active for real-time sharing, updates, and peer problem-solving.
- Annual Leadership Conclave: A flagship event bringing together current participants, alumni, sector leaders, and experts for keynote sessions, panel discussions, and critical dialogue. A space for visibility, thought leadership, and high-value networking.
- Knowledge & Learning Events: Exclusive invitations to webinars, roundtables, and guest sessions featuring experts from across sectors and domains.

From Our Leaders, In Their Own Words

This course has reshaped my perspective on leadership and its responsibility toward society. Its blend of theory, practical realities, and inclusive thinking has empowered me to grow as a more purposeful leader prepared to contribute meaningfully to the future.

My participation in the leadership training has certainly contributed to broadening of my horizons, led me to do more focused and sharper self-reflections; as a development sector professional, the sessions have been extremely potent in helping me understand the broader macro perspectives in the sector.

This program made me pause, reflect, and look at leadership differently. Learning from mentors and peers helped me move beyond my immediate role and see the larger organizational and sectoral picture. I leave with greater clarity, confidence, and a renewed perspective on my own leadership journey.

About FMSF

Financial Management Service Foundation (FMSF) is a resource development organisation with over 30 years of experience in educating and building the capacities of charitable organizations in India in the areas of Governance, Financial Management and Legal Compliance. With a broader vision of promoting accountability and transparency, FMSF undertakes a range of educational initiatives that build awareness and enable non-profit organizations and professionals in the sector to adopt sound systems and practices, strengthening their ability to work effectively and bring meaningful change to the lives of poor and underserved communities.

Over the years, FMSF has evolved into a leading think tank, developing innovative tools, concepts and resources to help charitable organizations navigate legal and regulatory requirements, manage resources effectively and strengthen organizational effectiveness through sound governance practices. Grounded in action research, this work is translated into practical knowledge through publications, online courses, workshops, seminars and digital learning resources, responding to the diverse and evolving needs of the voluntary sector. Collectively, these initiatives contribute to stronger accountability, transparency and institutional capacity across the sector.

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