1 NO POVERTY

masters' union university

MASTERS' UNION | ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT 2025

no *poverty*

End poverty in all its forms everywhere.



SDG 1 IMPACT REPORT

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01 Introduction

1.1 Understanding SDG 1: No Poverty

Sustainable Development Goal 1 seeks to end poverty in all its forms. For a university, that means looking past charity at the practical things that decide whether someone can get into higher education, stay long enough to finish, and go on to earn a steady living. It also covers what institutions can do to widen access to essential services, support people starting businesses and help communities withstand economic shocks.

Universities contribute to SDG 1 through research on poverty, financial support for students from low-income families, systems that help students stay and finish, and community programmes that create livelihood and enterprise opportunities.

1.2 Masters' Union's Contribution to SDG 1

Masters' Union contributes to SDG 1 through two connected pathways.

01

Within the institution

Reduces financial barriers to education through need-based scholarships, accommodation and meal support, education-loan assistance, counselling and emergency support.

02

Beyond the campus

Uses entrepreneurship education, venture support, consulting projects, rural immersion and student-led community initiatives to strengthen access to livelihoods, enterprise opportunities and basic resources.

1.3 Contribution at a Glance

AREA	DOCUMENTED SCALE / EVIDENCE
Need-based access to education	154 low-income students supported through three identified financial-aid routes.
Punjab entrepreneurship outreach	101,884 students engaged across 47 universities and 1,695 colleges; 20,226 student-led businesses created; 15,341 reported active; ₹44.15 crore in venture revenue.
Applied entrepreneurship learning	500+ students have participated in the Dropshipping Challenge, creating 150+ businesses and more than ₹10 crore in cumulative revenue.
Community support	Sharing the Light raised ₹50,000 for assistive learning and mobility resources; the Robin Hood Army food drive reached 250+ residents of Ghata Village.
Experiential learning	PGP Immersions expose students to rural livelihoods, informal enterprise, cooperatives, artisan collectives and agricultural value chains across India.
Enterprise and jobs	Up to 2025, Masters' Union has given ₹1.36 crore in venture grants and about 4,500 hours of one-to-one mentoring. The Founders' Fellowship pays selected full-time founders ₹50,000 a month for up to one year. The 30+ ventures profiled in the entrepreneurship report have created over 500 jobs.

02 Research

At Masters' Union, the SDG 1 research contribution is reflected through faculty work on market uncertainty and resource allocation, together with applied inquiry generated through rural immersions, entrepreneurship programmes and student-led field research. The emphasis is on understanding the economic systems within which livelihoods are created, constrained and made more resilient.

2.1 Research on Economic Resilience and Market Vulnerability

A 2025 faculty publication by Dr. Ashish Singh Bhandari and co-authors examines optimal processing and trading decisions for a commodity under random supply and inventory-conversion flexibility. The study asks how supply uncertainty, limited resources and market design affect economic resilience, especially for producers and small businesses facing volatile prices.

PUBLICATION	RESEARCH AREA	SDG 1 RELEVANCE
Bhandari, A. S., Sapra, A., Seshadri, S. & Sastry, T. (2025) Optimal Processing and Trading for a Commodity in the Presence of Inventory Conversion Flexibility and Random Supply Production and Operations Management.	Commodity processing, supply uncertainty and trading decisions	Economic resilience and market uncertainty affecting producers and small businesses
Saju, S. & Verma, N. K. (2026) Evaluating the Ecosystem Facilitating Agriculture Technology Adoption in Emerging Economies International Journal of Production Economics, 300.	Agricultural-technology adoption, rural productivity and farmer livelihoods	Farmer incomes and rural enterprise in emerging economies

2.2 Applied Knowledge on Rural Markets and Economic Inclusion

Masters' Union also develops applied knowledge through field research, entrepreneurship programmes and student-managed research. PGP Immersions requires students to investigate rural markets, livelihoods, public systems and local enterprise before and during field immersion.

The Outclass curriculum explicitly frames rural India as an economic system to be understood through livelihoods, consumption, agriculture, digital adoption, public policy and implementation rather than through a charity lens. This creates an applied research layer that informs student problem-solving on income generation and service access.

2.3 Book Chapters on Rural Livelihoods

Faculty work on livelihoods also appears in book form. A 2023 chapter by Dr. Anushree Poddar and Ashima Mathur studies how strategic corporate social responsibility by agri-input firms affects smallholder farmers in India.

PUBLICATION	RESEARCH AREA	SDG 1 RELEVANCE
Poddar, A. & Mathur, A. (2023) The Impact of Strategic CSR on Small Holder Farmers: A Study of Agri-Input Firms in India In Sustainable Food Value Chain Development. Springer Nature.	Corporate social responsibility and smallholder farmers	Farmer livelihoods and the role of agri-input firms in rural incomes

03 Stewardship

Masters' Union addresses poverty through a structured portfolio of need-based and diversity-linked scholarships, together with support that reduces non-tuition barriers. These measures form the institution's most direct internal contribution to SDG 1 because they act on affordability at the point of access and throughout the student journey.

3.1 Financial Aid for Low-Income Students

Masters' Union reports 154 low-income students receiving financial aid through three identified routes. These schemes include a need-based scholarship for undergraduate students and two diversity scholarships directed towards applicants from underserved or financially constrained backgrounds. The purpose is not simply to reward academic performance, but to make attendance feasible where cost would otherwise be prohibitive. Across all scholarship schemes, Masters' Union awarded ₹22.9 crore, including 100 awards that cover half or more of tuition.

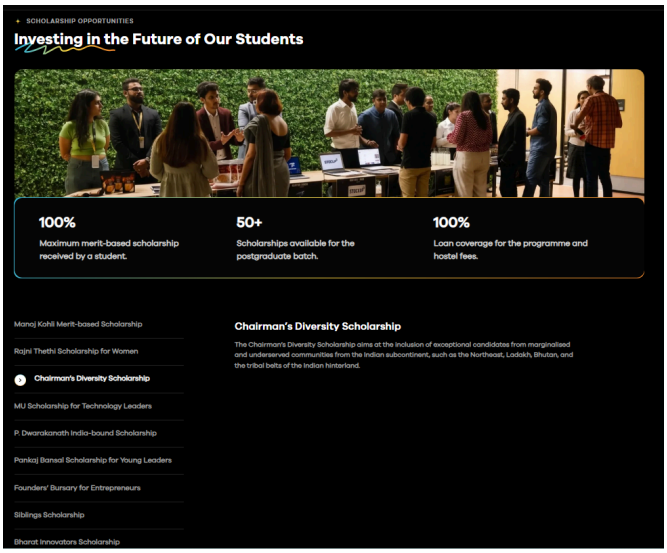
STUDENTS SUPPORTED, BY ROUTE **154**

Need-Based Scholarship (UG, 2025 intake onwards) — 117

Narendra Jadhav Diversity Scholarship — 32

Chairman's Diversity Scholarship — 5

Bar length shows share of the 154 students.



Masters' Union scholarship framework, including need-based and diversity-linked support.

3.2 Targeted Scholarship Portfolio

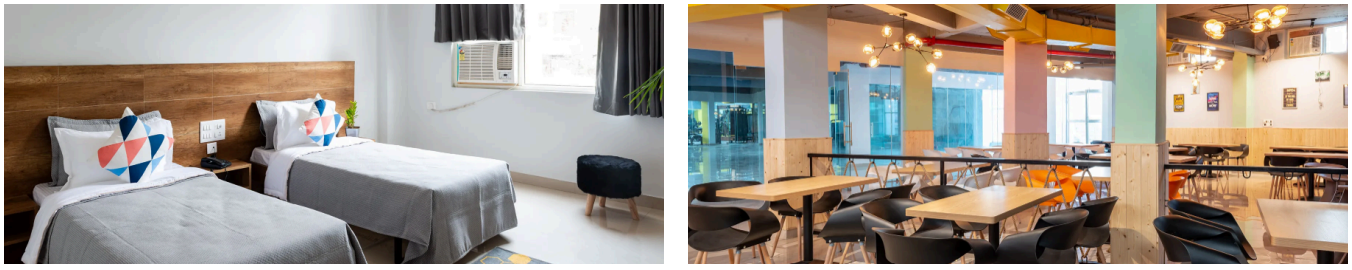
The three schemes counted above sit within a wider scholarship portfolio that targets different barriers to participation. The portfolio includes merit awards, women-focused support, diversity scholarships, support for technology and entrepreneurial talent, and need-based assistance for applicants facing financial hardship. Not every scholarship is counted as poverty-related financial aid; the broader portfolio is presented here to show how the institution combines need, diversity and merit within its access strategy.

SCHOLARSHIP	TARGET GROUP / BASIS
Manoj Kohli Merit-Based Scholarship	Exceptional academic record, test scores and professional accomplishments.
Rajni Thethi Scholarship for Women	Women applicants with strong academic and/or professional potential.
Chairman's Diversity Scholarship	Candidates from marginalised and underserved communities across the Indian subcontinent, including the Northeast, Ladakh, Bhutan and tribal belts.
Narendra Jadhav Diversity Scholarship	Candidates from underserved and diversity backgrounds.
MU Scholarship for Technology Leaders	Candidates demonstrating technology aptitude, leadership, innovation or research.
P. Dwarakanath India-bound Scholarship	India-bound candidates meeting programme criteria.
Pankaj Bansal Scholarship for Young Leaders	Applicants demonstrating leadership through community service or student initiatives.
Founders' Bursary for Entrepreneurs	Candidates with at least one year of entrepreneurial experience.
Siblings Scholarship	Applicants with a sibling enrolled at Masters' Union.
Bharat Innovators Scholarship	Applicants demonstrating strong innovation or entrepreneurial potential.
Mihir Mankad's Need-Based Scholarship	Working professionals facing financial hardship, subject to income documentation.
Edward Rogers Change-Agent Scholarship	Applicants demonstrating social impact or service.
Need-Based Scholarship (UG, 2025 intake onwards)	Low-income undergraduate applicants.

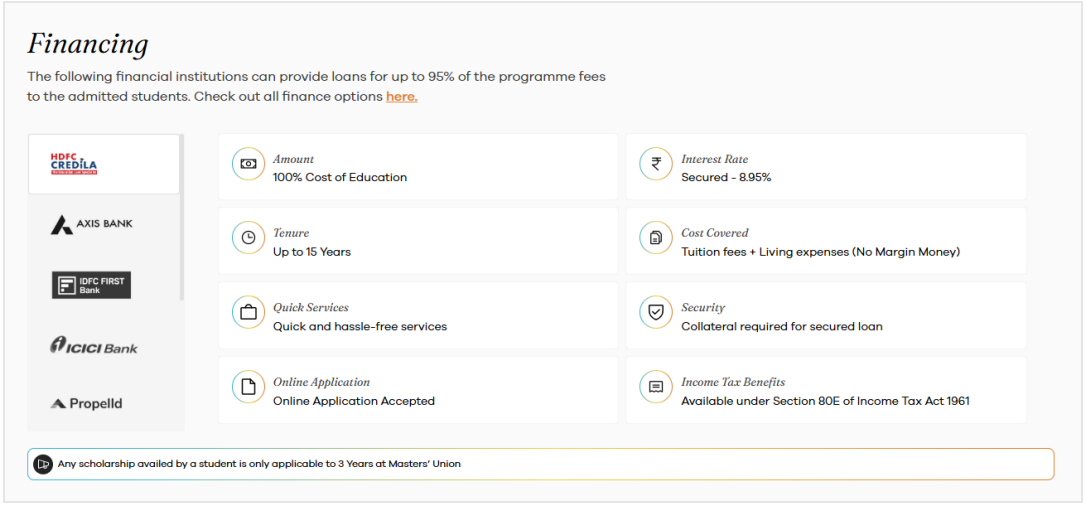
3.3 Support for Students to Complete Their Studies

At Masters' Union, financial access extends beyond tuition support. Students facing financial pressure may also encounter challenges related to accommodation, meals, emergency expenses and access to financing. Masters' Union therefore combines scholarships with practical financial support to help ensure that such constraints do not disrupt a student's education.

SUPPORT MECHANISM	HOW IT SUPPORTS CONTINUATION
Accommodation support	Subsidised hostel accommodation reduces the cost burden associated with studying away from home.
Meal support	Dining plans are bundled with hostel arrangements, reducing separate living-cost pressures.
Emergency assistance	Emergency grants are available for unforeseen financial hardship.
Education-loan assistance	The institution connects students with financing options that can cover up to 95% of programme and hostel fees, subject to lender terms and eligibility.
Mentoring and counselling	Academic, career and wellbeing support helps students manage non-financial pressures that can affect continuation and completion.



Student accommodation and dining facilities form part of the wider support environment for students studying away from home.



Education financing options presented to students as part of fee and loan assistance.

04 Outreach

Masters' Union's outreach combines large-scale entrepreneurship education with local-business support and student-led community action. Startup Punjab provides the strongest scaled example, while venture assistance, consulting assignments and SEWA Club initiatives address enterprise development, immediate material needs and access to essential resources.

4.1 Punjab Entrepreneurship Mindset Programme

The Punjab Entrepreneurship Mindset Programme is Masters' Union's largest documented community-facing entrepreneurship initiative. Delivered through public education institutions, it promotes entrepreneurship as a way to earn an income, with particular relevance for rural and small-town learners, women and students from families with limited means.

Participants develop and operate ventures across e-commerce, content creation, professional services, retail and other categories. The programme combines structured entrepreneurship learning, mentoring and a digital Coach platform that supports learners from idea development through early enterprise creation.

Masters' Union built the programme for the Government of Punjab, from the curriculum to the Punjab Startup App that carries it. Students choose one of five tracks (e-commerce, content creation, retail, professional services or their own idea), work through twelve milestones in four phases, upload proof of each task and sell to real customers. An AI coach and 1,000+ mentors, with 20+ nodal mentorship centres across universities, guide them in English, Hindi and Punjabi, and students earn academic credit based on the revenue they actually make.

101,884
Students engaged

20,226
Student-led businesses created

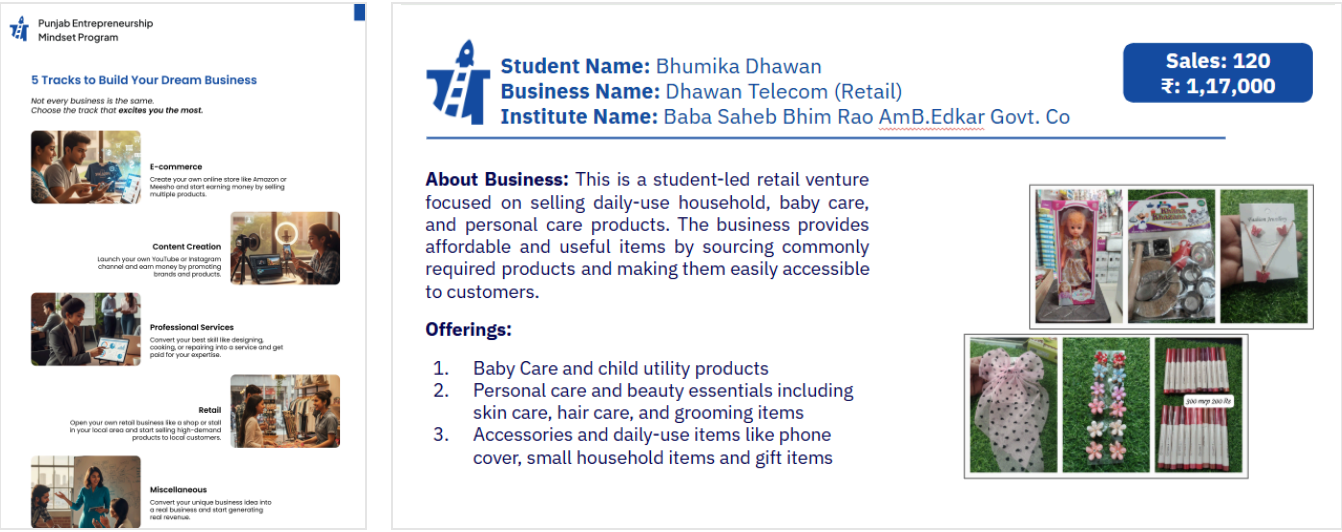
₹44.15 Cr
Revenue generated by ventures

47
Universities covered

1,695
Colleges covered

15,341
Businesses reported active

43,605
Business transactions recorded



Punjab Entrepreneurship Mindset Programme: venture tracks and an example student-run retail business.
Image source: Punjab Entrepreneurship Mindset Programme deck, shared by the programme team.

4.2 Enterprise and Start-up Support

Masters' Union's wider entrepreneurship ecosystem supports SDG 1 by reducing some of the financial, capability and network barriers that can prevent individuals from building sustainable sources of income through enterprise creation. The School combines structured venture-building support with mentorship, access to investors, incubation infrastructure and, for selected founders, direct financial assistance. The aim is not just academic learning. Students test ideas, build viable businesses and create routes to self-employment and, where ventures grow, to jobs for others.

A central component of this ecosystem is the Venture Initiation Programme (VIP), a structured 9–10 month venture-building journey that supports founders from early problem identification through problem validation, minimum viable product development, go-to-market execution and product-market fit. Students receive guidance from entrepreneurs, operators, investors and domain experts as they test their ideas with real customers and develop the capabilities required to build and sustain a business. Stronger ventures may receive non-dilutive institutional funding, enabling founders to continue building without immediately giving up equity, while the programme culminates in Demo Day, where selected ventures are presented to more than 150 venture capitalists and angel investors for potential follow-on support.

Masters' Union Ventures extends similar support to founders under 25, including coders, creators, self-taught builders, school and university dropouts and entrepreneurs from Tier 2 and Tier 3 locations. Up to 2025, the institution has provided ₹1.36 crore in venture grants and approximately 4,500 hours of one-to-one mentoring, and more than 30 ventures profiled in the entrepreneurship report have created over 500 jobs.

The Founders' Fellowship provides an additional layer of support for selected founders who commit more substantially to building their ventures. Fellows receive a stipend of ₹50,000 a month for up to one year, backed by a dedicated ₹100 crore fund. This eases the personal financial pressure of starting a business in its early stages. This support matters because early-stage founders often go for a while without a stable income, so access to time, capital and mentoring can decide whether the venture continues.

₹50,000

Monthly stipend for selected Founders' Fellows

₹100 Cr

Dedicated fund backing the Fellowship

These measures are not presented as direct evidence of poverty alleviation on their own. Their relevance to SDG 1 lies in creating economic pathways that can reduce dependence on traditional employment, lower barriers to enterprise creation and enable individuals to build income-generating businesses. Where supported ventures become commercially sustainable, they can also contribute to wider economic opportunity through employment, supplier relationships and market participation. In this way, Masters' Union's entrepreneurship ecosystem contributes to SDG 1 through economic agency, self-employment and enterprise-led livelihood creation.

MECHANISM	SUPPORT PROVIDED	ECONOMIC PATHWAY
Venture Initiation Programme	Structured venture-building, mentorship, investor exposure and potential non-dilutive funding.	Supports transition from idea to operating enterprise.
Founders' Fellowship	₹50,000 monthly stipend for selected founders; programme backed by a ₹100 crore fund.	Reduces personal financial pressure during early venture building.
Masters' Union entrepreneurship ecosystem	Mentors, faculty, investors, pitch forums and access to institutional facilities.	Builds entrepreneurial capability and access to capital networks.

Student Consulting for Local Enterprises

Through live consulting projects, students work with smaller businesses on billing, delivery-platform economics, customer discovery and online visibility, introducing point-of-sale systems and WhatsApp ordering. Through the Kalaghar initiative, they helped commercialise handcrafted products made by artisans from underserved communities, and students in food ventures source directly from farmers and producers, giving them a direct market.



Student venture receiving institutional support through the Venture Initiation Programme.

4.3 Community Welfare and Access to Basic Needs

Masters' Union's student-led SEWA Club complements long-term economic-capability programmes with targeted community support. These initiatives do not substitute for structural poverty reduction; they address immediate material needs among vulnerable groups and create a recurring mechanism through which students mobilise funds, goods and volunteer time.

INITIATIVE	DOCUMENTED CONTRIBUTION
Sharing the Light	₹50,000 raised; 42 walking canes, 43 headphones, 81 Braille slates and food packages distributed through three partner organisations serving visually impaired communities.
Winter Clothing Donation Drive	Student contributions pooled to purchase and distribute blankets to vulnerable people across Gurugram during winter.
Clothes Donation Drive	More than 25 pairs of footwear plus clothing collected for Masters' Union hostel operational staff.
24-Hour Food Donation Drive with Robin Hood Army	Food, funds and apparel mobilised by 15 students and distributed to 250+ residents of Ghata Village near Banjara Market.

Sharing the Light

The Sharing the Light campaign raised ₹50,000 through contributions from alumni, employees and the institution. The funds supported assistive learning and mobility resources distributed through Nirmala Foundation, Blind Welfare Society and Blind Persons Association. The initiative focused on concrete resources that can affect educational access and everyday independence for visually impaired learners.

FUNDS RAISED, BY CONTRIBUTOR

₹50,000

Alumni ₹31,020

Institution ₹12,080

Employees ₹6,900

42
Walking canes

43
Headphones

81
Braille slates





Distribution of assistive and learning resources through partner organisations serving visually impaired students.

Clothing and Food Support

The SEWA Club's winter and clothing drives mobilised the campus community around immediate material needs. The winter drive pooled donations to purchase blankets for distribution in Gurugram, while a separate hostel-based clothing drive collected footwear and garments for operational staff.





Winter clothing and hostel donation initiatives organised through the student-led SEWA Club.

The 24-Hour Food Donation Drive, conducted with the Robin Hood Army, reached more than 250 residents of Ghata Village near Banjara Market. Fifteen Masters' Union students coordinated donations of food, funds and apparel. Unlike a general awareness activity, this initiative provided direct material support to a nearby community.





SEWA Club and Robin Hood Army food-distribution activity in Ghata Village.

05 Teaching

At Masters' Union, SDG 1 is integrated primarily through experiential learning. Immersions expose students to rural livelihoods, informal enterprise, cooperative business models and community institutions, while entrepreneurship modules require students to build and test income-generating ventures in real markets. The PG Programme in Sustainability and Business Management maps each of its 40 courses to the goals it serves. Social Impact (Term 1) is the course mapped to SDG 1, covering inclusive growth, theory of change and stakeholder analysis.

5.1 Rural and Community Immersions

Swades Foundation: integrated rural development

The Swades Foundation immersion in rural Maharashtra exposed students to an integrated development model spanning livelihoods, education, healthcare, water access and community institution building. Students looked at how these systems work together at household level. Income resilience depends not only on jobs, but also on access to essential services, local institutions and how well communities organise around shared needs.

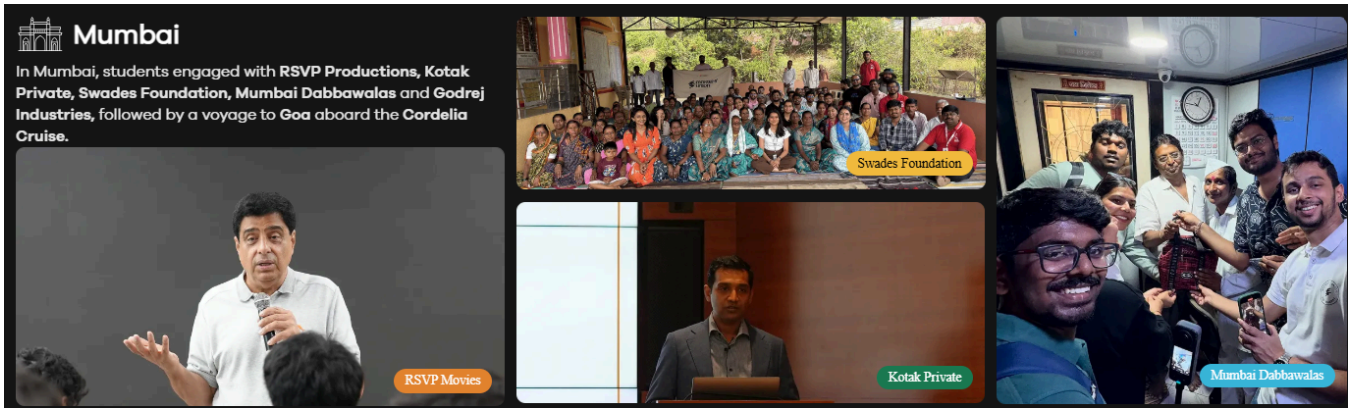


Immersion with the Swades Foundation, focused on rural livelihoods and integrated community development.

Dharavi: informal enterprise and household resilience

In Dharavi, Mumbai, students study one of India's most visible informal-enterprise ecosystems. The immersion examines how small businesses, recycling networks and community-based value chains generate income in a dense urban settlement while operating with constraints around space, finance, formal market access and social protection.

The value of the immersion for SDG 1 lies in its treatment of informal enterprise as an economic system rather than as a case study in deprivation. Students assess how businesses create livelihoods, how value is distributed, where vulnerability remains concentrated and what forms of market access or operating support could strengthen income stability.

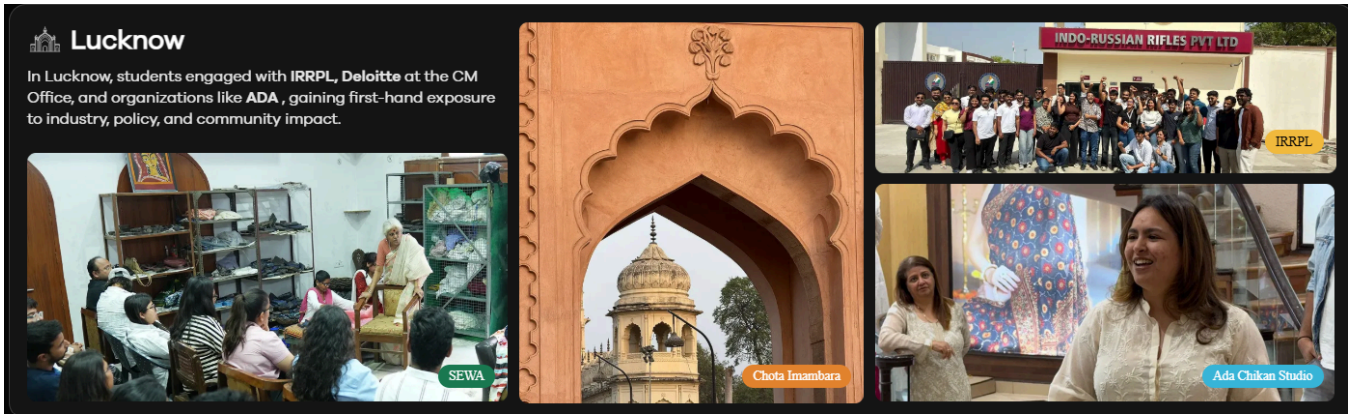


PGP Immersions in Mumbai: community and enterprise exposure including the Swades Foundation and Mumbai Dabbawalas.

SEWA Chikankari: women's livelihoods and collective enterprise

The SEWA Chikankari immersion in Lucknow gives students direct exposure to women-led artisan livelihoods and collective enterprise. Through engagement with artisans and community organisations, students examine how skills, collective organisation, market access and value-chain participation influence household income and resilience.

The experience is particularly relevant to inclusive enterprise because it asks students to assess whether business models create durable income opportunities for producers rather than simply extracting value from craft communities. It also connects questions of poverty with gender, market power and the economics of traditional livelihoods.



PGP Immersions in Lucknow, including engagement with SEWA and local artisan enterprises.

Amul: cooperative enterprise and rural incomes

The Amul immersion in Anand, Gujarat introduces students to a farmer-owned dairy cooperative model that links rural producers to processing, cold-chain infrastructure and large consumer markets. Students examine how collective ownership and market integration can influence farmer income, bargaining power, value realisation and household resilience.

The immersion does not treat a large cooperative as automatic evidence of poverty reduction. Its educational value lies in examining whether and how operating structures distribute value back to producers, create stable market access and strengthen local capabilities over time.

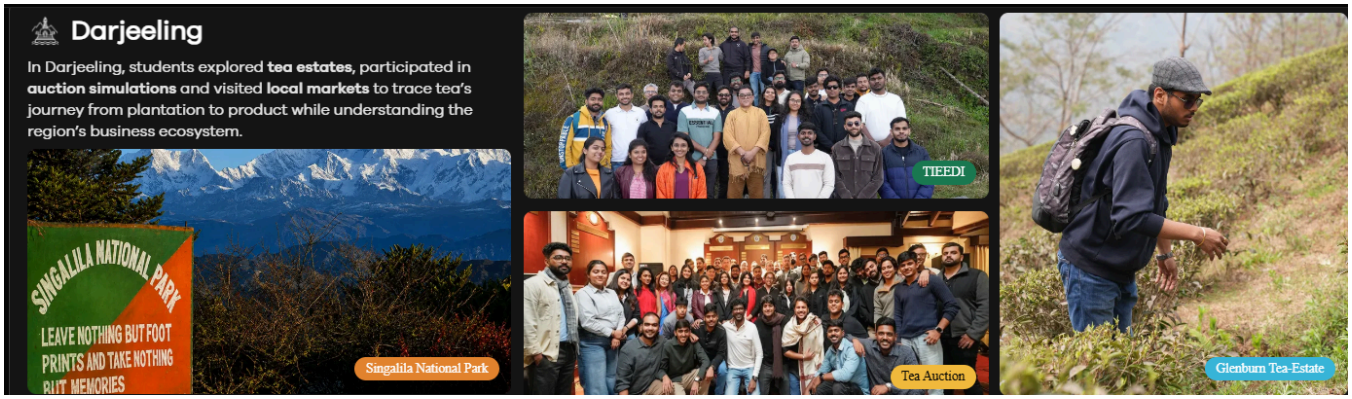


PGP Immersions participants at Amul, Anand, examining cooperative enterprise, rural incomes and market access.

Darjeeling: rural livelihoods, tea value chains and regenerative enterprise

In Darjeeling, PGP Immersion students engage with TIEEDI, Glenburn Tea Estate and local market systems to study rural livelihoods, agriculture, regenerative practice and premium value chains. These experiences help students understand how land-based livelihoods depend on productivity, environmental resilience, processing, quality differentiation and access to markets.

The immersion also exposes students to the trade-offs between commercial value creation and the long-term resilience of communities whose income depends on agriculture and tourism. It therefore connects poverty reduction with the sustainability of rural enterprise rather than treating income growth as an isolated outcome.



PGP Immersions in Darjeeling: TIEEDI, tea-market learning and Glenburn Tea Estate.

5.2 Entrepreneurship as Applied Economic Capability

Entrepreneurship is embedded into the Masters' Union curriculum as an applied capability rather than a classroom simulation. The Dropshipping Challenge requires students to identify products, manage suppliers, build storefronts, integrate payments, run digital campaigns, acquire customers and track revenue, profit, cash flow and inventory. This gives students direct experience of how a small enterprise is created and operated with limited starting capital. A recent cohort generated more than ₹3.3 crore in about two and a half months.

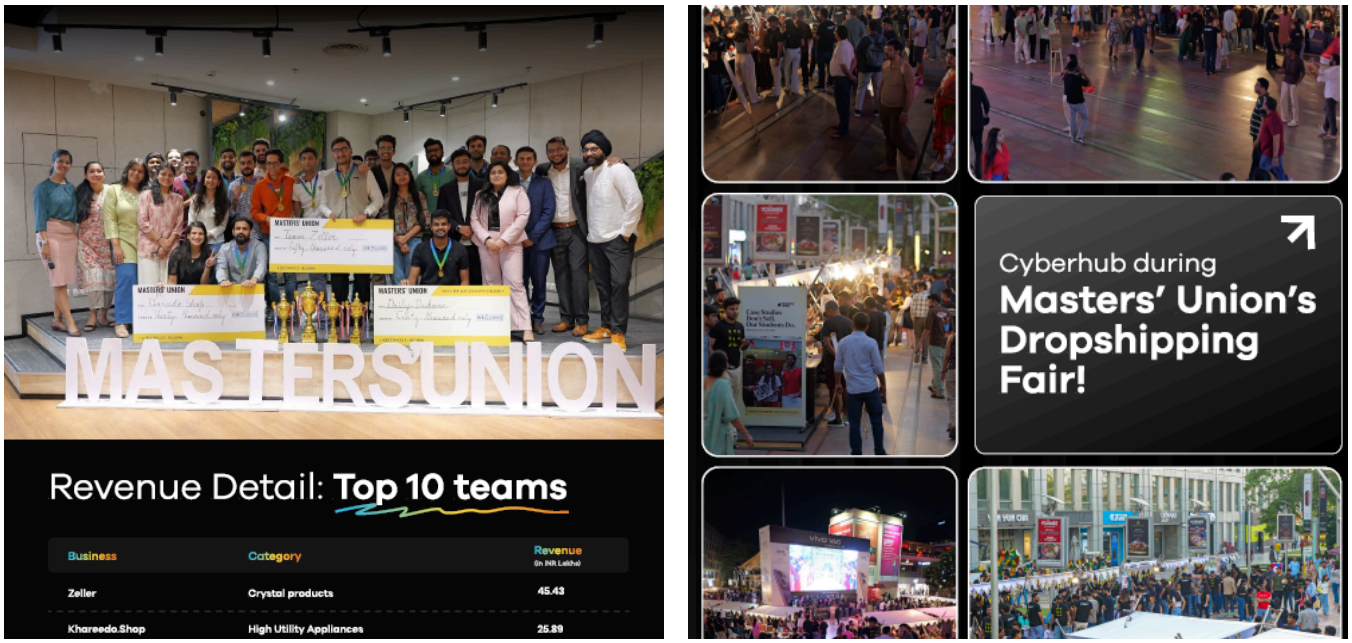
500+
Students have participated since inception

150+
Businesses created

₹10 Cr+
Cumulative revenue generated

43
Digital brands launched by the 2024–25 UG cohort (₹1.2 Cr+)

These figures show the scale of the learning model; they are not presented as direct poverty-impact outcomes, but as evidence that students acquire practical pathways to enterprise and self-employment.



Dropshipping Challenge: top-team revenue showcase and the Dropshipping Fair at Cyberhub, Gurugram.

The Venture Initiation Programme extends this learning over a longer venture-building cycle. Students move through pre-seed validation, MVP development, go-to-market execution and product-market fit, supported by workshops, mentor check-ins and investor engagement. Together, the Dropshipping Challenge and VIP make income generation, customer discovery and enterprise execution recurring parts of the learning experience.

06 Institutional Direction

We have built a base: need-based aid that helps students from lower-income families join and stay, and entrepreneurship programmes that reach people far beyond our campus. Our ambition is for talent, not family means, to decide who gets a Masters' Union education and who gets to build a business.

6.1 An Education No One Is Priced Out Of

We want every talented student to be able to study here whatever their family's income, and to finish what they start. Our aim is to widen scholarships, loans and support until cost is no longer the reason someone turns us down.

6.2 Enterprise as a Route to a Better Living

We want to take the Startup Punjab model to more regions and to rural and underserved communities, so that starting a business becomes a real option for people who have never had one. Our ambition is to help people earn a better living on their own terms.

6.3 Learning with the Communities We Serve

We want our immersions and SEWA Club drives to grow into lasting partnerships with the communities and organisations we work with, and to turn what students learn there into teaching and research on livelihoods that others can use.



SDG 1 IMPACT REPORT

masters' union university