

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Reliance Foundation and Observer Research Foundation unveil study of decade-long work in 3,000 villages, outline pathways to an ‘Atmanirbhar Gaon’**

- A joint study by Observer Research Foundation and Reliance Foundation, ‘A Decade of Doing More: Evaluating Development Interventions in India’s Rural Frontiers’, captures livelihood changes over 10 years.
- It highlights how integrated, community-led development models are contributing to sustainable rural transformation towards an ‘Aatmanirbhar Bharat’.
- At a roundtable where the publication was released, practitioners, researchers, and experts convened to chart future priorities towards self-reliant villages.
- Multipronged interventions across four states, with targeted approaches, have enabled households to transition out of poverty.

**New Delhi, 11 May 2026:** A large-scale study of progress in 3,000 villages across four states of India finds that strong local institutions can drive rural well-being towards self-reliant villages. The insights from the collaborative study by Observer Research Foundation (ORF) and Reliance Foundation, ‘A Decade of Doing More: Evaluating Development Interventions in India’s Rural Frontiers’ were presented at a roundtable titled “*Towards an Atmanirbhar Gaon: What Lies Ahead for Rural India in the Next Decade,*” here today.

The study examines the long-term impact of interventions over 10 years, across four clusters — Balangir (Odisha), Mandla (Madhya Pradesh), Adoni (Andhra Pradesh), and Radhanpur (Gujarat). It delves deep into the livelihoods and living standard changes for 2,100+ households across four clusters to appraise the impact of these interventions.

The evidence-based insights and ground-level learnings of the publication were presented by Dr Soumya Bhowmick (ORF) and Dr Saji M. Kadavil (Reliance Foundation). It highlights how integrated, community-led development models are contributing to sustainable rural transformation and advancing the vision of Aatmanirbhar Bharat. A key insight from the study is that long-term rural transformation requires integrated approaches and calls for strong collaboration across community-led institutions, civil society, research, private sector and government stakeholders to scale successful models that strengthen rural India.

At the roundtable in New Delhi, policymakers, development practitioners, and sector experts reflected on pathways for rural transformation in India.

**Dr Nilanjan Ghosh, Vice President, Development Studies, ORF**, underscored the importance of context-driven progress, stating that “True progress is context-driven, rooted in resilience, inclusion and sustainability. When institutions evolve, communities find agency, and stakeholders work together through integrated action, we move beyond poverty alleviation

towards creating self-reliant ecosystems that are robust, replicable and built for long-term change.”

**Mr Sudarshan Suchi, Chief Development Officer, Reliance Foundation**, highlighted the role of community ownership and collaboration. “An Atmanirbhar Gaon is built when communities find their voice, strengthen local institutions, and come together to co-create solutions. Through collaboration, resilience, and collective action, Reliance Foundation aims to bring people together and continuously raise the bar for self-reliance.”

Emphasising institutional strength and technology-led transformation, **Mr Abhinav Sen, Head, Rural Transformation Programme, Reliance Foundation**, said, “Through convergence, community participation, and the power of data and AI, Gram Panchayats can be enabled to strengthen local governance, helping create resilient, inclusive and future-ready villages.”

The round table explored actionable pathways, and the wider implications for India’s rural development policy and future practice, examining the lessons from public programmes, CSR initiatives, and community-based institutions. Participants emphasised the need for stronger institutional capacities, enhanced participation of women and youth, and a greater focus on environmental stewardship, alongside responsible use of digital technologies.

The roundtable aimed to build a shared commitment to rural institutions, enhance livelihoods and enable resilient, self-reliant villages – leading to a strong, vibrant ‘Aatmanirbhar Gaon’ movement across India.

### **About Reliance Foundation**

Reliance Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Reliance Industries Limited, aims to play a catalytic role in addressing India’s development challenges through innovative and sustainable solutions. Led by Smt. Nita M Ambani, Founder and Chairperson, Reliance Foundation is relentlessly working for the overall well-being and enhanced quality of life for all, focusing on rural transformation, education, health, sports for development, disaster management, women empowerment, urban renewal and arts, culture and heritage, and has touched the lives of over 97 million people across India, in over 91,500 villages and urban locations. More on [www.reliancefoundation.org](http://www.reliancefoundation.org).

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