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Voice AI for Inclusion: Why Now?

India's digital journey over the last two decades has been remarkable in its reach, ambition, and the infrastructure built to support it. And yet, at the edges of this journey, large numbers of people remain invisible: those without smartphones, those not comfortable using apps in a language not their own, and those for whom the basic assumption behind every digital service, that you can read, tap, and type, does not apply.

The gap was never about willingness. A tribal woman wanting health advice had no easy, private way to get it. A farmer who could see something was wrong with his crop had no one to call for timely help. A daily wage worker eligible for a government scheme often never found out because the information was buried in a document, on a website, in a language he couldn't read. For each of these people, the tool itself was the problem.

India has over 300 million people without smartphones, more than 100 spoken languages, and over 5,000 dialects. Even among those who own a phone, navigating apps comfortably is far from guaranteed, especially for women, people in rural areas, and older populations. Human call centers, which were the usual alternative, are costly, hard to scale, and almost never available in more than a few languages.

Voice AI is changing that and changing it fast. While LLMs and generative AI continue to develop rapidly, Voice AI technology along with cloud telephony has matured significantly over the past year. Today's voice models can understand a wide range of Indian languages and their dialect variations, respond in a natural, human-like voice with very low delay, handle thousands of simultaneous calls, and still perform well even with background noise. That combination; affordable, accurate, and available at scale, is what makes this moment different from everything that came before.

Put together, this means someone can simply call a number, speak in the language they grew up with, and get useful, accurate information, with no smartphone, no app, no typing required.

That is not a small improvement. It is a completely different kind of access.

This booklet brings together Voice AI deployments already happening across government departments and impact organisations in India. Each one started with a real problem for farmers, patients, workers, and citizens who had long been on the margins of the system. The hope is that reading through these will help you see your own context more clearly: the people you could be reaching, the problem worth solving, and where you might want to begin.

What's making this Possible

The infrastructure that makes Voice AI work at population scale does not appear overnight. It is built deliberately, in layers, by many hands and much of that building has been happening quietly in India over the last few years.

AI4Bharat has developed the foundational open-source datasets and language models that make accurate speech recognition and natural-sounding synthesis possible across Indian languages and dialects. Without this invisible layer, India would have taken many more years to get to where it is today. **VoicERA**, developed by COSS and deployed on **Bhashini**, India's national language infrastructure, brings these capabilities together into a pluggable, deployment ready stack available to government departments, researchers, and mission driven organisations alike.

Listen at Scale is a program built in partnership with Sarvam and AI4Bharat, designed with one clear purpose: move Voice AI from promising pilots to real, population-scale deployment. The program offered 10 million minutes over 30 days to 20 high-impact use cases, at zero cost.

Impact at Scale takes this further – a structured 100-day program that helps organisations move from idea to live deployment, at **under Rs 1 per minute**, with unlimited minutes provided by three partners. It removes the single biggest barrier that has kept Voice AI out of reach for most NGOs, government departments, and social enterprises: the cost and complexity of getting this started.

Running alongside all of this is a growing Voice AI community seeded by EkStep of over 1,000+ practitioners – builders, telephony providers, AI researchers, language contributors, and deployment partners – working together to make Voice AI more accessible, more affordable, and more collaborative across India.

The deployments that follow are drawn from this ecosystem. A farmer in Maharashtra getting real-time crop advisory in Marathi through **MahaVISTAAR-AI**. A job seeker in a small town finding work through a voice call on **BlueDots**. A student who has fallen behind building language skills through **AXL**. A citizen in rural Assam sharing feedback on water delivery to a government bot. Each one started as a problem someone wanted to solve. Each one is now running.

All of this points to one simple goal: Voice AI that is abundant, accessible and is within reach of every organization that needs it.



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The PROBLEM

Farmers in Maharashtra depend on timely, local guidance for sowing, pest management, and fertilizer use, but expert advice is limited in tribal and underserved regions. Extension officers cannot reach every village, and digital apps often fail due to low literacy and language diversity. This lack of access leads to crop losses, while administrators lack real-time visibility into emerging seasonal challenges.

The SOLUTION

MahaVISTAAR-AI deployed **Vasudha**, a multilingual voice assistant that enables farmers to access guidance through a simple phone call. Farmers speak in their local dialect to receive:

- **Crop Advisory:** Symptom-based pest and disease guidance.
- **Weather & Sowing:** Location-specific recommendations for irrigation and sowing.
- **Fertilizer & Input:** Stage-wise guidance tailored to the specific crop and season.
- **Inclusive Access:** Supports Marathi and tribal dialects like Bhili; works on feature phones in low-bandwidth environments.



The IMPACT

6 Lakh+

unique farmers interacted with Vasudha AI bot

24 Lakh+

questions handled so far (Chat & Voice Calls)

32 Lakh+

app downloads (MahaVISTAAR-AI)

3 Minutes

average call duration, indicating meaningful engagement

4.6/5 farmer rating for the Vasudha AI bot (feedback from field)

The PROBLEM

India's "Ayushman Vay Vandana Yojana" offers free health coverage for senior citizens aged 70+, yet awareness and enrolment lagged far behind eligibility. More than three crore seniors, many with low digital literacy and limited mobility, relied on infrequent camps or service centre visits to learn about the scheme.

At national scale, human-led outreach was slow and expensive, leaving high-need districts underserved and administrators without a clear view of intent, barriers, or enrolment readiness.



The SOLUTION



Listen
At Scale



Guided Enrolment Support:

Explained benefits, checked eligibility, and captured intent



Family Mediation Handling:

Enabled relatives to assist seniors in real time



Verified Routing: Captured identity and location for offline enrolment follow-up

The IMPACT

25 Lakh+
calls outreach

42% increase in
average daily enrolment
in 30 days

2.3 Lakh+ citizens
interested in enrolment

The PROBLEM

Lend A Hand India (LAHI), a non-profit organisation, integrates vocational education in secondary schools across India, working with 50k+ students each year, primarily in underserved and rural communities, helping them build practical skills and explore future education and career pathways.

However, once students left school, LAHI lacked a structured way to stay connected. Informal follow-ups offered limited visibility into real outcomes, whether training led to career mobility, where support was needed, and how impact could be measured. Without clear, readable data, program design and donor reporting remained anecdote-driven, creating a blind spot across tens of thousands of alumni.



The SOLUTION

The program used a multilingual, voice-based agent to verify identity, validate academic linkages, and classify current status across education, employment, skill training and disengagement at scale.

Multilingual Outreach: Large-scale calls to confirm identity and current status

Structured Outcome Capture: Documented education, employment, training, exam prep, or disengagement

Registry Generation: Cleaned, verified records ready for action by program teams

*The 'Listen at Scale' program jointly conceived by EkStep, Sarvam, and AI4Bharat in December 2025 offers up to 10 million free minutes for high-impact use cases.

The IMPACT

1 Lakh+ alumni reached

1.1 Lakh+ call interactions processed

59% students confirmed in higher education

14k fully verified outcome records



The PROBLEM

Civis, an NGO, works to increase citizen participation in the lawmaking process, generate public awareness, and provide education on issues of civic importance. India's Union Budget impacts every household, yet public engagement remains limited because information is often fragmented, technical, and difficult to access for non-digital and non-English audiences.

Call centres cannot absorb the surge in questions following the announcement, and written FAQs exclude those without internet access. As a result, civic engagement remains largely informational rather than participatory. Citizens hear about policy changes but rarely understand how they affect their daily lives.



The SOLUTION



Civis deployed a multilingual conversational voice system immediately after Union Budget 2026. The system proactively contacted citizens and enabled two-way conversations, allowing users to ask questions, seek clarifications, and receive simplified explanations across domains such as taxation, agriculture, healthcare, and education.

Each interaction generated structured data on topics of interest, satisfaction, and willingness for further participation, transforming individual conversations into aggregated civic insight while maintaining consent and disclosure safeguards.

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The IMPACT

1 Lakh+ calls outreached

59k+ live conversations

186k+ policy questions were answered

63.28% of people reported satisfaction from the call



The PROBLEM

Large-scale Minimum Support Price (MSP) procurement programs depend on last-mile readiness, yet governments rarely know in advance how much crop is available, who intends to sell, or what barriers farmers face. In Karnataka’s maize-growing districts, officials needed rapid visibility into farmer readiness, inventory, and preferred procurement channels before operations began.

Traditional field surveys would have taken weeks and significant manpower, risking missed harvest windows and farmers selling to private traders first.



The SOLUTION



The Agriculture Department deployed an outbound conversational voice campaign to verify crop status, sale intent, preferred Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs), and key concerns. Retry strategies recovered thousands of connections, while call analytics surfaced issues like outdated records, crop diversification, and early sales.

The campaign provided real-time insights for procurement planning, highlighting demand peaks, APMC preferences, and gaps around payments, transport, and process clarity. This enabled targeted follow-ups, prioritising ready sellers, scheduling callbacks, and refining communication for future cycles.

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The IMPACT

49k+ farmers outreached

5.1k+ farmers confirmed seed receipt

884k+ quintals of supply were identified within 4 days, achieving 5× faster discovery than the manual approach



Government of Maharashtra
(Agriculture Department)

The PROBLEM

The Government of Maharashtra runs “Farmer Field Schools” to train farmers in practices that improve yields and reduce losses. However, once a session ended, there was no way to verify attendance, track adoption, or assess whether benefits actually reached farmers.

Monitoring relied on field visits and paper reports, while surveys took months and arrived after the season had closed. At scale, this left outcomes unclear and delayed action, with no reliable view of impact on the ground.



The SOLUTION



The Government of Maharashtra deployed a conversational voice-based outreach campaign to connect directly with farmers across districts, enabling real-time verification of participation, adoption, and scheme benefits at scale.

Rapid Statewide Outreach: Rolled out quickly to contact beneficiaries across districts

Two Focused Campaigns: Covered Farmer Field School implementation and scheme benefit verification

Safe and Compliant Execution: Built in consent, disclosure, and data protection

The IMPACT

247k+ outreach calls

71k+ meaningful conversations

59% farmers implementing FFS learnings

43% farmers reported positive impact on farming output

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The PROBLEM

Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPWD) manages welfare, schemes, and certification for ~2.68 crore people with disabilities across 21 recognized types. However, visibility of beneficiaries remains low due to incomplete registries and slow field profiling, resulting in low-fidelity and outdated profiles. Outreach at scale is a challenge, with field teams reaching only ~10–15 individuals per day and unable to scale to millions. This leads to a mismatch in needs, as overloaded helplines and IVR systems lack nuance and fail in proxy or guardian scenarios, often resulting in generic or misaligned support.

The SOLUTION



Built an outbound, multilingual, multi-turn voice profiling agent that:

1. Captures explicit consent
2. Collects structured needs, disability type, and socioeconomic context
3. Writes verified, allocation-ready profiles directly into Purple Dots database for downstream matching

Rich qualitative inputs, including economic context and aspirations, make these profiles highly effective for supporter matching.

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Example

A man with a locomotor disability in Andhra Pradesh had a plan — he wanted to sell eggs and fruits, going village to village, running a small business. The one thing standing between him and that plan was a modified scooty. No system knew he existed. No scheme had reached him. No one had asked. This call was asked. He answered. His need — mobility support for self-employment — is now a verified request on ONEST, visible to NGOs, schemes, and supporters who can act on it. He went from invisible to on record in a three-minute conversation.



The IMPACT

2.8 Lakh+ minutes of structured profile dialogue

14 Lakh+ calls in outreach in a single wave

51k+ profiles created

45k+ requests for assistive devices captured

31k+ requests for financial aid captured

The PROBLEM

According to the Economic Survey 2025-26 – MSMEs employ over 32 crore people in India, yet most of these jobs are never listed online. Businesses and workers are often just a few streets apart but cannot find each other.

- **Discovery Failure:** Local jobs stay hidden on paper posters or travel only by word-of-mouth.
- **The Digital Gap:** Most blue-collar workers and small businesses are not on national job websites, making local opportunities "invisible."



The SOLUTION

Blue Dots AI is a shared infrastructure that makes local talent and jobs visible on a digital map.

- **Simple Voice AI:** No smartphone or digital skills are required. A **2-3 minute voice conversation** in a local language on any phone creates a "Blue Dot."
- **Location-Anchored Signals:** Each dot represents a real job opening, a skilled person, or a local service, plotted exactly where they are located.
- **Smart Matching:** The AI connects people in the same neighbourhood, removing the need for long commutes or expensive middlemen.

The IMPACT

(Results from Ghaziabad & Dharwad)

Visibility: Surfaced over **10,000 local jobs** in less than 60 days, compared to fewer than 100 on national platforms.

Speed: Time to find a job or a candidate dropped from **2 weeks to under 2 days.**

Proximity: Most people found work within 2 bus stops of their home, reducing the need to migrate.

Success: Hiring conversion rates jumped from 10% to **over 50%.**

Efficiency: The cost to find local talent fell from ₹500 to **less than ₹10** using Voice AI.

The PROBLEM

Government workers at the Panchayat and ward level in Bihar and Jharkhand regularly receive updates about new schemes and policies. However, these administrators sometimes find it difficult to apply these guidelines in their daily work because the instructions are not always clear.

Across thousands of Panchayats and tens of thousands of ward-level workers, the lack of timely, role-specific guidance creates an “information-to-implementation” gap.



The SOLUTION Listen At Scale

“**AI Sachiv-G**” is a voice agent that calls workers, communicates in their own language, and delivers role-specific information. It can handle **49,000** calls in a single day.

“It is responding to the queries aptly. I asked it about 15th FC and it told me about untied grants as well.”



Mukhiya, Giridhi district

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The IMPACT

1 Lakh+ interactions across
141 districts and
16k+ panchayats

Average call duration is
215 seconds

Policy understanding rose from
48-55% in Phase 1 to
95%+ in Phase 2

The PROBLEM

CEGIS Foundation (Centre for Effective Governance of Indian States) works with state governments to understand whether public programs are reaching people. Uttar Pradesh runs a farmer registry that enables access to government schemes and support. However, many farmers had not enrolled, and the government did not know how many or why.

Field surveys take months, and by the time data arrives, the enrolment window has closed and the season has moved on. There is no time left to act. As a result, the gap persists, farmers remain outside the registry, and the government cannot determine whether the issue is awareness, access, paperwork, or something else.



The SOLUTION



CEGIS deployed a multilingual conversational voice system. The Voice AI agents called farmers in Uttar Pradesh and asked two questions: are you enrolled in the farmer registry, and if not, why not?

Farmers responded in their own language, and the system recorded and structured every answer, without field teams, paper forms, or long delays. Within days, CEGIS had responses from over 10,000 farmers, with data available while the program was still running, not after it had ended.

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The IMPACT

10k+ farmers reached by phone

45.7% of respondents were not enrolled in the registry

73.7% of those farmers had never heard of the registry

For the first time, the government could see and respond to the problem in the same season

The PROBLEM

SwaTaleem Foundation works to strengthen girls' education by building engagement between Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya schools and families in underserved communities. For over five years, they used IVR to reach parents across Haryana and Karnataka, ensuring scale but limiting interaction to passive listening, with no way to measure understanding or engagement.

In rural contexts where school-family linkage is critical to retention and safety, this created a blind spot: outreach was happening, but its effectiveness was unknown. The challenge was to move from one-way communication to meaningful participation, without increasing staff burden.



The SOLUTION



SwaTaleem piloted a multilingual conversational voice campaign reaching over 6,500 parents in Hindi and Kannada on practical digital safety topics, including harmful apps, deepfakes, cyber fraud, safe payments, and parental controls. Unlike IVR, parents could respond, navigate structured flows, and share feedback in real time.

Narrative-First Design: Story-led prompts improved retention over quiz-heavy formats

Real-Time Metrics Captured: Interaction, completion, and feedback tracked for instant optimisation

Low-Touch Ops: Higher calls per hour without added staff or scheduling burden

*The 'Listen at Scale' program jointly conceived by EkStep, Sarvam, and AI4Bharat in December 2025 offers up to 10 million free minutes for high-impact use cases.

Example

A parent received a call from their daughter's school. By the end of it, they knew banks never ask for an OTP, only apps from official stores are safe, and unknown links can put their money at risk. They had never been told this before. They asked one question, which apps are safe, and got a clear answer. The call took a few minutes. They said it was useful and easy to understand. This is digital safety education delivered to a parent in a rural community, through a phone call, in their own language, without a teacher, a classroom, or a smartphone.

The IMPACT

6.5k+ parents reached across both states

93% parents engaged

61% active interaction rate

62% task success rate achieved

The PROBLEM

The PHED department of Assam aims to provide clean drinking water to every rural household in the state as part of Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM). It focuses on supplying safe, adequate water (55 LPCD) on a long-term basis, prioritizing water-quality-affected areas, schools, and health centers while fostering community ownership.


While the government invests in laying drinking water pipelines, storage tanks, household tap connections, and pumping infrastructure, the biggest challenge is ensuring the delivery of safe and sufficient water on a regular basis.


The ground truth is often different from what appears in reports there is no real-time visibility available to officers in the capital on actual delivery status, or on the challenges faced by ground teams and citizens alike. The department was looking for gaps and opportunities to improve its program delivery mechanisms.




The SOLUTION

In partnership with EkStep foundation and Arghyam, a Voice AI solution was deployed to collect citizen feedback in rural Assam districts. Initially the areas speaking Hindi were chosen for this pilot.

 **Ganga** is a JJM Voice AI assistant deployed to collect citizen feedback on delivery of water quality, quantity and regularity.

 **Inclusive AI:** Conversations designed for rural telephony, handling noisy backgrounds, interruptions, and local vocabulary.

 **Standard Frameworks:** Implementation of safe, responsible, and respectful AI guidelines to ensure high-quality citizen engagement.

The IMPACT

Pilot successfully completed

2.5k+ calls placed

10k+ questions answered

150 seconds average call duration



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oari
OpenAgriNetwork

kStep

The PROBLEM

The income of a dairy farmer in Gujarat depends on the health, breeding cycles, and milk yield of their animals. Timely veterinary guidance usually requires a field officer or clinic visit. Delays in detecting an undetected illness, a missed heat cycle, or a delayed vaccination lead directly to lost income and reduced productivity.



The SOLUTION



Amul deployed **Sarlaben**, an AI powered digital assistant that allows farmers to receive personalized guidance through a simple phone call. Farmers speak in **Gujarati** to access:

- **Animal Health Advisory:** Symptom-based diagnosis and treatment guidance via voice.
- **Breeding & Heat Detection:** Cycle-tracking and timely alerts through natural conversation.
- **AI Booking:** Farmers can book Artificial Insemination appointments via phone to avoid missed cycles.
- **Personalised Records:** Responses linked directly to the farmer's own cattle profile and history.
- **Inclusive Design:** No smartphone, app, or literacy required; works on any phone.

The IMPACT

61k+ calls so far & average duration of 2 mins

2 Lakh+ interactions with Sarlaben including Voice & Chat

Over 200 farmers have already used Voice AI to book Artificial Insemination appointments for their cattle in 10 days



The PROBLEM

Gram Vaani is a social technology enterprise that focuses on giving people in rural and low-income areas a way to access information on sexual health and mental wellness privately, without sharing their name, through a basic phone call.

These are topics people may not discuss openly not with family, not with a doctor, and not in a community setting. The stigma prevents them from seeking help due to fear of judgment or exposure regarding taboo topics such as sexuality, mental health, etc. In rural areas, this could be far more prevalent. The need is to provide a safe space for people to share openly.



The SOLUTION



Gram Vaani deployed a voice agent, **Riya**, available by phone, in local languages, at any time. People could call and ask about sexual health or mental wellness without identifying themselves, receiving information and continuing the conversation at their own pace.

The service also reached out to past users, signalling that support existed and was safe to engage with. Consent was built into every interaction, if a person chose not to continue, the call ended; if they did, the agent stayed with them.

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The IMPACT

10k+ calls attempted

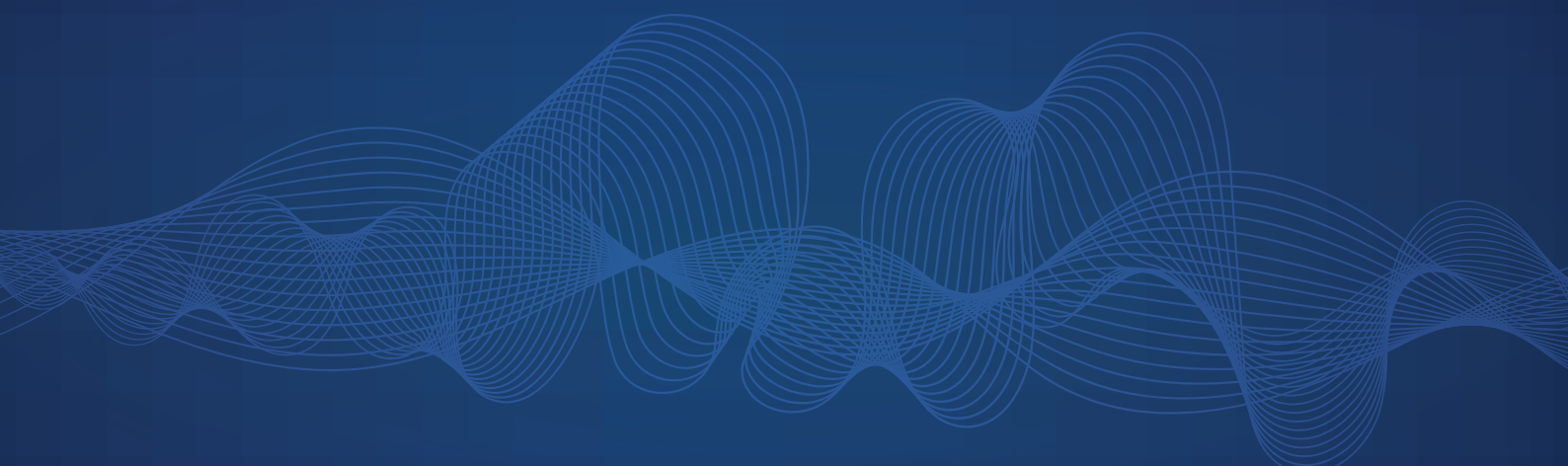
19.6% inbound (self-initiated) interactions

93.4% engagement rate

~25k questions exchanged during the pilot

Example

During one of the calls, the bot reached a rural woman in distress. She asked about suicide, anxiety, irregular periods, and why a wife might not get pregnant after six months of marriage. These are questions most people do not ask out loud - not to a doctor, not to a family member, not to anyone. She asked all of them. In one call. In Hindi. By the end, she had answers on mental health, menstrual health, and fertility. She stayed on the call through every question, expressed her satisfaction, and said goodbye. That is what access looks like when the barrier is removed.



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