

# The Rise of Social Enterprises in India: The Case of DesiCrew

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## Abstract

Gone are the days, Corporates perceived rural India with poverty, illiteracy and agriculture and more specifically as the recipients of their charity. On the other hand, the present day Corporates in India have well understood that they could make fortunes at the base of the pyramid by including the low-income communities into their business operations, therefore derive profits from a largely untapped market and all together, they strive to make substantial social impact also.

Not only the big Corporates, many young entrepreneurs have also put in all the efforts to establish successful social enterprises and transform their business strategy to include the underprivileged rural people as their consumers, employees, producers and entrepreneurs.

DesiCrew Solutions Pvt. Ltd (DesiCrew), a rural BPO company kicked off by the young social entrepreneur Ms.Saloni Malhotra (Saloni), is one among them.

The rural BPO, by converting villages into BPO hubs, strive to bag the large Indian Corporates and multinationals as their clients for providing quality and cost effective back-end services through rural BPO centers.

Started in 2007, with a decentralized business model providing competitive outsourcing solutions to clients and meaningful employment opportunities in rural hinterlands, DesiCrew proved itself as a scalable social business enterprise in just 3 years of its inception.

This case facilitates discussion on the importance of promoting the culture of social entrepreneurship in India. It mainly discusses how DesiCrew, kicked off by the then 23 years old young social entrepreneur Saloni, has evolved into a scalable social enterprise. The case has also been prepared to provide scope for discussion on the suggestive measures that would substantially throw up new possibilities in rural hinterlands for social entrepreneurial ventures.

**Key Words:** *Social Enterprise, Social Entrepreneurship, DesiCrew Solutions Pvt. Ltd, Saloni Malhotra, Rural BPOs, Sustainable Livelihoods, Social Impact etc.*

## Introduction

“Social entrepreneurs can play an important role in setting and implementing stringent quality standards, meeting deadlines and ensuring acceptable labour standards, and can convert seemingly informal sectors into value-based, financially viable enterprises of the poor.”

- **Kalpana Kaul**, Asia Director & Managing Editor, Changemakers

“Most people equate rural India with poverty, illiteracy and agriculture, with the latter representing scores of debt-ridden small land holders on the brink of suicide. Contrary to this perception, I was enthused by images of rural people gainfully employed by technology-driven profit-making enterprises.”

- **Saloni Malhotra**, CEO, DesiCrew Solutions Pvt. Ltd.

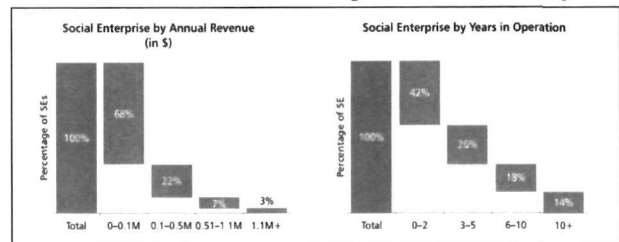
Gone are the days, Corporates perceived rural India with poverty, illiteracy and agriculture and more specifically as the recipients of their charity. On the other hand, the present day Corporates in India have well understood that they could make fortunes at the base of the pyramid by including the low-income communities into their business operations, therefore derive profits from a largely untapped market and all together, they strive to make substantial social impact also.

Not only the big Corporates, many young entrepreneurs have also put in all the efforts to establish successful social enterprises and transform their business strategy to include the underprivileged rural people as their consumers, employees, producers and entrepreneurs in their value chain in a way that would create sustainable livelihoods in rural areas.

As far as India is concerned, the concept of Social Entrepreneurship started gaining tremendous ground over the last decade only. However the revenue size and the year of operation of these social enterprises were comparatively low in India during the last decade.

According to the Beyond Profit 2010 survey, survival of about 68% of Social Enterprises were less than five years and the annual revenue of the 90% of these enterprises were less than \$500,000 between 2009 and 2010 (**Table 1**). It was also observed that one in three social enterprises experienced losses in their operations.

**Table 1:**  
**Social Enterprise Space in India by Annual Revenue and Operational History**



Source: "India Social Enterprise Landscape Report", <http://www.avpn.asia/downloads/india-social-enterprise-landscape-report.pdf>, 2012

However, in the current decade, the social enterprises have witnessed a rapid growing trend. Nearly one-third of the enterprises have grown by over 50%, while only few of the enterprises have declared negative growths during the period.

Central and State Government's initiatives to establish public-private partnerships in key development sectors such as health, education, agriculture, communication, training, energy, financial services, environment, technology, housing, sanitation, job creation etc, have paved room for many social enterprises to be a successful one in India. Establishment of government-backed venture capital funds and streamlined government policies and regulations towards promotion of social enterprises have also resulted in setting up of many enterprises with a focus on underserved/unserved segments of the society.

While addressing India's vast development needs, social enterprises are also very keen on maintaining their sustainability through adopting innovative and viable revenue models. They follow a triple-pronged strategy – on one hand, they address social and environmental needs such as affordable health services and energy, and on the other hand, they build in all efforts to establish a financially sustainable revenue model.

DesiCrew Solutions Pvt. Ltd (DesiCrew) is one among them which, by converting villages into BPO hubs, strive to bag the large Indian corporates and multinationals as its clients. It provides quality and cost effective back-end services to those clients through setting up BPO centers in rural area.

Started in 2007, with a decentralized business model providing competitive outsourcing solutions to clients and meaningful employment opportunities in rural hinterlands, DesiCrew has proved itself as a scalable social business enterprise amidst the challenging business scenario. The rural BPO has achieved many awards and accolades for linking commercial outsourcing with rural set up (**Annexure I**).

It remains to be seen how DesiCrew, kicked off by the then 23-year-old young social entrepreneur Ms. Saloni Malhotra (Saloni), has evolved into a scalable social enterprise through promoting BPOs in rural India.

### **Origin of DesiCrew – An Innovative Social Enterprise**

With a view to pay a close attention to social agenda with rural focus, many well-known IT Enabled Services (ITES) companies like Satyam, Lason India and Hewlett Packard promoted the concept of Rural BPO in India which aimed at linking the Indian rural skill development with commercial outsourcing. These rural BPO centers were set up mainly to cater to the back end needs of their parent companies.

However, with the mounting awareness about the opportunities available at the bottom of the pyramid, many Indian young entrepreneurs attempted to establish commercially viable BPO centers in rural hinterlands which were expected to empower the rural population with a better

source of income (**Annexure II**).

One of the remarkable establishments was DesiCrew. The rural BPO was the brainchild of the young entrepreneur Saloni, an engineer from the University of Pune. DesiCrew's journey started off in 2005 as an incubatee of IIT- Madras's Rural Technology Business Incubator (RTBI). The idea of starting a BPO center in rural area was envisaged by Saloni from Dr. Ashok Jhunjunwala, Professor of Electrical Engineering at IIT-Madras and co-founder of Telecommunications and Computer Networks group (TeNet), a rural BPO centre that has been providing BPO services through Internet Kiosk Network.

It was expected that the establishment of DesiCrew would dramatically transform the way the Indian BPO industry operates, while empowering rural India through sustainable income generation, thereby pioneering a new vision for stimulating inclusive growth in India. According to the Professor "wanted small decentralised BPOs in the rural areas where a maximum of 15 to 20 people work, and those who work should belong to that village."

Impressed by the project, Saloni quit her well-paying job in Delhi and came to Tamil Nadu to take up the research project under the mentorship of Dr. Ashok Jhunjunwala.

Through the research project, Saloni could realize that there is a huge inflow of work into India and a commercial model could be made viable by providing sufficient training to rural youth and setting up the required infrastructure in rural hinterlands. Establishment of DesiCrew would provide meaningful livelihood to rural & semi-urban India through socially responsible business process outsourcing which in turn would result in saving about 40% of the clients' cost.

With this background research, DesiCrew aimed at connecting the three dots; Employment, Rural India and Technology by developing a cost-effective outsourcing model out of rural areas, which would generate employment for the local people (**Figure 1**).

With an initial capital of INR. 5 Lakhs from the personal savings of Saloni, supported by a seed fund grant of INR. 20 Lakhs from a Chennai-based NGO Villgro Innovations Foundation, DesiCrew was incorporated as a private limited company in early 2007 from being an incubatee of RTBI of IIT- Madras.

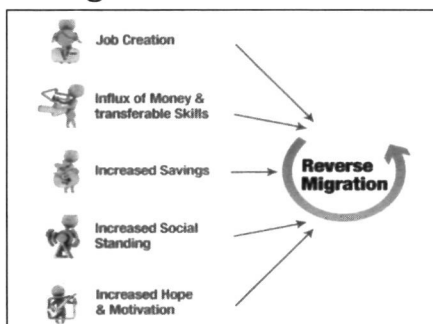
**Figure 1:  
DesiCrew' Team at Chennai Office**



**Business Model of DesiCrew**

With a vision of taking the jobs to the people rather than moving people to where the jobs are, DesiCrew follows a business model called 'Reverse Migration Business Model' where its delivery centers are located at different areas, whilst their work is coordinated at the head of office through technology (**Table 2**).

**Table 2:  
Reverse Migration Model of DesiCrew**



Source: "Social Impact", <http://desicrew.in/social-impact.html>

The functional details of DesiCrew's business model can be listed as below.

**Fund Raising**

Saloni, as a budding entrepreneur, had well understood that the sustainability of a social enterprise depends up on its ability to raise funds through various modes. To raise funds, she approached many Venture Capital providing institutions. Villgro Innovations Foundation, the Chennai-based NGO who helped for the establishment of DesiCrew facilitated the rural BPO to raise an additional INR. 3 Crore as venture fund.

Villgro also provided leadership training to the DesiCrew's workforce and facilitated the rural BPO to conduct the first formal impact assessment study which generated publicity for its work. During that time, DesiCrew could have established only 2 BPO centres.

In order to expand its business operations further through setting up many delivery centres, the rural BPO had to raise funds from various Venture Capital Institutions. Consequently, it raised angel funding in 2008 from Rajiv Kuchhal, one of the founding members of Progeon BPO of Infosys. Followed by angel backing from Rajiv Kuchhal, DesiCrew also raised \$1.2 million in Series B round of funding from Ventureast Fund Advisors India Ltd in 2011. This funding was expected to help DesiCrew to scale up its business operations against all odds, given the fierce competition from large MNCs and seasoned players in the industry.

**Strategic Location**

With the potential of 130 million educated workers in rural India with little or no access to meaningful employment, Saloni attempted to expand economic geographic boundaries by leveraging the local talent pool to provide a competitive advantage to customers.

Increasing attrition rates in the urban BPO centers was another factor for DesiCrew to move to rural and semi-urban locations.

DesiCrew set up a network of micro-centres strategically selected in Tier III towns and villages where there were no computer based/ knowledge related jobs. Locations of these were identified in those regions with a population in the range of 10 to 100 thousands. Each centre was professionally run with a 25 seat facility working in 2 shifts to provide back-end services to global clients. She ensured that their employees live in the area of 5-6 km from the centers.

Saloni envisaged that setting up of BPO centres in rural area would result in cost reduction by owing to lower infrastructure cost and manpower cost as minimal investment in infrastructure was required. Rentals and overheads also tend to be low in the rural areas. According to Saloni "We saw that in smaller towns people were skilled, were educated but they did not have the opportunity or the exposure to go and get a job in the mainstream BPO market. If we could setup smaller 20-30 computer centres in smaller places then they will be closer to home, attrition rate would be lesser, people would be happier and the cost of doing it would be far lesser."

After a thorough research, DesiCrew officially launched its first centre in a village near Bhavani, a small town in Tamil Nadu. Beginning with one delivery centre in the outskirts of Chennai, as of 2013, DesiCrew had totally 5 delivery centres with more than 300 efficient rural-based workers. Four centres in Tamil Nadu at Chennai, Kollumagudi in Thiruvavur district and Appakoodal in Erode district and one in Karnataka at Kaup, Udipi district.

### **Workforce Selection**

With a realization that the rural youth can be as efficient as their urban counterparts, if they are given the right training, DesiCrew recruited the local talent through advertising on local television channels and from local colleges and universities in tier II and tier III cities. Its crew includes graduates, post graduates, MBAs etc (**Figure 2**). It was estimated that the local youth can earn anywhere upto INR.15,000c per month while living close to home. "People are realising that BPOs need not be fancy places in glass and chrome urban settings. And it is a mistake to limit village jobs to entry level," said Ashwanth G., who co-founded DesiCrew back in 2007.

**Figure 2: Workforce of DesiCrew at Various Delivery Centres**



Besides, employees can stay with their family and spend negligible time and money on travel. For an urban employee, a large part of his salary goes in living expenses and maintenance and the money he gives back to home would be lesser. However, the rural employees could save 90% of their salaries as opposed to 10% in the city. Out of the total workforce in rural BPOs, two-third of them is women. It is expected that working in outsourcing industry would substantially provide them earning capability and make changes in their standard of living. "Rural BPOs are also bridging the digital divide and helping village youth, especially young women, become financially stable" said Ravi Manchani, Director of IndiVillage, a rural BPO initiative.

Saloni believed that the success of a rural BPO depends on the capability of its workforce in satisfying its clients which in turn depends on the training provided to them. In order to train the rural workforce, DesiCrew launched DTouch, an internally developed 3-month training program that would train resources on Computer and English skills, parallelly preparing them for the processes.

According to Saloni, "People from the field were excited about the opportunity. Though skilled and hardworking, many were impatient. Training started with computer operations, basic office management, HR practices, data entry and Internet usage". To manage its work orders, the rural BPO plans to expand its workforce to 1000 employees in the coming years.

### ***Clients Network and Distribution Channels***

In case of Corporates-promoted BPOs like Gram IT, Lason India, Wipro BPO etc., the rural BPO centres mainly serves to the back end needs of their parent companies.

However, for DesiCrew promoted by a budding young entrepreneur, it was a tough job to convince the clients around the world that they are offered with a quality work from BPOs operated from villages.

According to the experts, "The challenge beyond scalability would be ability to convince customers that their information is secure and they can get good quality work from the rural part of India. India's metro destinations are sold but the areas which are not in a metropolitan area - one still doesn't know the quality of workforce. So convincing customers around that aspect is going to be the key".

However, Saloni managed all these hindrances and currently the BPO serves around 8 customers including Insurance, Internet and Mobile service providers. Some of its clients include AID India, Give India, IFPRI (USA), HDFC Standard Life Insurance Company, Ziva Technologies, IIT-Madras, IL&FS, Government of Rajasthan, Government of Andhra Pradesh, Apollo Hospitals and two of the largest Internet companies in the world etc.

### ***Services offered by DesiCrew***

In the initial period, DesiCrew started offering digitization services such as data entry and data conversion and then started handling bigger projects (**Table 3**). "We are doing data entries only 30-35% of our total business. We have moved ahead with more knowledge based activities where people are engaged in thinking and doing stuff which requires their mind to be put to use." said Saloni. Currently, it offers added services such as content creation and validation, GIS based mapping services, transcription, mapping of data and handle mobile queries from various parts of the country. It also offers services such as conducting secondary



research for companies, quality checks for top web portals in English and foreign languages and working with a start-up that does search engine on SMS.

**Table 3: Services offered by DesiCrew**

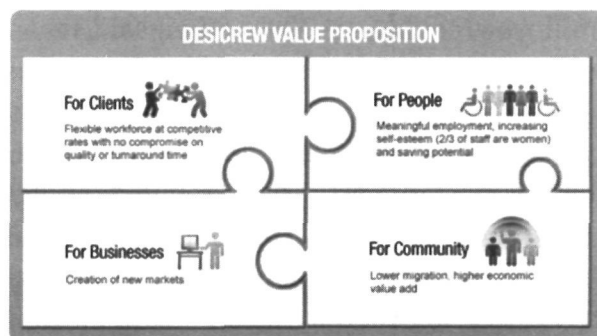
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digitization, Scanning and Data Entry</li> <li>• Transcription</li> <li>• Translation (English and Regional Indian Languages)</li> <li>• Secondary Research</li> <li>• Generate, Populate, and Moderate Content</li> <li>• Live Chat Responses</li> <li>• Mailroom Activities</li> <li>• New Business Set-up</li> <li>• Project Management</li> <li>• Beta Testing of Web Products</li> <li>• Localization of Web Products</li> <li>• Website Monitoring</li> </ul> <p>Source: "DesiCrew Solutions: More than just a typical BPO company", <a href="http://desicrew.in/DesiCrew%20More%20than%20a%20Typical%20BPO.pdf">http://desicrew.in/DesiCrew%20More%20than%20a%20Typical%20BPO.pdf</a></p>
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DesiCrew also provides specialized backend insurance services which results in reducing the overhead costs of the client, thereby improving their margins. According to a client of DesiCrew, "We employed DesiCrew to work on one of our projects purely as an experiment. What was initially considered an experiment with a tentative outcome turned out to be an extremely successful one, spanning an association of over a year and a half and still going!"

Its hybrid-model focuses on providing competitive advantage to its clients in terms of reduced overhead cost, customer-centric, quality and socially responsible business process outsourcing that provides meaningful livelihood to educated people of rural and semi-urban India. The holistic approach followed by DesiCrew resulted in generating business and to generate financial and social returns for all of its stakeholders (**Table 4**). Over the years, the company has evolved into a scalable social enterprise

model and achieved break even point in just 3 years of its inception with more than INR 2 crores revenues generated in the year 2008-2009.

**Table 4: DesiCrew's Value Proposition**



Source : "Why DesiCrew", <http://desicrew.in/why-desicrew.html>

### Social Impact of DesiCrew

By taking commercial business to rural areas instead of bringing a rural workforce to overcrowded cities, DesiCrew has made a tremendous impact on the society. DesiCrew ensured steady employee retention, increased employee savings, provided clients with world-class outsourcing services at competitive prices and ultimately stimulated economic activities within the rural context. Some of the achievements are:-

- ◆ Provides respectable, gainful employment to educated but socially, economically and geographically disadvantaged Indians at their door steps by taking commercial outsourcing to rural hinterlands.
- ◆ Offers rural people with new sources of skill enhancement and new source of income which finally translates into increased confidence and in turn greater aspirations for the future.
- ◆ Out of the total workforce, 2/3<sup>rd</sup> of them are women. Bringing educated young girls and housewives, who cannot traverse distances, into the workforce,

DesiCrew enables the enhancement in their existing household income levels.

- ◆ Provides a greater purchasing power capability and helps improving the life quality of rural migrants who suffer due to relatively low salaries, low savings and higher cost of livings in metros. Employees could use their savings to pay for daily necessities, invest for homes and higher education of their children.
- ◆ Unlike urban BPO centers, the attrition rate in rural BPOs is Zero or low as most of the employees are hired from their home town itself. DesiCrew's attrition rate stands at about 5% p.a, which is much lower than the industry average of 35%. These imply lower turnaround and hence, lower training costs.
- ◆ Rural BPOs have lower real estate and labor costs along with less attrition rate, resulting in costs savings of nearly 40% over their urban counterparts.
- ◆ By creating regular employment to 120 people through a single BPO centre running in two shifts, DesiCrew is expected to substantially contribute to the prosperity of at least 120 families in the village. A village with 400-500 families out of which one-fourth of them is directly benefited by DesiCrew through the job on a monthly basis.
- ◆ In addition, DesiCrew causes a rural economic multiplier effect leading to other services like catering, transport, telephone services etc. Hence there is an additional multiplier effect of 2-3 times of the BPO salaries. So, not only these 120 families get employed, a major portion of their salaries get spent in the village itself. According to the experts, providing BPO jobs to 120 people in a village is equivalent to creating additional 400-500 acres of irrigated farming land in the village.

- ◆ Furthermore, through linking BPO with rural area, the rural talent could stay in rural itself which would result in reducing the brain-drain effect and adding to the development of rural India.

Seeing the performance of rural BPOs, the Tamil Nadu Government has devised a 'restructured rural BPO policy' to attract more entrepreneurs from urban areas to invest in rural areas. "The restructured policy will be devised to attract entrepreneurs to set up their centres in rural areas. By establishing these centres, job opportunities will be created in rural areas on par with urban areas" said R B Udhayakumar, IT Minister, Govt. of Tamil Nadu. Under this scheme, around 2,500 students would be trained necessary skill-set for competing in the global market at the cost of INR. 5 crore.

This intensive training for rural youth is expected to be helpful in the government's proposal on E-District project which aims at taking the government services to the last mile with the departments like revenue, social welfare, backward classes and most backward classes, Adi Dravidar and tribal welfare departments. Following the amendment, the State Government of Karnataka has also planed to amend its rural business process outsourcing (BPO) policy to facilitate investment flow into the districts.

### **Operational Challenges of DesiCrew**

While rural BPOs can help in lowering real-estate costs and help in getting cheaper labour for low-end outsourced work, setting up BPO centres in the remote villages of India is not an easy task. DesiCrew, as an upcoming social enterprise, confronted with many problems in realizing the dream of empowering the rural India through technology and employment. Some of the operational challenges of DesiCrew are:-



### ***Difficulties in developing infrastructure in rural hinterland***

The biggest challenge of DesiCrew is to establish the required infrastructure facilities in a rural setting which should be at par with the client's office in Delhi, Mumbai or Bangalore. It has to face many hurdles due to under-developed infrastructure facilities such as low-speed broadband connectivity, frequent power cuts, poor telecommunications, lack of transportation, less effective education and a general paucity of other support facilities in remote areas. Telecom & Technology costs are also higher as compared to an urban BPO.

### ***Building trust within the community***

Another challenging task for DesiCrew is to establish the concept of a BPO among the rural teams. It has to take all the efforts to ensure with the rural setup that establishment of BPOs in villages would result in the development of rural infrastructure and an increase in standard of living of society. It also faces hindrances in changing the perception in the minds of the people in urban India that work done out of the hinterland would be with the same quality of work done in urban India. Community acceptance in villages is also an obstacle to the establishment of rural BPOs as majority of the workforce is women.

### ***Issues in Talent Management***

Skill up gradation of rural BPO staff is a critical factor for improving service quality level of DesiCrew. More training hours are required by the team heads to make the employees capable enough to handle the back-end services which are at par with the standards expected by the clients. It typically takes between 2 - 4 months to fully train a rural employee, which is almost twice the gestation period of urban counterpart. According to Saloni, "This is a perception. You have to select simple tasks that can be

handled by these BPOs. Due to lack of exposure, the employees in a rural BPO may take additional time in getting trained, but it is doable in an acceptable time frame. For a job that takes two weeks training in an established city will take around 3-4 weeks here."

DesiCrew has to arrange for an intensive training in computer applications, English language comprehension and grammar, and speech and etiquette. DesiCrew's attempt to move from low-end outsourced work to high-end decision-based outsourcing requires a diverse talent pool to be able to meet the needs of the different customers.

### ***Business development***

With the challenges that urban BPOs are facing in terms of growing global competition, escalating costs and high attrition levels, well established Corporates also started seriously venturing into tier II cities and villages to set up rural BPOs. This serious venture by Corporates into rural set up would create tough competition for the rural BPOs established by young entrepreneurs.

With the increasing competition in the BPO industry, DesiCrew, as a social enterprise, find it difficult to convince the global clients with low-end outsourced work. It may also create problems such as financial constraints, issues in skill up gradation and difficulties in creating business through maintaining quality levels.

According to the experts, it is envisaged that the sustainability of DesiCrew with low-end services would become questionable in the coming years. To withstand in the present competitive scenario, it has to offer more value-added services. However, as it may not be possible for DesiCrew in a rural setup, it has to find all ways and means to get a partner in urban center that can offer these services.

Training employees for delivering more high-end services to satisfy the world-class customers also would be challenging in future.

### **The Road Ahead**

As of 2011, there were around 50 odd rural BPOs in India spread across the nation employing about 5,000 rural youth. However, Nasscom, the apex association of India's booming IT and BPO industries estimated that the country could have about 1000 rural BPO centers by 2015. It was also estimated that this massive penetration would provide job opportunities to over 1.5 lakh people from rural area. According to the experts, this estimation has been becoming true with the prospects of rural development in India. It is forecasted that the rural India with a prospect of \$250 billion by 2020 would be the next best destinations for the future of Indian BPO Industry.

Though the cost advantages of moving to rural India are quite obvious, it is envisaged that, DesiCrew as a social enterprise may face a tough competition in near future. In this scenario, Saloni has stepped down as the CEO of DesiCrew in March 2012.

Mr. Manivannan J.K who was the COO at DesiCrew has taken the office of DesiCrew's CEO. Mr. Manivannan J.K is an alumnus of Anna University and IIM Bangalore and was largely instrumental in implementing GramIT – the rural BPO initiative of Byrraju Foundation.

While commenting on the future face of rural BPOs, the Industry experts said that “the next few years could prove crucial for this fledgling business. Several leading companies are expected to commit funds to extract the cost arbitrage available through moving lower end services to the villages. However, for the experiment to transform into a successful business model, state intervention may be required.”

It remains to be seen how DesiCrew as a social entrepreneurial venture would sustain in the highly competitive market while heeding to the untapped potentials of rural India and most importantly to put in their efforts for an inclusive growth pattern in the country.

### **Annexure 1**

#### **Honors and Awards achieved by DesiCrew**

- ◆ DesiCrew had won the Manthan Award for best e-content practices
- ◆ 2nd Runners-up in the BID challenge in the established business category.
- ◆ Saloni was the Runners up as Asia's best young entrepreneur, in an online competition conducted by Business week Asia.
- ◆ Facilitated by the President of India, for its services in localization of educational content.
- ◆ Featured by 'Business Today' magazine as 'India's 10 most wired companies'.
- ◆ Chosen as Global readers' favorite Fast 50 2007 according to Fast Company magazine
- ◆ Saloni was nominated for Business Week's Asia's Youngest Entrepreneurs, MTV Youth Icon 2008
- ◆ E&Y Entrepreneur of the Year 2008
- ◆ Intellectap's Sankalp Awards in the year 2009 for developing a highly scalable business model with social focus
- ◆ Best Women Social Entrepreneur from FICCI.
- ◆ Finalist for 2010 Red Herring's top 100 Asia award, a prestigious list honoring the year's most promising private technology ventures from the Asia business region.

TiE Stree Shakthi Award in 2011

Compiled by the author

## Annexure 2 : Innovative Rural BPOs in India

Rural BPO	Business Models
GramIT	Its model is called in the name of 'Build Own Operate Franchise (BOOF)'. Under this model, The GramIT centers are operated by the foundation and employees are trained by them till the centers attain financial stability. Later these centers become a cooperative society through a process that derisks stakeholders, employees, investors and customers.
Lason India	Lason follows a decentralised business associate model. It is a kind of a franchisee model. The company does not own any specific centers. It provides the hardware and training and manages the quality of the output, while the local owner provides the physical location for running the centers. Supported by Lason, Chida Soft is located in Kizhanur village of Tiruvallur District in Tamil Nadu. Employs graduates from the village involved in coding, data entry and auditing legal publishing.
Rural Shores	The Bangalore-based company has HDFC Bank Ltd as its strategic investor. The company is also in talks with major manufacturing companies to set up its BPO centres near all the manufacturing facilities of the companies. While Rural Shores would provide the technology and training inputs for the centre, the local partner would provide the physical infrastructure
Datamation	It follows a unique private-public partnership business model in rural BPO process with a not-for-profit philosophy. The company owns and operates its centers with the assistance from NGOs in hiring and training a work force from under-privileged sections of society. It also runs Hewlett-Packard's rural BPO initiative, which is part of a bigger project called HP i-Community. Employs about 50 employees in Kuppam (Andhra Pradesh) and in some villages in Uttar Pradesh.
Drishtee	Linking telecentres in its rural BPO model, Drishtee ensures quality of service delivery by leveraging the best available technology besides bringing cost effectiveness to the clients. Drishti-Soft Solutions is a technology partner to Rural Shores, Bangalore.
Sai Seva	The firm based in Puttaparthi has over 50 employees and handles image-based data capturing activity, electronic records creation for investment products, loans etc. This rural BPO has a key client in HDFC Bank.
Comat	Runs 2,000 telecentres and ten facilities across rural India. Comat offers transaction processing services for Orbograph, a leading provider of recognition-centric software and services for the check processing and forms processing markets of the US and hires graduates in villages around Mysore.
TeNet	Provides the services through Internet kiosk network. While TeNet would provide technology and the kiosk owners would be accountable for hiring and managing the work force, ensuring timelines and quality standards, and managing daily operations. This unique initiative has a assortment of services such as typing in English and regional languages, data entry operations, web and multimedia development and regional language translation. Besides, engineering services such as 2D drafting and conversion of 2D to 3D for the manufacturing sector have also been introduced.
Compiled by the author	

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