Ajender Singh Chawla

Senior Development Professional · Programme Evaluation & Design · Capacity Building · Resource Planning & Development · Visual Documentation

Founder, Rural Solutions and Forest Flower Films

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ENGAGEMENT

Assignment-based, multi-month reviews or retainers.

A senior development practitioner with 26 years across the full programme cycle — design, implementation at scale, resource mobilisation, monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL), and visual documentation. I have worked with bilateral agencies, philanthropic foundations, CSR and state governments, and bring a funder-grade lens grounded in field realities.

01 How I can support your organisation

A · ASSESS & DESIGN	B · STRENGTHEN	C · EVALUATE	D · COMMUNICATE
02 **Assessments and programme design**	06 **Capacity building and organisational development**	01 **Independent evaluations**	03 **Documentaries and visual storytelling**
	07 **Thematic expertise in livelihoods and health**	**Partner due diligence and grant and award assessment**	04 **Social media strategy and management**
			05 **Annual and thematic reports**

Numbers refer to Areas of contribution, page 2.

02 At a glance

26 years

GIZ, NABARD, Tata Trusts, UNDP, CARE India, American India Foundation, Azim Premji Foundation, Wipro CSR, and the Governments of Uttarakhand and Rajasthan

IRMA, 1999

Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Management, Institute of Rural Management Anand

Large-scale livelihood programmes

Designed and delivered with UNDP, GIZ–NABARD, Tata Trusts and the Government of Uttarakhand: **200+** community enterprises promoted, and value chains benefiting **9,500+** households

3 end-line evaluations for Tata Trusts

2011–17, alongside reviews for UNDP and the Government of Uttarakhand

₹50 crore+ in enterprise finance

50+ community enterprises and NGO projects made investment-ready and financed under the GIZ–NABARD UPNRM facility

₹20 crore raised in 18 months

From 15 CSR and philanthropic donors, including Axis Bank Foundation, EdelGive Foundation and HDFC Parivartan

Statewide programmes with government

A World Bank–supported citizen database covering **22 lakh** residents, and the statewide launch of a maternal and newborn health initiative in Uttarakhand

World Bank Development Marketplace finalist, 2008

One of 100 projects selected worldwide

03 Areas of contribution

I work alongside donors, CSR foundations and NGOs as an external expert across the programme cycle — from needs assessment and design to evaluation and communication.

01	**Independent evaluations**	End-line and mid-term evaluations as an external evaluator, using mixed methods aligned to OECD-DAC criteria. For funders, also partner due diligence and grant and award assessment.
02	**Assessments and programme design**	Baselines, field-based and needs assessments, translated into programme design with a theory of change, results framework and cost–benefit analysis.
03	**Documentaries and visual storytelling**	Documentaries, end-of-project films, short visual documentation, impact stories and case studies that communicate change to donors, boards and communities.
04	**Social media strategy and management**	Content planning, design and ongoing management that keeps an organisation's work visible to donors and the public.
05	**Annual and thematic reports**	Donor-ready annual reports and thematic and learning reports, written and designed for busy readers.
06	**Capacity building and organisational development**	Strengthening teams in programme management, MEL, proposal development and donor reporting, and thematic skill building for project staff and communities.
07	**Thematic expertise in livelihoods and health**	Subject-matter expert in rural livelihoods, enterprise and value chains, and maternal, newborn and community health.

04 Documentary film

FOREST FLOWER FILMS

Herland for Ibtada · directed by Kallol Mukherjee · produced by Ajender Chawla

Internationally awarded feature documentary on women in Goojarpur village, Rajasthan, claiming the right to work under MGNREGA. World premiere in Moscow; the only Indian film in the main competition of DokuBaku International Documentary Film Festival.

FILMS ON WOMEN'S LIVES

Through Forest Flower Films I have helped develop internationally acclaimed films on women's lives: *Herland*, and *Sad Letters of an Imaginary Woman* (Busan, 2024) and *Secret of a Mountain Serpent* (Venice, 2025). I bring the same craft to documentaries and impact films for NGOs, foundations and CSR programmes.

05 Selected assignments

Independent evaluations for Tata Trusts

2011–17

Evaluations whose recommendations shaped the next phase of funding.

- **Bamboo and natural-fibre livelihoods (2011)** — SHGs and cooperatives in **29 villages**; exit strategy and Phase 3 design (**₹1.38 crore** grant)
- **Medicinal and aromatic plants (2011–12)** — final evaluation
- **Portfolio monitoring (2011–12)** — NGO partners in organic farming and livestock, Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh
- **Integrated livelihoods, two disaster-affected districts (2016–17)** — end-line evaluation of a four-year programme; restructured the enterprise it created

05 Selected assignments *continued*

Blended finance for community enterprises

GIZ and NABARD, 2010–12

Making community enterprises investment-ready for NABARD's UPNRM concessional credit.

- **50+ projects appraised and financed** — **₹50 crore+** in concessional credit
- **SOS Organics, Uttarakhand** — **₹1.5 crore** working-capital loan for Himalayan produce
- **Gorukana, Karnataka** — community-owned wellness enterprise employing Soliga tribal youth
- **Pipeline and partnerships** — investment-readiness for NGOs and producer institutions, including the Aga Khan Foundation; PPP scoping in five states

Building a state bamboo and natural-fibre sector

Government of Uttarakhand, 2003–06

State Livelihood Coordinator, UBFDB, and Managing Director, Uttaranchal Bamboo Development Company.

- **₹5 crore mobilised** — **200+** community enterprises promoted
- **20-year state perspective plan** — investor meets; led the state delegation to the World Bamboo Congress, 2004
- **Skills and markets** — design with NID; sales through Dilli Haat and urban buyers
- **Infrastructure** — common facility centres, including "Ajeevika Vatika"; bamboo housing with INBAR

Livelihood programmes for UNDP

2017–19

- **Ahmednagar, Maharashtra (2018–19)** — five agri livelihood models adding **₹1.5 crore a year** for **2,500 households**; skilling for **3,500 rural women**
- **Sahibganj, Jharkhand (2017)** — SHG needs assessment, feasibility report and first SHG enterprise plans

CSR-funded livelihood development

Azim Premji Foundation and Wipro, 2012–15

- **Wipro CSR's integrated livelihood programme** — designed and led, in disaster-affected districts
- **1,000+ households** — dairy, organic farming, community tourism and crafts
- **250-member state team** — annual planning and review

Large-scale delivery with government

- **Citizen Data Vault, Uttarakhand (2006–08)** — State Project Manager; World Bank–supported biometric database of **22 lakh** residents at **99.7%** accuracy
- **Bhamashah, Rajasthan (2008–10)** — State Head; **200+** team built a panchayat-level banking network; **1,000** rural women trained to run village banking points

Resource mobilisation for grassroots organisations

2021–26

- **Ibtada, Alwar** — **₹20 crore in 18 months** from 15 CSR and philanthropic donors, including Axis Bank Foundation, EdelGive and HDFC Parivartan
- **Rootbridge Services** — **₹2 crore+** in individual giving for CRY, Oxfam and others; **500** fundraisers trained

06 Institutions I have worked with

A career spanning the field, the state, the funder and the fundraiser.

Bilateral and multilateral agencies	GIZ (UPNRM, with NABARD and KfW) · UNDP (Maharashtra and Jharkhand) · World Bank–supported Citizen Data Vault, Uttarakhand · DFID-supported hill livelihoods programme (SPWD)
Foundations and trusts	Tata Trusts and Himmotthan · Azim Premji Foundation · American India Foundation (MANSI maternal and newborn health) · L&T Public Charitable Trust
Government	Government of Uttarakhand: Bamboo & Fibre Development Board, Department of Urban Development and ITDA, Health Department · Government of Rajasthan: Bhamashah financial inclusion programme, with IL&FS
International NGOs	CARE India (health and nutrition programmes in Udaipur and Bhilwara)
Grassroots organisations and fundraising	Ibtada · Aajeevika Bureau · Jan Sahas · Rootbridge Services (for CRY, Oxfam, Breakthrough and others) · Umeed

07 Education and recognition

- Post Graduate Diploma in Rural Management, Institute of Rural Management Anand (IRMA), 1997–99
- B.Sc., Meerut University (now CCS University), 1993–96
- **Finalist, World Bank Development Marketplace 2008, Washington DC** — one of 100 finalists worldwide, with Umeed, for a proposal on internet kiosks and community radio stations in mountain villages
- Led the Government of Uttarakhand delegation at the World Bamboo Congress, New Delhi, 2004, covered in the press

08 Contact

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