

Annual Report

2024 - 2025



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Introduction & Context

The Synodical Board of Social Services (SBSS) has been a source of hope and service since 1984. Committed to promoting socio-economic development, SBSS works to uplift some of the most marginalised communities across India. Our work is guided by a firm belief in people-led change, so that every person, regardless of religion, caste, creed, colour or community, can lead a life of dignity and purpose. With over four decades of experience, SBSS has become a trusted partner in addressing the most pressing challenges faced by the poorest communities. We focus on livelihood enhancement, employment, food security, education, water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), nutrition and overall well-being. Our initiatives are currently spread across five states (Punjab, West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra), where we work with local communities, government departments and like-minded organisations to create lasting change.

We believe real progress is more than economic growth. It also means community ownership and self-reliance. Our programmes give people the skills and knowledge to improve their own lives and contribute to their communities. Through a collaborative approach, we keep people and their needs at the centre of everything we do.

2024-2025 at a glance

The year 2024-2025 was a year of recovery and renewed growth for SBSS. After the denial of our FCRA registration in April 2024 slowed our field activities, the registration was restored in September 2024. From then on, teams, volunteers and community partners who had stayed committed through the uncertain months moved quickly to regain momentum. Nutrition gardens, organic farming, women's livelihoods, education, clean drinking water and sanitation all saw a strong expansion, and this year records our highest reach of the three years.

Our Priorities

In 2015, the United Nations General Assembly adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to be achieved by 2030, with the aim of ending poverty, protecting the planet and ensuring peace and prosperity for all. India is a signatory and uses these goals to guide its policies and programmes on national development challenges. SBSS's programmes are also designed in line with the SDGs. Of the 17 goals, SBSS works on five, as follows:

1. Income Generation & Asset Creation (SDG 1- No Poverty and SDG 8- Decent Work and Economic Growth)

SBSS works with Poorest communities to identify their economic issues and facilitate solutions to their livelihood problems through various income generation activities.

- Women Self-Help groups are trained in different alternative livelihoods
- Agriculture: small and marginal farmers are engaged in organic farming for increased incomes.
- The youth in the community are trained with different skill building workshops for employment and career development.

2. Ensuring Good Nutrition (SDG 2- Zero Hunger)

SBSS works to improve the nutritional status of young children and women of reproductive age; by ensuring access to benefits under Government schemes like ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme), by helping communities develop nutrition gardens to provide nutritious food to families as well as through other social security schemes.

3. Facilitating Quality Education (SDG 4-Quality Education)

- Creating awareness in the community on the importance of education to lower the dropout rate, especially among girl children, and
- ensure effective functioning of schools in the village as per the Right to Education (RTE) Act.
- 12 Children's clubs and children's libraries are formed to enhance their creativity, personality, and communication skills.

4. Working on SDG 5- Gender Equality

- Ensuring women and girl children live with dignity and respect without facing any gender discrimination.
- They should gain equal access to education, health, sanitation and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

5. Access To Safe Drinking Water & Sanitation (SDG 6- Clean Water and Sanitation)

SBSS works to ensure that communities

- To access to safe drinking water and toilet facilities under the Government's Jal Shakti Mission and Swachh Bharat Abhiyan.
- Awareness building programs are conducted to create awareness in the community on open defecation, sanitation, good menstrual hygiene for women and girls, water conservation, and preservation.

Area of Operations

70+ employees and specialists working at 10 project offices, 2 program support offices, and a Head office.

The team comprises of staff from Program, Finance, Communication and Administration. Along with these 300 volunteers assist SBSS teams in village development work.

Beneficiaries	Female	Male
Children in the 0 - 6 years age group	11,643	12,858
Children in the 6 - 18 years age group	33,266	37,512
Adult Population	51,338	54,829
Total	96,247	1,05,199

SBSS has its registered office (head-office) at New Delhi and two Program Support offices at Pune (West) and Bhubaneswar (East). 10 project offices are at different locations with teams comprising of 5-10 members each.

The Programs team comprises of field staff, referred to as CEs (Community Enablers), responsible for regular community engagement and facilitate change processes at the grass root level. The coordinators provide guidance to the field team in daily operations and consolidate all data and information, reporting to the Program Officers at the regional level. The Programs team, alongside the Finance and Communications team, reports to the Chief Coordinator of SBSS.

Programmes

The work of SBSS in 2024-2025 was shaped by the renewal of its FCRA license. After the application for renewal was denied in April 2024, SBSS promptly submitted a fresh application, and in September 2024 the Ministry of Home Affairs granted CNI SBSS a fresh FCRA license. Until then, funds for field activities were limited, so the field teams concentrated on work that depends on community mobilisation rather than budget: awareness campaigns, school and village-level meetings, Church Mission Engagement workshops, youth and volunteer engagement, and linking communities with government schemes. Staff, volunteers and community groups stayed committed through these months. Once the license was granted, funded work resumed, and SBSS regained its momentum and expanded across all its programme areas. This year records the highest reach of the three years.

The four projects launched in 2023-2024 (Let My People Go – 2, Community Development: From Margin to Many – 2, Socio Economic Development of Women and the Jharkhand Food Security Project) continued through the year. A new project, Community Development: Fullness of Life, began on 1 October 2024 in Simdega and Khunti districts of Jharkhand, in the blocks of Bano and Torpa, covering 20 villages. It focuses on organising communities at the local level, helping them claim their rights and building people's collective agency. It aims to reach 18,161 people directly and 14,591 people indirectly.

Organic farming

Organic farming and allied activities continued to be the core of our livelihood work. 300+ farmers were supported this year in organic farming and allied activities such as poultry, goatery, piggery and fisheries, with annual earnings of more than INR 70,000, across Nagpur, Kolhapur, Chotanagpur, Kolkata, Barrackpore, Durgapur and Phulbani. This takes the number of farmers reached since 2022-2023 to 600+. 50 more demonstration plots were developed, taking the total to 100, for live demonstrations and for building the capacity of other small and marginal farmers in the villages.

Food security and nutrition

SBSS continued to address food security and nutrition disparities among marginalised communities through knowledge building and behaviour change on dietary habits, monitoring of the nutrition levels of children below 6 years and women of reproductive age, and awareness of inter-generational malnutrition together with government-run ICDS centres. Nutrition interventions reached 2,500 children (0 to 6 years) and 1,750

women this year, taking the totals since 2022-2023 to 5,000 children and 3,500 women. 2,500 additional nutrition gardens were developed, taking the total to 5,000, to promote dietary diversity and a balanced diet.

Nutrition awareness campaigns were held in 50 villages, with more than 2,500 people taking part. Creative mediums were used to promote hygiene behaviour: washing hands with soap before eating, after defecation, after handling children's faeces and after looking after sick people, ending open defecation, and managing solid and liquid waste responsibly.

Government schemes and partnerships

SBSS works to improve the reach of government welfare schemes to people from marginalised communities, irrespective of caste, creed, colour or community. Families received benefits under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS), Mid-Day Meal (MDM), Right to Education (RTE), Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), pension schemes for widows, the elderly and persons with disabilities, the Public Distribution System (PDS), Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY), Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY) and other schemes of the central and state governments.

SBSS networked with Krishi Vigyan Kendras in West Bengal, Jharkhand, Odisha and Maharashtra to train farmers in innovative organic farming techniques, and with ICDS centres for the development of children and mothers. We also worked with different agencies and government departments to provide skill development and capacity building for women and youth.

Engaging youth in community nutrition

Youth are among the most dynamic forces in any society. Creative, energetic and willing to question the status quo, young people are a bridge between childhood and adulthood. Recognising their potential to influence sustainable development, SBSS has involved them in leading village development initiatives, with a strong focus on community nutrition.

SBSS identifies and trains interested village youth as Youth Resource Persons (YRPs). With leadership training and technical knowledge, YRPs measure the height and weight of children and women, maintain community nutrition gardens, and regularly visit Anganwadi Centres for practical exposure. These visits also open conversations with mothers and adolescents about nutrition and health.

Beyond these roles, YRPs organise and lead nutrition meetings with their peers to discuss challenges, share learnings and plan strategies suited to their villages. Their voluntary participation has empowered them and contributed to community-driven improvements in nutrition.

Nutrition has been a core theme for SBSS over the years, through targeted campaigns, spot-feeding programmes, focused workshops, partnerships with Anganwadi Centres and the promotion of nutrition gardens that add fresh vegetables and herbs to daily diets. Through these youth-led, community-based efforts, SBSS continues to build healthier villages and a new generation of grassroots leaders.

Women's economic empowerment

SBSS supported the economic empowerment of women by helping them access government schemes such as MGNREGA and its guarantee of the "Right to Work". Entrepreneurship development, linkages between women-run SHGs and banks, markets, government institutions and schemes, and technical support helped improve lives in disadvantaged communities. This year, 1,500+ women were engaged in alternative livelihoods and small businesses through 300 SHGs and direct livelihood support, and 3,229 households were engaged in MGNREGA work. Since 2022-2023, 3,000+ women have been reached through 600 SHGs.

Education

SBSS continued its work in education, with 5,657 children attending government schools regularly and receiving benefits under the Right to Education. Through the campaign "Hamaare Bacche, Hamara School", our awareness efforts reached 12,000+ community members and children, 78 villages, 5,500 children in 86 government schools and 880 School Management Committee members. The campaign encouraged families to send their children to school and helped activate school management committees under the RTE Act.

Water and sanitation

SBSS worked to ensure that communities have access to clean drinking water within 500 metres of their homes, and that all households can access and use toilets with water available. Community meetings and campaigns raised awareness of personal hygiene, sanitation, menstrual hygiene for women and girls, and water conservation. This year, 2,500 households gained access to drinking water sources within 500 metres, through new connections and restoration of old ones, and 1,018 households gained toilets at home, through new construction and restoration. Together with the previous two years,

this takes the totals to 5,000 households with drinking water sources and 2,036 households with toilets. There has been a significant reduction in water-borne diseases.

Church Mission Engagement (CME)

CME continued as a process in various dioceses, in which diocesan leadership, congregation members, community leaders and other stakeholders take part, with emphasis on building awareness among pastors, lay leaders and church members from a development perspective. 18+ workshops were held across the dioceses on social development issues, and 360+ pastors, lay leaders and congregation members were trained this year. Together with 2023-2024, this takes the totals to 25+ workshops and 500+ people.

Youth

SBSS sees youth as an important stakeholder and workforce for holistic development. 50 youth were trained in vocational skills as drivers, mechanics, beauticians, tailors, electricians and mobile repairers, according to their choice, taking the number trained since 2022-2023 to 100. SBSS also continued to build the capacity of 150 Youth Resource Persons this year, taking the number to 300 since 2022-2023. They take part in village-level campaigns and help SBSS teams raise awareness on different development themes. They also engage with faith leaders to promote peace and harmony in the community. Sports events and the celebration of cultural and national events organised by these groups helped bring communities together.

Future Plan

1. Exploring new avenues for resource mobilisation

Securing foreign funding is becoming harder as government control over it increases, and this is a challenge for the whole development sector in India. Our own experience of the FCRA denial in April 2024, and the months of limited funds that followed, showed how much our work depends on it. Although the license was restored in September 2024, CNI SBSS recognises the need to sustain its programmes through alternative sources of funding. We already have several successful development models, but new opportunities must be explored. We aim to identify domestic funding sources, build partnerships with corporates under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and engage with government ministries such as:

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- Ministry of Jal Shakti
- Ministry of Education
- Ministry of Youth Affairs

At the same time, we will continue to nurture our long-standing relationships with mission partners.

2. Strengthening local capacities within CNI SBSS

As the Development and Justice Board of the Church of North India, CNI SBSS is committed to strengthening its own capacities on an ongoing basis. We will focus on building skills in:

- Development perspective
- Programme management
- Financial planning and monitoring
- Risk management
- Thematic knowledge
- Leadership and peace-building

These efforts will strengthen our organisational systems and help Dioceses and community organisations sustain long-term development processes.

3. Moving towards self-reliance

To serve the poor, needy and marginalised fully, CNI SBSS must become self-sustaining. We plan to start income-generating projects and explore innovative approaches to reach this goal. We will also strengthen our networks with the Synod, Synod-related trusts, institutions, church leaders, congregations, friends and partners, and invite them to join this mission of development and justice. We also aim to set up an endowment fund to secure our financial sustainability for the future.

4. Empowering youth

We have begun engaging youth in communities and see them as key stakeholders, because their involvement can bring positive change to their own lives and to society. To deepen their participation, we will continue to offer training and capacity-building opportunities. Our vision is for young people to become ambassadors of peace and development who promote harmony and collaboration in their communities.

5. Expanding our reach

CNI SBSS is currently active in 12 of the 28 Dioceses of the Church of North India and sees a clear opportunity to grow. We are in the process of extending our work to three new Dioceses, starting with the most pressing issues that people there face. As we grow, we will also seek additional funding to support and sustain these new initiatives.

6. Upholding transparency and accountability

Transparency and accountability have always been core values at CNI SBSS, and they have built strong, trusting relationships with our stakeholders. For us, accountability is a choice driven by values, not just a requirement. We are committed to maintaining and raising these standards as we work towards our mission and vision.

Strategic direction: deepening sustainability

Looking ahead, CNI SBSS's three-year strategic focus is on deepening sustainability in the villages we serve. We aim to consolidate our learning and scale successful models, including:

- Decentralised seed banks
- Low-cost composting and waste management systems
- Climate-resilient agriculture

We will also increase youth volunteerism, encourage greater community ownership, and promote environmental stewardship and soil restoration.

Conclusion

SBSS continued to stand with the communities it serves through a year of uncertainty over funding. Even while the FCRA license was awaiting renewal, our teams kept working on awareness, education, nutrition, sanitation, youth engagement and linkages with government schemes, so that the communities we serve were never left on their own.

In September 2024, the Ministry of Home Affairs granted CNI SBSS a fresh FCRA license. What had seemed impossible only months earlier was made possible through God's grace and providence. Funded work resumed, and our activities grew quickly across nutrition gardens, organic farming, women's livelihoods, education, clean drinking water and sanitation. In October 2024, the project Community Development: Fullness of Life began, with the aim of organising communities at the local level and strengthening their collective agency.

We give thanks to the Lord Almighty, whose boundless wisdom and strength have enabled us to embrace the calling of His mission. In the midst of challenges, His guidance opened a way forward and helped us chart a renewed course for CNI SBSS.

We are also grateful to our valued partners (Bread for the World, USPG, Change Alliance, Kerk in Actie, Presbyterian World Service & Development, FMSF, ACT Alliance, CASA, CPA, and all others) for their lasting support, trust and companionship over the years.

We acknowledge with deep appreciation the dedication and perseverance of the staff, and of the volunteers and Youth Resource Persons, of CNI SBSS. Their commitment remains a source of strength and inspiration as we move the organisation forward. With prayerful hope, we seek the Lord's continued direction, that CNI SBSS may have the faith and courage to venture into new paths and respond to His calling in ever more impactful ways.

S.No	Benefits Received	Number of Beneficiaries
1.	Organic Farming Technical/Financial Support	600+ Farmers
2.	Demonstration Plots showcasing Organic farming and allied activities	100 Households
3.	Supplementary Nutrition through ICDS	5000 children (0 to 6 yrs) and 3500 women
4.	Nutrition Garden – Technical and Financial Support	1000 Households (total 8000)

S.No	Benefits Received	Number of Beneficiaries
5.	Alternative Livelihood Support and training	3000+ women engaged in alternative livelihood and small businesses. 6458 HH engaged in MGNREGA work
6.	Training and Awareness on importance Education	11314 children regularly attending schools. Awareness campaigns reached 12,000+ community members and children, 78 villages, 5500 children of 86 Government Schools, 880 School Management Committees members
7.	Training and Awareness on importance of Clean Drinking Water	2231 Households gained access to clean drinking water
8.	Training and Awareness on importance of using toilets to prevent open defecation	800 Households gained access to toilets
9.	Vocational Training for Youth	30 youth trained (total 200)
10.	Church Mission Engagement (CME)	25+ workshops; 500+ pastors, lay leaders and congregation members trained

Governing Body

Mr. B.B. Baskey, Chairperson

Mr. Surendra Nanda, Vice Chairperson

Mr. Soumya Ranjan Mohanty, Chief Coordinator & Secretary

Mr. Manjur Halder, Treasurer

Mr. Sumit Gupta, Member

Mr. Subrata Gorai, Member

Mr. Srinivas Chopade, Member

Ms. Lopamudra Mistry, Member

Dr. Vinita Eusebius, Member

Mr. Joshua Rathnam Chinthala, Member

Mrs. Sushma Kumar, Member

Ms. Shona Thangavel, Member

Ms. Prita Samantroy, Member

Mr. Lal Bahadur Kamble, Member

Mr. Matthew CP, Member

Ms. Parvesh Mattu, Member

Ms. Anima Ekka, Member

Dr. D.J Ajith Kumar, Member

Mr. Pradeep Kawah, Member