



Charles Sturt
University

Parul[®]
University



The Community-Based
Global Learning
Collaborative
Asia-Pacific Hub

Global Social Impact Project 2025

Project B: Steps to Stronger



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Social Impact Projects



Introducing Global Social Impact Projects in 2025

The Global Social Impact Projects represent an innovative evolution of Charles Sturt University’s work-integrated learning model, now extending beyond Australia to create meaningful international partnerships and cross-cultural collaboration that establish an international profile for the region.

Building on the success of our 2024 domestic Social Impact Projects, the 2025 Global program expands our reach through the establishment of the Asia Pacific Hub for Community-Based Global Learning Collaborative. This strategic initiative creates a regional hub connecting our community partners with an international network of North American universities and community organisations, fostering community-based global learning initiatives across regional Australia and the Asia Pacific region.

The Asia Pacific Hub advances Charles Sturt University’s Education Strategy Vision by creating authentic global learning experiences that develop students’ Graduate Learning Outcome of Global Citizenship – demonstrating the capacity to work effectively in a global world across social, cultural, economic, geo-political and environmental contexts. Through partnerships with educational institutions, NGOs, and industry partners across the Asia Pacific, the hub integrates community-based global learning projects directly into our curriculum, providing students with hands-on, real-world international experience.

A cornerstone outcome of this initiative is students participating in Global Social Impact Project internships through our partnership with Parul University in India. These students collaborated with international peers on social justice issues within local Indian communities, applying their global citizenship capabilities in authentic cross-cultural contexts.

These projects continue supporting the National Priorities Industry Linkage Fund (NPILF) through Case Study 1’s work-integrated learning initiatives for regional communities, while now expanding into Case Study 3 by strengthening international collaborations with global industry and community partners. This dual approach creates a truly global learning ecosystem that addresses universal social challenges while respecting cultural diversity and local contexts, embodying Charles Sturt’s “Empower Communities” theme of “Partnering for real regional solutions” with global impact.



Strategic alignment with Education Strategy Vision

The Global Social Impact Projects directly align with Charles Sturt University's Education Strategy themes, demonstrating how our international initiatives support the university's core mission of creating real-world experiences that drive regional outcomes with global impact.



Empower communities

Global collaboration for local impact

Connects communities across the Asia Pacific to identify universal challenges like climate change and resource scarcity. Develops innovative solutions with broader regional and global impact through strategic international partnerships and community-based learning initiatives.



Inspire students

Authentic global learning experiences

Provides work-integrated learning that develops essential skills, attitudes and professional networks through meaningful international collaboration. Creates inclusive pathways supporting students from all backgrounds in accessing transformative global educational opportunities and career development.



Be exceptional

Innovation for global educational reach

Strategically selects cutting-edge technologies that enhance global learning environments and enable seamless international collaboration. Provides innovative spaces for testing emerging educational technologies within authentic community-based projects and cross-cultural learning experiences.

Charles Sturt's commitment to "real-world experiences" and "working alongside communities to solve challenges that drive regional outcomes with global impact" provides strong institutional backing for positioning global social impact projects as core to the university's educational mission.

Program expansion for 2025

Global reach: The 2025 program connected Charles Sturt students with Parul University in India, undertaking their Indian Summer School Program in June

Key features:

- Stackable 2 credit point subjects for students undertaking EMP subjects
- 80 hours of WIL for students completing the subject (multiple EMP subjects)
- Cross-cultural competency development

The Global Social Impact Projects offer students unprecedented opportunities to engage with a diverse array of international stakeholders, including academics, industry experts, individuals with lived experiences from different cultures, and peers from various disciplines, undergraduate and post graduate, across the globe. This expanded exposure broadens their understanding of global community needs and fosters meaningful cross-cultural connections.

These projects are designed to be flexible, responsive, and culturally adaptive, allowing students to co-design projects that address real-world community challenges while learning about different cultural approaches to social issues. This innovative global approach enriches the learning experience exponentially and prepares students for increasingly international professional roles.

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

The Global Social Impact Projects in 2025 partnered with Parul University in India (**SDG17 - Partnerships for the Goals**) to work in local communities on projects addressing six United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. Each student group focused on different SDGs for their specific project's mission.

Students engaged in hands-on project development, combining traditional Indian knowledge systems with academic frameworks to co-design practical solutions that communities identified as priorities for their own development.

1 NO POVERTY



2 ZERO HUNGER



3 GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



4 QUALITY EDUCATION



6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



15 LIFE ON LAND



17 PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



Professor Janelle Wheat

Pro Vice-Chancellor

Division of Learning and Teaching

Charles Sturt University



Dr. Preeti Nair

Director

Center for International Relations and Research

Parul University



Welcome to the inaugural Global Social Impact Projects program.

As we expand our successful 2024 domestic program to an international scale in 2025, we embrace the opportunity to create positive and lasting solutions through global collaboration and cross-cultural innovation.

The landscape of tertiary education continues to evolve, and our 2025 Global program represents a step forward in international education partnerships. These changes provide unprecedented opportunities for our students, community partners, and international collaborators to co-design solutions to social justice issues that transcend borders.

Together, we are translating creative ideas into actionable solutions that align with our Charles Sturt values and our ethos Yindyamarra Winhanganha – ‘The wisdom of respectfully knowing how to live well in a world worth living in’ – now shared across cultures and continents.

Special recognition goes to Dr. Faith Valencia-Forrester from Charles Sturt University and Dr. Preeti Nair from Parul University, for their leadership in transforming our local success into a global initiative. Their dedication to international and cultural collaboration has made this ambitious undertaking possible.

It is with great pride that I welcome you to the Global Social Impact Projects Program 2025, an international initiative that fosters collaboration and innovation around the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). I would like to acknowledge Professor Janelle Wheat, Pro Vice-Chancellor of the Division of Learning and Teaching, and Dr. Faith Valencia-Forrester from Charles Sturt University for their vision and leadership in making this global initiative possible.

The program focuses on competency and capacity building through intercultural experiences, helping both students and faculty members develop essential skills such as social adaptability, cross-cultural understanding, empathy, teamwork, leadership, and strategic decision-making. Participants gain opportunities to acquire new skills, enhance existing ones, and engage meaningfully with diverse perspectives.

At Parul University, we are committed to nurturing socially conscious leaders among both students and faculty members, and this program reflects that mission by uniting participants to foster cross-cultural understanding and create impactful solutions.

Together, we aspire to inspire a generation of changemakers – students and faculty members alike – who will champion sustainability, social justice, and intercultural collaboration, creating a future where innovation, compassion, and global competence transcend borders.

Sustainable Development Goals Implementation

Sustainable development has been identified as one of the most critical global challenges facing communities worldwide, particularly in rural and developing regions.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a comprehensive framework for addressing complex social, economic, and environmental challenges. However, meaningful implementation requires collaborative, grassroots approaches that engage local communities and leverage diverse perspectives and expertise.

The Social Impact Project India aims to facilitate international student collaboration and cross-cultural learning to develop awareness of complex sustainable development challenges and generate innovative, culturally-appropriate solutions for implementation in local village communities.

Our focus centres on building practical understanding of sustainable development implementation through direct community engagement. Within this focus, we strive to investigate effective approaches to SDG implementation, understanding what works in local contexts and why successful interventions take hold.



Sewing enterprise: At a sewing social enterprise in one of the more developed villages, students witnessed community members producing surgical hats for local hospitals. This enterprise demonstrates how vocational training can address both economic needs and essential community services.

Objectives

Professional practice	<p>Build discipline-specific competencies and professional capabilities through real-world application of knowledge and skills in international development contexts, fostering evidence-informed and reflective practice that prepares students for meaningful contribution to their chosen professions</p> <p>Develop lifelong learning mindsets by engaging with complex, multi-faceted challenges that require continuous adaptation, critical thinking, and professional growth throughout the international placement experience</p>
First Nations cultural safety	<p>Examine power, privilege, and cultural dynamics through critical reflection on colonial legacies, cultural safety practices, and social justice principles as students engage with diverse communities and examine their own positionality in international development work</p> <p>Apply cultural safety frameworks learned from First Nations perspectives to cross-cultural engagement in the Indian village context, promoting respectful, equitable partnership approaches</p>
Global citizenship	<p>Develop global competency and cross-cultural collaborative skills for addressing complex sustainable development challenges across social, cultural, economic, and environmental contexts in rural community settings</p> <p>Apply global citizenship knowledge, skills, and values through direct engagement with international partners, community members, and complex global challenges, building capacity to work effectively across diverse geo-political and cultural environments</p>
Sustainable and ethical practice	<p>Engage in ethical decision-making and sustainable practice by critically balancing social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors in solution design, ensuring approaches support ecological health, thriving communities, and individual wellbeing for current and future generations</p> <p>Develop and implement sustainable development initiatives through community-centered design and participatory approaches that respect local knowledge systems and promote long-term community resilience</p>

Rationale

The United Nations reports that achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda requires accelerated action in rural and marginalised communities where progress has been slowest. These communities face interconnected challenges spanning multiple SDGs, requiring integrated approaches that address education, health, economic opportunity, and environmental sustainability simultaneously. International collaboration enables knowledge exchange and innovative problem-solving that benefits both visiting and local participants while developing locally-appropriate solutions that respect cultural contexts and community priorities.

Approach

The project enhances sustainable development understanding through community-based international collaboration aligned with Charles Sturt University’s Education Strategy Vision 2030. Students develop SDG-focused initiatives in partnership with Parul University students and community members through Collaborative Innovation Solution Sprints responsive to local village priorities.

This approach develops cross-cultural professional practice through multidisciplinary international teams focusing on interconnected SDGs relevant to community needs. Students engage in meaningful dialogue about sustainable development challenges while implementing culturally-appropriate solutions that address community-identified priorities.

The project embodies Charles Sturt’s signature themes of *Building career journeys through experiences, partnering for real regional solutions (applied internationally), and meeting students at their place of learning.*

This is achieved by:

- **Cross-cultural professional practice development** through multidisciplinary international teams of students divided into two working groups, each focusing on three interconnected Sustainable Development Goals relevant to local community priorities, with embedded reflection on cultural safety and ethical practice
- **Global citizenship in action** through meaningful cross-cultural dialogue between international students, local university partners, and community members about sustainable development challenges, power dynamics, and collaborative approaches to social justice
- **Evidence-informed collaborative design processes** that support students in developing innovative, culturally-appropriate ways to address community-identified needs across multiple SDG areas, integrating sustainable and ethical decision-making frameworks
- **Professional experience through direct implementation** involving hands-on project development and community engagement during the international placement period, with structured reflection on professional practice and lifelong learning
- **Knowledge sharing and critical reflection** with innovative solutions and lessons learned published as resources for future international development initiatives and academic programs, including analysis of cultural safety, global citizenship, and sustainable practice applications



Traditional cooking demonstration: Students engage in a traditional cooking demonstration, gaining hands-on experience with local culinary practices. This cultural activity provided deeper understanding of daily life and traditions in the communities where they conducted their research.

Key partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Academic partners: Faculty from Charles Sturt University and Parul University• Community partners: Village leaders, organisations, and residents• Student participants: International and local students across multiple disciplines• Development practitioners: Local NGOs, and professionals
Primary activities	<p><i>Collaborative Innovation Solution Sprints</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pre-departure preparation and professional development: Cross-cultural competency training incorporating cultural safety frameworks, SDG education, global citizenship development, and ethical practice in international development contexts• Community immersion and reflective practice: Direct engagement with village communities to understand priorities and existing resources, with structured reflection on power dynamics, cultural positioning, and ethical considerations in cross-cultural collaboration• Collaborative solution design with sustainable practice focus: Working in mixed international/local teams to develop context-appropriate interventions that balance social, cultural, economic, and environmental factors for long-term community benefit• Professional implementation and evidence-informed practice: Testing and refining solutions during international placement with continuous reflection on professional learning, cultural safety application, and sustainable practice principles• Critical evaluation and global citizenship reflection: Documenting outcomes and sharing learnings with academic and development communities, including critical analysis of global citizenship development, cultural safety practices, and sustainable development approaches



Project B: Steps to Stronger

Project Overview

Steps to Stronger is a transformative collaborative initiative designed to empower Indian villages through sustainable, community-driven development aligned with United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This comprehensive project improves rural quality of life through targeted interventions in health, education, water & sanitation, and climate action across Ambali Village, Madheli Village, and surrounding Gujarat communities.

Our multi-village approach encompasses intensive field visits, comprehensive surveys, and deep community participation, bridging the urban-rural divide by mobilising educated youth as catalysts for meaningful change. Through comparative analysis with Australian rural development models, we provide unique global perspectives demonstrating how local realities shape universal development goal implementation.

The project's significance lies in demonstrating that sustainable development occurs through relationships, trust-building, and sustained engagement rather than isolated interventions or top-down programming approaches.

Vision

To create a network of empowered, self-sufficient Indian villages with universal access to healthcare, education, clean water, and sanitation while preserving cultural heritage.

Mission

We bridge the urban-rural divide through collaborative engagement between institutions and communities, implementing evidence-based, culturally relevant interventions addressing fundamental development challenges while providing transformative learning experiences.

Values

- **Community empowerment through collaboration:** Fostering genuine partnerships where academic expertise and grassroots wisdom create innovative, culturally appropriate solutions with community-led development.
- **Cultural sensitivity and respect:** Honouring local traditions, customs, and knowledge systems, recognising sustainable development must build on cultural understanding and indigenous practices.
- **Evidence-based impact:** Grounding all interventions in thorough research, comparative analysis, and data-driven decision making ensuring measurable, sustainable outcomes.
- **Youth leadership and engagement:** Recognising young people as change catalysts, focusing on school children and women as key drivers of community transformation.
- **Global learning and knowledge sharing:** Contributing to international rural development understanding by comparing experiences, sharing lessons, and building worldwide community bridges.



Beauty salon social enterprise: Students observe vocational training at a community beauty salon, one of several social enterprises supported by Parul University. This initiative provides young women with marketable skills to either secure employment or establish their own businesses, contributing to local economic empowerment.

Methodology and approach

Phase 1: Preliminary survey and infrastructure assessment




Students conducted comprehensive infrastructure evaluation across multiple villages through systematic data collection methodologies, examining educational facilities, water distribution systems, sanitation infrastructure, and community spaces. They developed detailed photographic documentation protocols while implementing infrastructure gap analysis frameworks that established baseline conditions. This systematic approach enabled identification of priority intervention areas while facilitating comprehensive stakeholder mapping that captured key decision-makers and community influencers across different social hierarchies.

Phase 2: Comparative problem identification and analysis

Through multi-village comparative analysis methodologies, students examined local enterprises, educational initiatives, and infrastructure variations to reveal common challenges alongside successful community innovations. Cross-village comparison frameworks identified transferable best practices while documenting existing successful initiatives that demonstrated inherent community capacity. Students analysed economic opportunities and constraints systematically, enabling the design of contextually appropriate development interventions that built upon existing local strengths and addressed structural barriers.

Phase 3: Community engagement and direct implementation

Students delivered community interventions through culturally appropriate engagement methods, including youth awareness sessions on health and environmental topics through interactive programming. Nukkad Natak (street theatre) performances served as culturally resonant communication that promoted SDG-aligned behavioral changes while generating community discussion. Informal hygiene education sessions provided practical knowledge with resource distribution, establishing cross-generational dialogue and community ownership.

Sustainable Development Goals		
SDG	Challenges	Approach
<div>SDG 2: Zero Hunger</div> <div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Food security varies significantly across villages with agricultural productivity challenges affecting household nutritionLimited access to diverse, nutritious food sources constraining community health outcomesSeasonal variations creating hardships for vulnerable populations including children and elderly	We promote comprehensive sustainable agricultural practices integrating traditional knowledge with modern techniques, systematically connect communities with government food security schemes including PDS and MGNREGA programs, and build local capacity for improved food production, preservation, and nutrition education through community gardens and local food networks.
<div>SDG 3: Good Health and Wellbeing</div> <div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Persistently low health awareness particularly among older adults relying on traditional remedies without modern healthcare accessLimited emergency healthcare services creating life-threatening situations with insufficient village infrastructureHigh prevalence of lifestyle-related health issues including alcoholism and tobacco consumption undermining community outcomes	We implement comprehensive hygiene awareness sessions targeting all age groups with culturally appropriate materials and methods. Emergency healthcare improvement initiatives work with authorities enhancing response capabilities, while community health education builds preventive care capacity. Substance abuse programs address lifestyle challenges through peer support and professional guidance.
<div>SDG 6: Clean Water and Sanitation</div> <div></div>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Insufficient water management systems affecting daily life and agricultural productivity with cascading health and economic impactsLack of proper sanitation facilities particularly impacting women's dignity and safetyPoor waste management creating significant health and environmental hazards with limited clean drinking water access	We facilitate community water filtration system implementation providing sustainable clean water access, while advocating for JAL JEEVAN MISSION expansion ensuring piped water supply reaches every household. Public toilet construction promotion addresses sanitation with attention to women's safety, while comprehensive waste management development includes infrastructure improvements and community education.

Impact and outcomes

• Student learning

Students developed practical competencies in community engagement, cross-cultural communication, and sustainable development implementation directly translating to professional capabilities. Cultural competency enhancement through direct rural community exposure built empathy and deep understanding of complex development challenges impossible to gain through classroom learning alone, preparing students for development and community engagement careers.

• Community benefits

Improvement in community understanding of government schemes, health practices, and development opportunities led to increased uptake of available resources and services. Enhanced community engagement through sustained dialogue and collaborative problem-solving across social groups built cohesion and collective efficacy. Improvements in hygiene practices and educational engagement created foundations for continued progress.

• Institutional impact

Development of a replicable framework for academic-community partnerships created models applicable across rural India and similar contexts with documentation institutions to implement versions. Evidence-based recommendations for rural development policy improvement contribute to broader discourse, while strengthened global development understanding enhances international collaboration and sustainable partnerships.

Future directions

The Steps to Stronger framework provides comprehensive templates for similar academic-community partnerships across India and developing nations with flexibility for local adaptation while maintaining effectiveness and community ownership principles.

Project findings inform advocacy for improved policy implementation mechanisms, particularly bridging gaps between policy formulation and ground-level execution through evidence-based rural development programming recommendations.

Ongoing support for emerging local leaders ensures gradual leadership transition to community members while maintaining university partnership and technical support.



Hindi language learning: Students participate in Hindi language lessons led by the Campus Director as part of their cultural immersion experience. Language learning formed a crucial component of their preparation for effective community engagement during the Social Impact Project.



Cultural performance activities: Faculty of Fine Arts students present traditional Indian dance, puppet shows, and fashion displays for the visiting cohort. These cultural exchanges enhanced cross-cultural understanding and provided insight into the rich artistic traditions of the region.

Project Team

Charles Sturt University students

Ramona Weston

Studying a Bachelor of Arts



Overall, this experience was incredibly valuable and rewarding, and I am eternally grateful to have learned so much about Indian culture, social issues, and cross-cultural communication. The cultural activities, in particular, added so much depth and helped me understand the context in which we were working, which in turn allowed me to engage with the project more thoughtfully and respectfully.

D'Kodia Laine

Studying a Bachelor of Communication (Public Relations)



This experience has been one of the most meaningful and transformative journeys I've taken, both personally and professionally. I'm deeply grateful for the opportunity to learn from the communities, leaders, and peers who generously shared their time, stories, and insights with us. Being immersed in such a complex and vibrant cultural landscape reminded me of the power of connection, the importance of humility, and the value of listening with intention.

Jessica Anderson

Studying a Bachelor of Arts



I feel incredibly grateful to have been part of something so profound and to have walked away feeling more connected to myself, to others, and to the world I hope to contribute to. I learned a great deal not only about the world, but about myself, as a student, a team member, and a person navigating difference. Some of these lessons were pleasantly surprising, while others invited honest reflection and growth. Socially, I learned more about how my neurodivergence affects the way I process group dynamics, energy levels, and communication.

Nicholas Parnell

Studying a Bachelor of Accounting



As I reflect on this experience, I feel incredibly thankful for the opportunity to have participated in the Indian Summer School program. I'm especially grateful for the hospitality and generosity shown by the communities in Ambali Village, the faculty and staff at Parul University, and the many individuals who welcomed us so openly into their lives and culture. This journey has deepened my understanding of social impact, broadened my perspective as an accounting student, and reminded me of the importance of humility, empathy, and mutual respect in all forms of learning and service.

Project A: Ambali Village

Working alongside Parul University students, Ramona and Jessica formed the foundation of the Ambali Village project team, tackling the complex challenges of poverty, education access, and environmental sustainability through targeted SDG interventions.

Project B: Steps to Stronger

D'Kodia and Nicholas collaborated with Parul University students in the Steps to Stronger initiative, delivering community interventions from youth awareness sessions to street theatre while addressing health, nutrition, and water access challenges.



Anitha Sunkara
Disciplines: Language Sharing, Art & Activity Workshops, Traditional Attire Days, Collaborative Projects.
I was drawn to this program because it fosters meaningful cultural exchange, allowing students to learn from one another's traditions while building global perspectives and lasting friendships.



Dr. Aakash Pareek
Master's in Hospital Administration (Parul Institute of Public Health)
I was excited to participate in the Indian Summer School program because it offers a unique opportunity for cross-cultural learning and collaboration. Interacting with students from different country not only broadens my global perspective but also allows me to share insights about India's healthcare systems, public health challenges, and cultural richness. This program fosters mutual understanding, academic growth, and lifelong connections.



Dr. Urva Vasavada
Masters in Hospital Administration at Parul University of Public Health
I was drawn to the Indian Summer School because it represents a dynamic platform that blends education, cultural exchange, and experiential learning.



Mohomad Kalim Ansari
Parul Institute of Social Work (MSW)
I was very interested in this summer school program 2025 because of it gave me opportunity to work on SDGs in rural communities with international students and also contribute to meaningful community development work.



Pranjal Sharma
MSW Semester 3
I was particularly interested in The Indian Summer School 2025 in collaboration with Charles Sturt University, Australia because it provided a unique opportunity to engage in cross-cultural collaboration on real-world challenges.



Shawn James
Master of Hospital Administration at Parul Institute of Public Health
As someone who designs visual content focused on SDGs, I saw it as an ideal platform for fostering cross-cultural academic exchanges between Indian students and Australian delegates, enriching perspectives on global health challenges.



Richu Issac
Operations Management, Master of Business Administration - MBA



Snigdha Nath
Parul Institute of Social Work (MSW 3rd Semester)
I joined this program to collaborate with international peers, exchange cross-cultural ideas, and contribute to meaningful community development. I was also excited to work towards the Sustainable Development Goals.



Vikrant Bharti
Parul Institute of Social Work. (MSW)
I was interested in this program because it gave me the chance to work with international participants, share ideas across cultures, and contribute to meaningful community development work.

Additional participants of the program but not shown above:

Faculty of Social Work	Faculty of Management Studies	Parul Institute of Public Health
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rapunzel FernandesJihnesh Solanki	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Shreyash PatelStavan ParmarJay OzaJinilgir Gauswami	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Birupaksha BiswasMaitry Shah

Detailed Program

Program overview



Participants

4 students from Charles Sturt University



Duration

Two weeks



Host

Center for International Relations & Research, Parul University, India

Week 1: Orientation & cultural immersion

Day 1 Sun, June 22	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Arrival: Airport pickup and transfer to campus accommodation
Day 2 Mon, June 23	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Traditional welcome ceremony at campus temple, inaugural orientation• Afternoon: Icebreaking session, campus tour• Evening: Welcome dinner at multi-cuisine restaurant
Day 3 Tues, June 24	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Participant introductions, three academic sessions on sustainability initiatives by different faculties (Social Work, Management, Public Health)• Afternoon: Group formation and SDG-based brainstorming activity• Evening: Cultural activities including fashion show, puppet show, and Indian dance
Day 4 Wed, June 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Village immersion field visit exploring rural development practices• Afternoon: Group reflection and documentation of observations
Day 5 Thurs, June 26	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Presentation by Social Responsive Cell Head, field visit to SRC centres• Afternoon: Indian games and festivals exposure• Evening: Local market visit and street shopping in Vadodara City
Day 6 Fri, June 27	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Hindi language session, group discussion on village visit observations• Afternoon: Hands-on Indian arts workshop (Henna, Rangoli, block printing)
Weekend June 28-29	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free days with CIRR support for travel planning and assistance



Week 2: Deep learning & implementation

Day 8 Mon, June 30	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: UNESCO Heritage site visit to Champaner• Afternoon: Lakshmi Vilas Palace tour (Royal Family residence)• Evening: Poicha Temple visit• Dinner: Multi-cuisine restaurant
Day 9 Tues, July 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Early morning: Yoga and meditation session• Morning: In-depth village data gathering field visit• Late morning: Indian cooking workshop• Afternoon: Additional Hindi session, strategic implementation discussions
Day 10 Wed, July 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Action plan execution in real-world village settings• Afternoon: Free time for presentation preparation• Evening: Dinner at Swagat Niwas Restaurant
Day 11 Thurs, July 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Mock presentation day with group presentations• Afternoon: Free time for final preparation
Day 12 Fri, July 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Morning: Final presentations to jury panel• Closing ceremony:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Traditional Indian attire dressing- Open mic participant reflections- Certificate distribution- Souvenir presentation- Faculty acknowledgement- Director's closing address• Afternoon: Photoshoot and video testimonials• Evening: Farewell dinner
Weekend July 5-6	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Free days with CIRR support for travel arrangements

Key program components

Academic focus

- Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)
- Rural development practices
- Social responsibility initiatives
- Cross-cultural management approaches

Cultural immersion

- Traditional welcome ceremonies
- Hindi language instruction
- Indian arts and crafts workshops
- Local games and festivals
- Yoga and meditation
- Traditional cooking experience

Field experience

- Multiple village visits
- Community development observation
- UNESCO heritage site exploration
- Local market engagement
- Real-world action plan implementation

Assessment and documentation

- Group presentations
- Peer reflection sessions
- Strategic implementation discussions
- Video testimonials and documentation

Learning Outcomes

Cross-cultural competencies developed



Cultural awareness

- Understanding diverse approaches to social issues
- Recognition of cultural factors in problem-solving
- Appreciation for traditional and indigenous knowledge systems
- Sensitivity to different communication styles and preferences



Global citizenship

- Development of international networks
- Understanding of global interconnectedness
- Ability to work across time zones and cultural boundaries
- Commitment to international social justice



Professional skills

- Virtual collaboration across cultures
- Cross-cultural communication
- International project management
- Global perspective on local issues

Future Directions

The Global Social Impact in Cambodia

Through the Global Social Impact Project, we are funding 6 students to participate in a transformative program in Battambang, Cambodia, developing globally competent graduates through authentic community partnerships addressing real social challenges. Students can participate via two pathways: Digital Inclusion and All Abilities, delivering measurable community outcomes while developing students' intercultural capabilities, professional networks, and global citizenship competencies.



Program Framework: 2-4 weeks | 2-6 credit points
Strategic partnership with Challenges Abroad



Global Partnerships in Action

Written by Dr Faith Valencia-Forrester

Academic Lead, Designer and Developer for the Social Impact Projects

Division of Learning and Teaching | Charles Sturt University



Every day during our inaugural Global Social Impact Projects collaboration with Parul University in Gujarat, India, I was overwhelmed by gratitude for this transformative experience. What we achieved wasn't traditional study abroad – it was genuine community-based global learning that prioritised authentic partnership over cultural tourism.

The power of authentic partnership

Rather than arriving with predetermined projects, our students worked alongside Indian communities to address locally identified priorities. This approach created space for mutual learning that challenged all our assumptions about international education and demonstrated the true potential of our Global Social Impact Projects model.

The Parul University campus pulsed with energy that reinforced why physical presence matters. There was unmistakable vibrancy that virtual learning cannot fully replicate – while digital tools expand access, our time at Parul reinforced the unique value of shared spaces and spontaneous encounters.

Reciprocal learning in action

When invited to present about collaborating on Social Impact Projects, I discovered I learned as much as I shared. The exchange was genuinely reciprocal – Parul University's perspectives on community engagement and educational innovation offered fresh frameworks for our own work. Their whole-hearted commitment to community engagement creates distinctive conditions for authentic partnerships.

In the villages we visited, I was struck by the warmth and genuine welcome from people whose circumstances differed vastly from my Western context. This wasn't about romanticising poverty but recognising that joy, community, and human connection transcend economic conditions in ways that challenge assumptions about development.

What makes this approach different?

Our Global Social Impact Projects collaboration demonstrates an alternative to extractive international education through:

- **Community-defined priorities:** Working on projects communities identify as crucial
- **Long-term relationship building:** Establishing ongoing institutional partnerships
- **Mutual learning:** All participants simultaneously teaching and learning
- **Cultural humility:** Acknowledging we have much to learn from local knowledge systems

Connecting to Charles Sturt's vision

This collaboration directly advances our Education Strategy Vision 2030 by empowering communities through authentic partnerships, building career journeys through experiences, and developing Global Citizenship capabilities. Students returned with enhanced cross-cultural competencies and deeper understanding of their global responsibilities.

Looking forward

The students who participated will carry these insights into their careers, embodying “high-impact practices” that transform perspective. They've experienced what it means to engage across cultural differences with respect, curiosity, and humility – skills desperately needed in our interconnected world.

This experience represents broader transformation in international education. Our model suggests that genuine partnership characterised by shared decision-making and mutual benefit creates results that benefit everyone involved. The transformation goes beyond adding international experience – it fundamentally shifts understanding of our place in the world and responsibilities to one another.

This collaboration exemplifies Charles Sturt University's commitment to authentic global partnerships that honour diverse knowledge systems while addressing real community priorities. Our Global Social Impact Projects model demonstrates that meaningful international education happens when we approach it with genuine humility and commitment to mutual learning.

Dr Faith Valencia-Forrester

Acknowledgements

Center for International Relations and Research Team, Parul University



Dr. Preeti Nair
Director



Ms. Aalisha Umer
Officer



Mr. Aditya Singh
Officer

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) Strategy Team, Charles Sturt University



Dr. Faith Valencia-Forrester
Academic Lead



Kirsty Munn
Project Officer



Rebecca Hambilton
Communications Officer



Michelle Apps
Data Systems Officer



Sabrina Forlin
Partnerships Officer

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to Parul University, their staff and students who made the 2025 Global Social Impact Projects both a success but most importantly welcomed our students with open arms. The success of this global initiative demonstrates the power of international education partnerships and the universal nature of social impact work. Together, we are building a more connected, culturally aware generation of leaders.



Dr. Preeti Nair | Director
Center for International Relations and Research



Dr. M. N. Parmar
Dean
Faculty of Social Work



Dr. Bijal Zaveri
Dean
Faculty of Management Studies



Dr. Parthasarathi Ganguly
Director
Parul Institute of Public Health



Mr. Gautam Narayan Patil
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Social Work



Ms. Meghavi Vilas Garud
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Social Work



Dr. Younis Mohammad Malik
Assistant Professor
Faculty of Management Studies



Dr. Sapna Chauhan
Assistant Professor
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