SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS
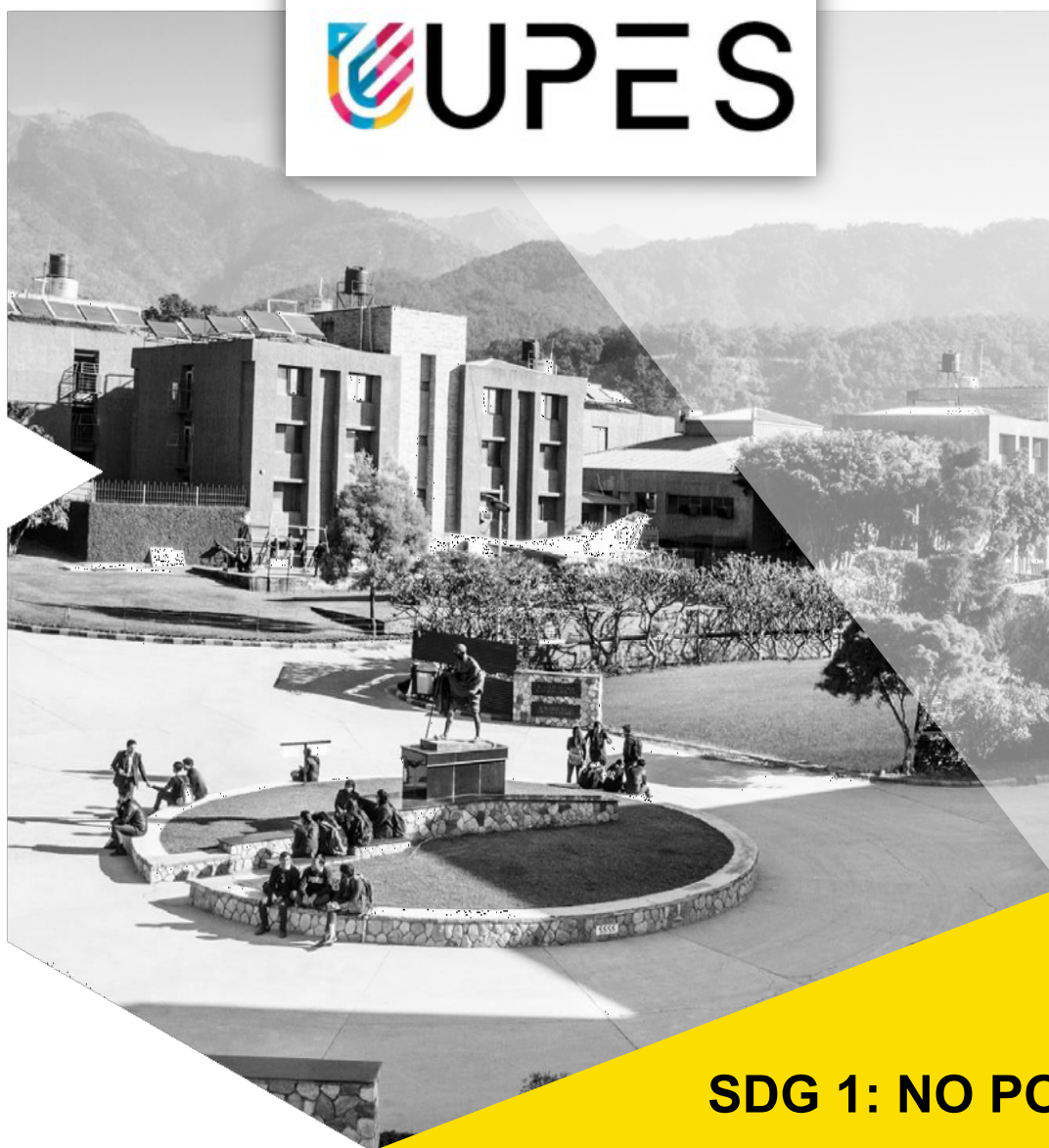
UPES

SDG 1: NO POVERTY

2025

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SDG 1: NO POVERTY

UPES University's Contributions to SDG 1: No Poverty (Impact Report)

This report outlines how UPES University (Dehradun, India) supports **UN Sustainable Development Goal 1: No Poverty**, highlighting key initiatives and outcomes from the past five academic years. UPES has adopted a multi-pronged approach – providing financial aid to students in need, engaging in community upliftment programs, fostering economic empowerment through education and skills, and conducting research to inform policy and practice. The following sections detail UPES's efforts, with metrics and examples demonstrating the university's commitment to poverty alleviation.

Financial Support for Economically Disadvantaged Students

UPES is dedicated to ensuring that financial hardship is not a barrier to higher education. The university offers extensive scholarships, fee waivers, and other aids targeted at students from low-income backgrounds:

Need-Based and Merit Scholarships

In the 2023-24 academic year alone, UPES awarded ₹46 crore in scholarships, benefiting 6,844 students [1]. These include merit-based awards as well as need-based support for those from economically weaker sections [2]. In fact, the scholarship schemes cover over half of the student body each year, reflecting a broad reach of financial aid. UPES explicitly earmarks scholarships for *meritorious students, high achievers, and those from economically weaker sections*, thereby reducing the financial burden on disadvantaged learners [2]. Uttarakhand state residents receive a 33% tuition fee concession as a domicile benefit, and top-performing students can earn up to 100% tuition waivers on merit [3].

"Shakti" Scholarships for Women

UPES launched the *Shakti* scholarship program in 2020 to support female students' education. Eligible female students (60% or higher in Class 12) receive up to 30% tuition fee waivers, and since 2020 this program has benefitted more than 6,000 women across multiple states [4]. By its fourth year (2023), Shakti had reached thousands of young women – students like Yashasvi Tiwari attest that the financial assistance "made it easier to achieve her higher education dreams" [4]. This initiative not only promotes gender equity but also eases the economic strain on families, many of whom are from low-income backgrounds.

Full Freeships under Project Jyoti

In 2022, UPES introduced *Project Jyoti*, offering **50 full scholarships (freeships)** to students from economically weaker sectionspioneeredge.in. These scholarships cover 100% of tuition (and in many cases hostel fees as well) for underprivileged students who might otherwise be unable to afford collegepioneeredge.infinancialexpress.com. The Vice Chancellor, Dr. Sunil Rai, noted that UPES provides scholarships "for girl students, to the underprivileged, to sportspeople and more because we believe financial worries should not stop them from chasing their dreams"pioneeredge.in. *Project Jyoti* ensures that dozens of high-potential youths from low-income families can access a UPES education each year without any tuition cost.

"Project Protsaahan" (NGO Partnership)

Since 2018, UPES has partnered with the Purkal Youth Development Society (a local NGO) to fully sponsor higher education for select underprivileged students. Through *Project Protsaahan*, 15 students from impoverished families have received full scholarships (100% tuition, hostel, and related fees) to pursue degrees at UPES. UPES covers all expenses – tuition, housing, uniforms, laptop, etc. – for these students throughout their course duration. This program, institutionalized in 2019, supports two new students every year and provides an annual bursary of ₹10–15 lakh per student, including stipends during internships. Many beneficiaries are first-generation college students coming from meager means, yet they have excelled with UPES's support. As Rahul Nainwal (Director–CSR at UPES) observes, these youths have *"transformed and are now leading fulfilling lives… this initiative not only provides access to education but also empowers young minds to dream big and achieve their goals, regardless of their background."*. For example, one Protsaahan scholar from a rural farming family is now pursuing a career in cybersecurity, and another became an engineer with a top firm – tangible outcomes of breaking the poverty cycle through education.

Other Targeted Aids

UPES also offers a *"Student Financial Support"* scheme and reserved scholarships for special groups. For instance, 25 seats are reserved each year for children of armed forces and paramilitary personnel (many of whom come from modest backgrounds) with tuition concessions [1]. Additionally, UPES runs an *Alumni Scholarship* and *Employee Ward Scholarship* to ease education costs for those with financial need, and a *Sherryl Kintu* scholarship in memory of a student, which often goes to deserving candidates with hardship. All combined, these initiatives ensure that 55%+ of UPES students receive some form of financial assistance annually, enabling thousands of economically disadvantaged students to enroll and succeed in higher education [1] [2].

Community Outreach and Services

As a university with a strong social mandate, UPES actively engages in community outreach programs that directly benefit local populations experiencing poverty. These initiatives range from basic needs provision (food, healthcare, legal aid) to educational and capacity-building programs in neighboring communities:

Rural Upliftment ("Utthan" and Village Development)

UPES participates in the Government of India's *Unnat Bharat Abhiyan* (UBA) by adopting nearby villages and driving development projects. Through its flagship community program *"Utthan"*, UPES has impacted approximately **155 families** in rural areas around Dehradun. The Utthan initiative, listed under UBA, involves trust-building with villagers, needs assessments, and implementing projects to improve living conditions. UPES students and faculty have organized at least **three free medical camps** in village clusters, bringing healthcare services to underserved residents. During the COVID-19 lockdown, UPES also distributed emergency **ration kits to 1,000 migrant worker families** (about 4,000 individuals) in six rural locations [3]. Each "Dry Ration Family Pack" contained 8–10 days of essentials for a family of four, providing critical food security in a time of crisis [5]. Furthermore, Utthan volunteers delivered **household necessities** and conducted development workshops in villages, helping sensitize communities on hygiene, nutrition, and education. These efforts alleviate immediate hardships (hunger, health issues) and lay the groundwork for longer-term poverty reduction in the adopted villages.

Educational Outreach and School Support

Believing that education is key to breaking the poverty cycle, UPES runs outreach programs for local schools and children. The university has *adopted eight government primary schools* in the vicinity of its campus, providing infrastructural and academic support [3]. Projects under the *"EDUDHARMA"* social initiative have impacted over 100 families by improving education in underprivileged communities [3]. For example, *Project Bodh* focuses on enhancing learning outcomes in those adopted primary schools, while *Project Abhilasha* identifies meritorious students from marginalized rural areas and brings them to UPES for a month-long free residential coaching camp to bolster their Physics, Chemistry, and Math skills [3]. These camps prepare underprivileged students for competitive engineering entrance exams, dramatically expanding their higher education opportunities. Another effort, *Project Samvedna*, operates a day-care and learning center for the children of migrant construction workers employed on UPES campuses [3]. This free day-care ensures that toddlers and young kids of laborers (mostly low-income, transient families) receive nutrition, early education and care while their parents work, preventing neglect and enabling the parents to earn a livelihood. In addition, UPES students volunteer as mentors and tutors for local underprivileged schoolchildren – via student clubs and NSS (National Service Scheme) activities, they provide after-class tutoring, career guidance, and motivational workshops in nearby slum and rural schools . These educational outreach initiatives not only improve academic performance and aspirations among poor children, but also encourage them to view education as a pathway out of poverty [6].

Healthcare and Well-Being Services

UPES extends basic healthcare and well-being services to the community free of cost. Besides the medical camps under Utthan, the university's faculty and students (notably from the Pharmacy and Health Sciences school) conduct health check-up camps and wellness drives in villages and government schools [3]. They have organized general health screenings, eye check-ups, and menstrual hygiene awareness sessions for women, distributing free menstrual cups in an effort to eliminate "period poverty" [3]. UPES also hosts annual *blood donation camps* and has facilitated an "Assessment of Nutritional Status" survey across three districts of Uttarakhand to inform public health efforts [3]. During the pandemic, the university launched a 24×7 tele-counseling helpline (*We Care*) for mental

health support, which was extended not only to students and staff but also to local community members dealing with stress or trauma [3]. Moreover, in collaboration with healthcare platforms, UPES offered free telemedicine consultations (via "Practo" online services) to anyone in need, enabling poor families to access medical advice at no cost during COVID lockdowns [3]. All these efforts contribute to healthier communities and reduce the out-of-pocket burden of healthcare on the poor.

Legal Aid and Advocacy

Through its School of Law, UPES provides free legal aid services to economically disadvantaged people in the region. The UPES Legal Aid Clinic (in collaboration with the District Legal Services Authority) operates twice a week at the Kandoli campus, where local residents can walk in and receive legal advice at no charge [7]. Law faculty and trained student volunteers assist villagers with resolving legal issues, filing applications for government benefits, and understanding their rights. The clinic also conducts outreach – for instance, in December 2018, UPES organized a *"Legal Aid cum Awareness Camp"* in village Dunga (Prem Nagar), focusing on children's Right to Education [7]. Judges, lawyers, and UPES law professors educated villagers about free education laws and other welfare schemes, and the Legal Aid Cell members addressed individual grievances on-site [7]. They even distributed free booklets on common laws and rights. This camp (and others like it) helped empower rural families with knowledge about government programs (such as RTE Act benefits) and provided one-on-one legal consultations for resolving issues – all at no cost to the participants [7]. By raising legal awareness and offering pro bono legal support, UPES helps marginalized communities access justice and entitlements, which is crucial for protecting them from exploitation and poverty. Notably, the UPES Legal Aid Cell has won recognition for its community service, setting a model for law schools' role in social justice.

Donation Drives and Relief Efforts

UPES's student clubs and departments regularly conduct drives to support the needy. Over the past five years, students have organized winter clothing donation campaigns for homeless persons in Dehradun, food distribution drives in slum areas, and fundraising events for disaster relief. According to the university's SDG report, such student-led initiatives occur every year – from collecting food, clothes, and books for orphanages and flood-affected families, to volunteering time in old-age homes [6]. These activities not only provide material support to vulnerable groups but also inculcate a strong sense of social responsibility in UPES students. The cumulative impact is a university community that is deeply embedded in helping the surrounding population mitigate the effects of poverty.

Employment and Economic Empowerment Initiatives

UPES recognizes that education must translate into employability and sustainable livelihoods to truly lift people out of poverty. The university therefore emphasizes job placement for its graduates, entrepreneurship development, and skills training programs that extend to both students and local community members:

High Job Placement Rates

Ensuring that students (especially those from low-income backgrounds) secure gainful employment is a top priority. UPES's Career Services division runs robust placement training, career counseling, and industry networking programs. As a result, **100% of all eligible UPES graduates were placed in jobs in 2025**, with over **800 companies** (including Fortune 500 firms and startups) recruiting from campus [8]. This stellar placement record – an average annual placement rate above 90% – means that students who enter UPES from disadvantaged backgrounds have an excellent chance of landing well-paid jobs immediately after graduation. For instance, UPES alumni have secured positions at top companies like Microsoft, KPMG, Reliance, and Adani, with some earning international salaries (one alumnus earned ₹1.3 crore per annum at Atlassian) [8]. To achieve this, UPES provides **personalized career guidance, pre-placement bootcamps, and internships** for students, grooming them in technical skills and soft skills [8]. The university also partners with government and industry for job fairs and apprenticeship programs targeting final-year students. By delivering strong employment outcomes, UPES helps its graduates – many of whom are first-generation college-goers – to attain financial independence and support their families, thus breaking the inter-generational cycle of poverty through stable careers.

Entrepreneurship Support

In addition to placements, UPES fosters an entrepreneurial mindset so that graduates can create jobs for themselves and others. The campus hosts a startup incubator and entrepreneurship cell that provides seed funding, mentorship, and business development support to student and alumni entrepreneurs [8]. Notably, some UPES students from humble origins have launched small businesses and social enterprises with university support. UPES also runs an annual Business Plan Competition and has tie-ups with incubators like Runway Incubator to accelerate ventures. While these initiatives benefit all students, they are especially empowering for those from poorer backgrounds who may choose entrepreneurship to generate income in their communities. Moreover, through *Project Vikalp* (detailed below) and other social enterprise projects, the university extends entrepreneurial training to rural women, encouraging them to start micro-businesses. This dual focus on job placement and entrepreneurship ensures that UPES graduates have multiple pathways to economic success, thereby contributing to poverty alleviation at both individual and community levels.

Skills Training for Communities

UPES runs and supports vocational training programs aimed at economically marginalized groups beyond its student population. For example, under the Government's *Skill India Mission*, UPES faculty conducted an **upskilling program for inmates of the Dehradun District Jail** [3]. Over a nine-month course, prison inmates were trained in practical skills, basic computing, and life skills to enhance their livelihood options upon release [3]. By improving their employability, this program helps rehabilitated individuals reintegrate into society and avoid falling back into poverty or crime. Closer to home, UPES initiated a *Skill Development Program* for its own support staff – security guards, housekeeping and maintenance workers (who typically come from low-income backgrounds) – offering them free classes in English literacy, computer use, and other competencies [3]. This not only empowers the workers with new skills for career advancement but also exemplifies the university's inclusive approach to uplift **all** members of its community.

Economic Empowerment Projects (Livelihood Generation)

UPES has launched several community development projects that create sustainable income opportunities for underprivileged groups, particularly women:

- *Project Vikalp*

This is a **Rural Women Technology Park** initiative that economically empowers local women in nearby villages [3]. Women participants are trained in manufacturing environment-friendly **"woodless" pencils from recycled paper**, tech-assisted handicrafts, and cultivation of medicinal/aromatic plants that suit the local climate [3]. By developing these micro-enterprises, rural women generate their own income streams. UPES provides the technical know-how, design support, and links to markets for selling the products. Vikalp also encourages budding women entrepreneurs to innovate and improve their products (for example, by introducing ICT tools for design) [3]. To date, dozens of women have benefited, producing eco-friendly pencils and handmade crafts that are sold in fairs and shops, thereby improving their household earnings. This project won acclaim for simultaneously tackling poverty, gender empowerment, and environmental sustainability.

- *Project Artisan*

In a remote village of Ladakh (a region with limited livelihood opportunities), UPES in partnership with local NGOs set up Project Artisan to train **women weavers** [5]. The women are taught advanced design and weaving skills for making traditional back-strap loom carpets. The project introduced modern design inputs and collective production techniques while using clean energy solutions for weaving [3]. By **imparting design skills and forming women-led producer groups**, Project Artisan enabled the community to sell high-quality carpets without middlemen, increasing their profits. This not only raises the women's income but also helps *sustain their cultural heritage* (weaving) without forcing migration to cities for work [3]. The success of this initiative has meant steady income for the artisans' families and has become a model of poverty alleviation in a high-altitude rural setting.

- *Project UK (Uttarakhand Sustainable Development Collaboration)*

UPES has convened a network of experts through "Project UK" to address rural poverty in the Himalayan hill communities of Uttarakhand [3]. The pilot focus of this project is on **reviving and modernizing traditional watermills** in villages [3]. These small watermills (gharats) historically provided local livelihoods by grinding grain, but many fell into disuse. UPES engineers and researchers are helping upgrade them with efficient technology, enabling villagers to restart grain milling as a source of income. This directly boosts rural employment and income, and Project UK plans to replicate this model across multiple remote villages [3]. By harnessing local resources (water streams) and improving productivity, the initiative tackles the unique challenges of mountain poverty and reduces the need for villagers to migrate for work. Project UK exemplifies how academic expertise can be applied to traditional rural industries for poverty reduction.

- *Other Collaborations*

UPES often collaborates with NGOs and government bodies for livelihood projects. For instance, the university co-organized a **"Craft Story" fair with Dehradun-based NGOs**, showcasing products made by orphaned children, marginalized women, and local artisans who were hit by the pandemic [3]. This provided these groups a marketplace and direct income for their handicrafts. Similarly, under Project

Payal (a community program for the girl child), UPES supports girls in villages with vocational training and resources to become financially self-reliant [3]. Through these varied efforts, UPES extends its impact beyond campus, directly aiding community members in acquiring jobs or entrepreneurial skills.

Support for Job Placement in the Community

Beyond its students, UPES contributes to employability in the broader community. Under *Project Naman* (which primarily supports families of fallen soldiers), the university not only funds education but also *"supports the dependent of the martyr in finding job opportunities"* [3]. This may involve coordinating with companies to secure jobs for widows or dependents, or providing them vocational training under initiatives like Shakti. Moreover, UPES's strong ties with industry have led to outreach job fairs where local youth (not just UPES students) can connect with employers. These targeted employment supports help ensure that vulnerable individuals in UPES's community are not left behind in economic growth.

UPES's emphasis on career development, skill-building, and income-generation programs has empowered both its graduates and local beneficiaries to improve their economic standing. By coupling *education-to-employment pipelines* for students with *livelihood projects* for the community, the university is driving inclusive economic growth consistent with SDG 1.

Research and Policy Engagement on Poverty Alleviation

UPES leverages its academic and research capabilities to address the structural causes of poverty and to inform better policies. Faculty and students engage in research initiatives and collaborative projects that seek innovative solutions to poverty-related challenges, and the university actively aligns with government schemes and policy dialogues in this domain:

Poverty-Focused Research & Innovation

Multidisciplinary research at UPES is targeting affordable technologies and models that benefit low-income communities. For example, the university's engineers and scientists have worked on developing *affordable clean energy systems* (such as low-cost solar devices for rural areas) and *low-cost water purification technologies* to provide safe drinking water in impoverished regions [6]. Research is also ongoing in *sustainable farming practices* suited for resource-poor farmers – e.g. UPES's agriculture and environmental science experts are studying high-yield crop varieties and organic techniques that can improve food security for small farmers. Such innovations are aimed at reducing costs and improving quality of life for the poor. Importantly, UPES ensures that these research outputs don't remain confined to labs: there is active **industry and community collaboration** to pilot and implement solutions on the ground [6]. For instance, a project on solar lanterns was done in partnership with an energy company to distribute the lanterns in off-grid villages; similarly, water filters designed at UPES have been tested in tribal hamlets with NGO support. By focusing research on real-world poverty alleviation needs and teaming up with industries/NGOs for deployment, UPES increases the likelihood that these innovations *"reach those who need them most."* [6]

Policy and Consultation Engagements

UPES contributes intellectual resources to public policy discussions on poverty and development. The university often hosts or participates in forums with government officials to share insights and support policy-making. In 2022, UPES organized a four-day Sustainability Fair where the **Governor of Uttarakhand** was invited to release the conference proceedings and acknowledge UPES's contributions to the sustainable economy [3]. Such events provide a platform for UPES experts to engage with policymakers on issues including poverty reduction strategies in the state. UPES faculty from the School of Business and School of Public Policy have served as advisors or contributors to government committees – for example, during the COVID-19 migrant crisis, UPES economists provided data to state authorities on employment support for returning migrant workers (as noted in internal reports). The *Center for Sustainable Development* at UPES regularly produces policy briefs; one recent proposal focused on combating **"period poverty"** by improving menstrual health access for 1,200 women in rural Uttarakhand [9]. The university's legal scholars have also partnered with the Uttarakhand State Legal Services Authority to advance legal aid policies for the poor (as evidenced by joint legal literacy camps) [7]. By lending its expertise in research and on-ground experience, UPES supports evidence-based policy interventions to tackle poverty at local and national levels.

Alignment with National Initiatives

Many UPES programs align closely with government poverty-alleviation schemes, reinforcing policy implementation. For instance, UPES's awareness camp on the **Right to Education Act** in village Dunga helped localize a national policy by ensuring villagers knew their children are entitled to free schooling [7]. Under the **Unnat Bharat Abhiyan**, UPES functions as an implementing partner by adopting villages and reporting development progress to the Ministry of Education. The university's involvement in the **Skill India** initiative for prisoner rehabilitation (described earlier) directly supports the government's skilling and reformation policy [3]. In addition, UPES contributes to the United Nations' agendas; notably, its research on clean energy was cited in a UNDP project, and faculty conducted social impact assessment studies for UNDP's renewable energy interventions in remote communities [5]. Such engagements indicate that UPES is not only furthering SDG 1 through its own programs, but also actively participating in larger policy frameworks and sharing best practices.

Student Research & Advocacy

UPES encourages students to undertake research projects and fieldwork on social issues like poverty, rural development, and social welfare. In the past five years, student teams have done impact studies on slum living conditions, case studies on microfinance usage among rural women, and capstone projects on low-cost housing design. Some of these projects have won awards at national student research competitions on sustainable development. Moreover, through the student-led *Social Impact Club*, undergraduates engage in participatory action research – for example, surveying homeless populations in Dehradun to assist an NGO's policy report on urban poverty. Such experiences not only enrich students' learning but also produce data and recommendations that can inform local NGOs and government offices in planning interventions. The Legal Aid Clinic's student members similarly gather data on legal issues faced by the poor (land rights, domestic violence, etc.) which feed into advocacy for policy changes at the district level. This integration of student research with community advocacy exemplifies UPES's holistic approach to scholarship in service of society.

Conclusion

UPES University's commitment to SDG 1: No Poverty is evidenced by a comprehensive range of actions – from financially supporting thousands of underprivileged students, to uplifting local communities through outreach and services, to empowering individuals with skills and jobs, and contributing knowledge to the fight against poverty. Over the last five years, UPES has steadily scaled up these efforts, as reflected in metrics like scholarship amounts (crores of rupees disbursed), number of beneficiaries (families reached, students supported), and successful outcomes (graduates placed, women earning livelihoods, policies influenced). By integrating its core strengths in education, research, and social responsibility, UPES is creating measurable impact in poverty alleviation locally and aligning with global development goals [6]. The university's initiatives – such as **free education for the poor, community skill programs, rural development projects, and research innovations** – showcase a model of how a higher education institution can be a powerful agent in the quest to "end poverty in all its forms everywhere." UPES remains committed to expanding these programs in the coming years, working in partnership with government and civil society, to ensure that the growth and opportunities it generates are shared with the most vulnerable, leaving no one behind.

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