ENRICHING LIVES OF THE URBAN ASPIRATIONAL CLASS

Expert Round Table Proceedings

31st December 2024

ABCEL
ADITYA BIRLA CENTRE FOR ENRICHING LIVES

RE-IMAGINING FUTURES
TISS

Expert Roundtable Proceedings

Enriching Lives of the Urban Aspirational Class

Date: 28 November, **Venue:** Hall 601, Guest House, TISS, Mumbai

Introduction

The roundtable, organized by the Aditya Birla Centre for Enriching Lives (ABCEL) in collaboration with TISS, aimed to bring together thought leaders, academic experts, and practitioners to explore how ABCEL's Enriching Lives Framework can be effectively applied to enrich lives of the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC). The discussions focused on identifying current gaps in research, understanding the UAC, and developing action research agenda to understand and address their challenges and foster well-being.

The Urban Aspirational Class represents a critical segment of India's urban population, balancing aspirations for upward mobility with challenges of modern urban living. This roundtable sought to address knowledge gaps about UAC and create strategies for improving their well-being (detailed agenda attached as Annexure 1). Key outcomes included identifying research gaps, understanding sub-cohorts within UAC's, their specific challenges, and carving out the next steps for ABCEL.

Session 1: Introduction and Welcome

Key Objective: To set the stage for discussions on enriching lives of UAC by introducing ABCEL, its vision and proposed actions for impact, understand prior work of experts participating in the Roundtable and share the objectives of the roundtable, to scope the discussions.

Distilled Overview: Discussions revolved around the complexities faced by UAC, including pressures on women, mental health issues, and the evolving identity of the middle class. This was followed by a round of detailed introductions by experts, who spoke about their areas of interest and convergence of their prior work relevant to ABCEL's areas of work. Facilitators highlighted the significance of engaging with UAC, especially post-COVID-19, and emphasized the need to foster social belonging, and define actionable research priorities.

The experts introduced themselves and shared aspects of their prior work that resonated with the need to understand Urban aspirational class in today's time and space. This was followed by a high level overview of TISS and ABCEL potential collaboration by Prof Jojo, and sharing the objectives of the roundtable:

Objectives of the roundtable

- To develop a comprehensive understanding of the UAC, its nomenclature, needs, supported by data, knowledge repositories, data sources, case studies, and expert insights.
- To identify key research priorities that align with ABCEL's mission of enhancing the quality of life for UAC.
- To establish collaborative networks to operationalize the framework and define actionable methodologies based on the roundtable's deliberations.

Participant Overview

The roundtable featured a diverse assembly of thought leaders, academics, and practitioners. Experts from TISS (Professors Bipin Jojo, Asha Banu, Mouleshri Vyas, Manish Jha, Abdul Shaban, Sohini Sengupta and Aseem Prakash) and representatives from ABCEL (Ms. Nupur Joshi, Dr. Nidhi Gupta, and Ms. Padma) brought academic and operational insights. Specialists like Ms. Kamalika Guha Thakurta, Mr Sobins and Mr. Gurjeet Singh enriched discussions with cultural and strategic perspectives, while NGO leaders such as Ms. Geetanjali from Apnalaya contributed field-level expertise. Together, they illuminated challenges and proposed actionable strategies for enhancing the lives of India's Urban Aspirational Class (UAC). The detailed participant list is attached as Annexure 2.

Session 2 : Introduction to ABCEL's Enriched Life Framework

Key Objective: To present the Enriched Life Framework, integrating four core domains—meaning and purpose, social belongingness, health and well-being, and ease of living, and garner feedback from experts on the methodology adopted for development of the EL framework and potential pathway for it's validation.
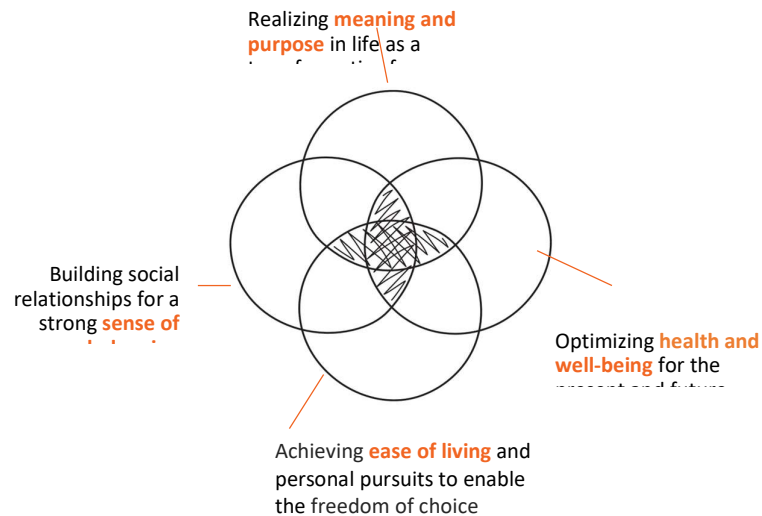
Facilitator: Prof. Manish Jha(TISS)

Presentation of Enrich Life Framework : Ms. Reetika (ABCEL), Dr. Nidhi Gupta (ABCEL).

Discussion Points: (details in Annexure 3)

The Enriched Life Framework integrates four core domains:

- **Meaning and Purpose** – Aligning personal aspirations with societal contributions.
- **Social Belongingness** – Building inclusive and connected communities.
- **Health and Well-being** – Promoting holistic physical, mental, and emotional health.
- **Ease of Living** – Improving access to opportunities and resources for a better quality of life.

Realizing **meaning and purpose** in life as a

Building social relationships for a strong **sense of**

Optimizing **health and well-being** for the

Achieving **ease of living** and personal pursuits to enable the freedom of choice

Key Points highlighted by experts

The insights from experts highlight the need for ABCEL to develop a more nuanced, inclusive, and flexible framework for understanding the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC). This framework should integrate various dimensions like well-being, cultural identity, and social belonging, while addressing the intersectionality of factors such as gender, income, and ethnicity. ABCEL should focus on creating distinct yet interconnected domains, such as the state (e.g., green spaces), market (e.g., financial well-being), and community (e.g., social norms, family connections), which will guide targeted interventions. A critical approach to defining and measuring well-being variables, including autonomy, altruism, and cultural identity, is

essential. Additionally, the framework should be adaptable, allowing for continuous refinement based on fieldwork data and feedback from diverse UAC sub-groups. ABCEL's work should emphasize qualitative research to capture personal experiences and societal values, creating policies and programs that resonate with the complexities of UAC's aspirations and challenges.

Key takeaways from the session: the EL Framework was well received by the experts as well as practitioners. There was a consensus that the **4 domains comprehensive** to capture enriching lives. There was suggestion to revisit sub-domains, define them and validate the framework with empirical data. Culture was identified as a critical variable (sub-domain) in Indian that crosscuts all 4 domains. Detailed expert comments from Session 1 is attached as annexure 4.

Session 3: Understanding the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC)

Key Objective: To explore UAC's diverse sub-cohorts, their aspirations, and the socio-cultural challenges they face.

Facilitator: Prof. Mouleshri Vyas (TISS)

Distilled Overview: four faculty members from TISS, presented their prior work which had interface with UAC, to set the context what we know and what we need to know better about the UAC. This was followed by individual reflection by experts through worksheets for individual work followed by group work. The experts were divided into 2 groups to analyse six dimensions namely sub-cohorts, existing knowledge about UACs, research gaps in understanding UACs, data sources on UACs and experts working on UACs. Key themes included mobility issues, digital engagement, and socio-economic stratification. Experts underscored the importance of addressing community disconnect and redefining aspirations beyond economic metrics (Details in Annexure 5).

Key Points of discussion

The insights from experts highlight the need for ABCEL to embrace a multifaceted and intersectional approach to understanding and supporting the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC).

Urban mobility, public spaces, and digital engagement are key areas where disparities exist, affecting the aspirations of different sub-groups. ABCEL must address the disconnect between individuals and their cultural or social roots, promoting inclusive spaces for diverse identities, including gender, caste, and migration status. The notion of "aspiration" should be redefined beyond economic factors, incorporating political, social, and spiritual dimensions that influence UAC's lived experiences. Interventions should be tailored to address unique challenges faced by various groups, including first-generation professionals, migrants, and those experiencing cyber-crime. ABCEL should also prioritize examining and addressing the anxieties and pressures caused by rapid urbanization, digital engagement, and changing family dynamics, ensuring that policies and programs remain responsive to these complexities.

Session 4: Open Forum and Collaborative Strategies

Key Objective: To brainstorm actionable interventions and operationalize insights from group work done in previous sessions on understanding UACs.

Facilitator: Dr. Sohini Sengupta (TISS)

Key takeaways: there was a consensus that UAC as a cohort needs attention and there is no organized body of knowledge focused on this cohort. There was appreciation for ABCEL pioneering "enriched living" for this cohort. Experts suggested to revisit the nomenclature "Aspirational" in Urban Aspirational Class (Aspirations are class agnostic). There was a consensus that UAC is highly heterogenous, and it as recommended that a sub-cohort approach for research as well as interventions would be better suited for this cohort. The discussion on 6 aspects from worksheets have been added as annexure 6.

Session 5: Strategic Next Steps and Closing

Key Objective: To consolidate insights and establish a roadmap for future actions.

Facilitators: Prof. Asha Banu (TISS), Ms. Nupur Joshi (ABCEL)

Distilled Overview: Participants recommended pilot projects, foundational studies, and partnerships to operationalize the Enriched Life Framework. Focus areas include intersectionality, aging, and digital inclusion.

1. Develop longitudinal studies to track evolving UAC needs.
2. Establish user-friendly frameworks for practitioners.
3. Publish white papers and multimedia content to enhance public awareness.

Key recommendations:

- Launch foundational studies to create a knowledge base on UAC and its sub-cohorts.
- Develop an online repository (Enrichpedia) to consolidate data and resources.
- Initiate pilot action research projects targeting specific UAC challenges.
- Design a longitudinal study to track the evolving needs of UAC.

EL Expert Network Established

- Participating Experts agreed to be a part of **EL expert network** and be on ABCEL mailing list
- 20 Subject Matter Experts (from 12 participant group and 8 from external network) identified to expand the EL Expert network

Way forward

- Expand research ecosystem by strengthening partnerships between ABCEL and academia and research institutions.
- TISS confident to move forward with formalizing collaboration with ABCEL, prioritizing Seasoned Citizens as a Cohort through organizing Expert Roundtable Expert Roundtables, leading a special Issue of Enriching Lives in reputed journal or edited volume, doctoral fellowships on EL framework and commissioning action research on seasoned citizens.

Annexure 1: Program schedule

Expert Roundtable – 'Enriching Lives of the Urban Aspirational Class'

Date: 28 November, Venue – Hall 601, Guest House, TISS, Mumbai

Annexure: Program Agenda

Time	Session	Session facilitation
10:30am to 11:00 am	**Session 1: Welcome & Opening Remarks: (30 min)** • Overview of ABCEL and its mission (5min) • Overview TISS School of Social Work and collaboration with ABCEL (5 min) • Objectives of the roundtable (5 min) • Introductions (Name, Background, areas of interest, connect with UAC/ EL) -15 min	**Session 1: ABCEL and TISS** • Ms. Nupur Joshi, Ms Padma R Tata • Prof Bipin Jojo • Introductions by each Expert
11:00 am-11:45 am	**Session 2: Introduce ABCEL's Enriched Life Framework (45 min)** • Introducing EL framework and its development journey • Open discussion - How EL framework may be applied to enrich lives of UAC	**Session 2: Session facilitation Prof Jha** • Dr Nidhi Gupta, ABCEL • Ms. Reetika, MSC • Discussion moderation- TISS Prof Manish Jha

11:45 am to 1:15 pm	**Session 3: Understanding the Urban Aspirational Class (1 hr 30 min)**
	
	• What we know? insights from research on UAC (40 min) by TISS faculty members
	• What remains unexplored? (20 min) – Inputs from participants
	• Group work: Sub-cohorts | Knowledge | data sources | experts | research gaps | interventions (30 min)
		Session 3: Session facilitation - Prof Mouleshri Vyas
		• Sharing research on UAC by
		   o Dr Sohini Sengupta
		   o Prof Manish Jha
		   o Prof Abdul Shaban
		   o Prof Aseem Prakash
		• Discussion and Group work moderated by Prof Vyas

1:15 pm to 2pm 2:00 pm to 3:00 pm	**LUNCH BREAK** **Session 4: Open forum (1 hr)** • Experts share their insights, critique, and suggestions (30 min) • Brainstorming on collaborative research projects and pilot studies (30 min) **TEA BREAK**	**Session 4: Session facilitated by TISS – Dr Sohini Sengupta**
3:00 pm to 3:15pm 3:15 pm to 4:00 pm	**Session 5: Strategic Next Steps and Closing (45 min)** • Summarization of key takeaways (10 - 15 min) • Outlining potential research and intervention areas (10 min) • Conclusion and roadmap for partnerships (5 min) • Call to be a part of EL expert network and vote of thanks (10 min)	**Session 5 - TISS and ABCEL** **Prof Asha Banu, TISS** **Ms. Nupur Joshi, ABCEL**

Annexure 2: Participant List

Name	Affiliation
Prof. Bipin Jojo, Dean Prof Bipin Jojo, Dean, School of Social work, School of Social work	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Prof. Asha Banu, Centre for Health and Mental Health, School of Social Work	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Prof. Manish Jha - Centre for Community Organisation and Development Practice, School of Social Work - Mumbai Campus	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Dr. Sohini Sengupta - Centre for Community Organisation and Development Practice, School of Social Work - Mumbai Campus	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Prof. Abdul Shaban - Chairperson of the Centre for Public Policy, Habitat and Human Development, School of Development Studies	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Prof. Aseem Prakash - Campus Director-Hyderabad Campus, School of Public Policy and Governance	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Prof. Mouleshri Vyas - Professor, Centre for Community organization and development. School of Social work	Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS)
Mr. Gurjeet Singh	Expert Social Audit, ex-mission Manager (**Jharkhand**), MoSJE, Independent Expert
Mr. Sobins Kuriakose	Consultant, The World Bank, Worked with NULM (National Urban Livelihood Mission)
Ms. Kamalika Guha Thakurta	Holistic wellbeing | non-profit organization management industry | Independent Expert
Ms. Nupur Joshi	Head, Aditya Birla Centre for Enriching Lives (ABCEL)
Dr. Nidhi Gupta	Head Research, Aditya Birla Centre for Enriching Lives (ABCEL)
Ms. Padma R Tata	Director, Aditya Birla Centre for Enriching Lives (ABCEL)
Ms. Disha Bhavnani	MSC Consulting
Ms Ritika Singh	MSC Consulting | development of EL framework
Ms. Geetanjali	Founder Apnalaya, expert in designing interventions and reaching large populations | Low-income communities

Annexure 3: Details of discussion in Session-1

- The facilitators for the session were Prof Bipin Jojo, Ms. Nupur Joshi, Ms. Padma R and Dr. Nidhi. They emphasized the objective of the workshop and expectations from each expert to contribute in developing Enrich Life Framework for UAC.

- The history of ABCEL and the need to engage with UAC especially during the COVID19 pandemic was highlighted by Ms. Nupur Joshi and Ms. Padma R.

- Along with their introduction the experts also highlighted the complexities of enhancing the lives of the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC), focusing on operationalizing definitions, addressing care economy gaps, and fostering a sense of purpose across demographics.

- The challenges faced by the elderly, pressures on women in care roles, and the evolving identity of the middle class shaped by caste, religion, and market dynamics were highlighted.

- Participants emphasized strengthening partnerships, setting actionable research agendas, and engaging students and faculty to address issues like mental health, digital engagement, and social belonging.

- The need for collaborative efforts to apply the Enriching Lives Framework effectively and expanding the scope of ABCEL-TISS initiatives was one of the key highlights of the session one.
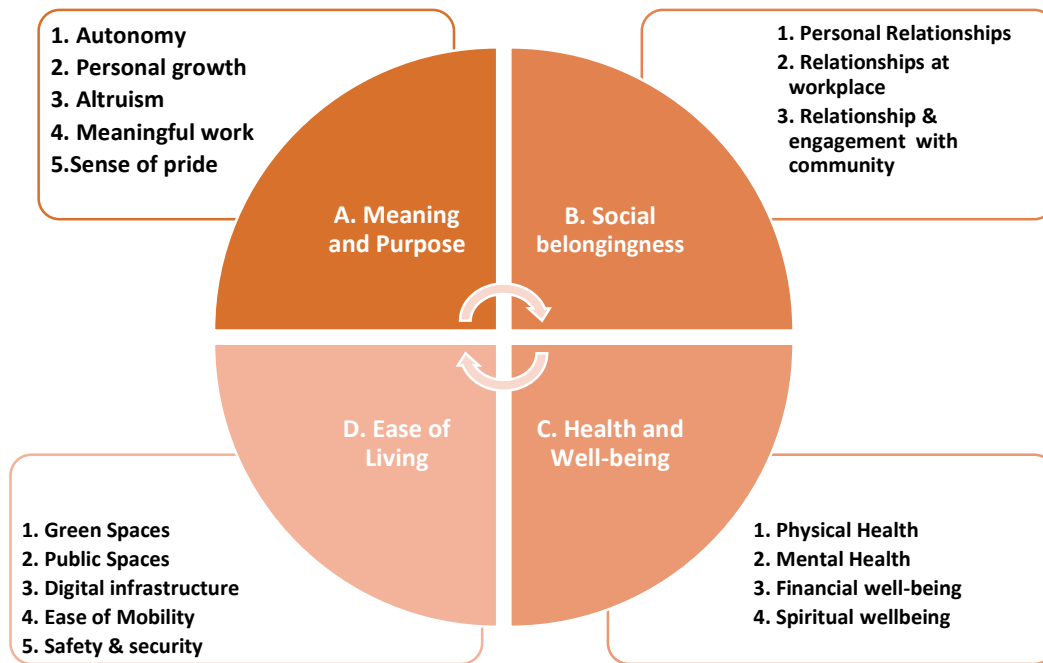
Annexure 4 Detailed discussions from Session- 2

Key Points highlighted by experts

The insights from experts highlight the need for ABCEL to develop a more nuanced, inclusive, and flexible framework for understanding the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC). This framework should integrate various dimensions like well-being, cultural identity, and social belonging, while addressing the intersectionality of factors such as gender, income, and ethnicity. ABCEL should focus on creating distinct yet interconnected domains, such as the state (e.g., green spaces), market (e.g., financial well-being), and community (e.g., social norms, family connections), which will guide targeted interventions. A critical approach to defining and measuring well-being variables, including autonomy, altruism, and cultural identity, is essential. Additionally, the framework should be adaptable, allowing for continuous

refinement based on fieldwork data and feedback from diverse UAC sub-groups. ABCEL's work should emphasize qualitative research to capture personal experiences and societal values, creating policies and programs that resonate with the complexities of UAC's aspirations and challenges.

The Enriched Life Framework integrates four core domains:

A. Meaning and Purpose
1. Autonomy
2. Personal growth
3. Altruism
4. Meaningful work
5. Sense of pride

B. Social belongingness
1. Personal Relationships
2. Relationships at workplace
3. Relationship & engagement with community

D. Ease of Living
1. Green Spaces
2. Public Spaces
3. Digital infrastructure
4. Ease of Mobility
5. Safety & security

C. Health and Well-being
1. Physical Health
2. Mental Health
3. Financial well-being
4. Spiritual wellbeing

Detailed inputs from Experts

Prof. Manish Jha

- Ease of living linked to factors like green spaces, clean air, and mobility.
- Importance of addressing both ease for pedestrians and hawkers inclusively.
- Social belongingness is critical to prevent exclusion.
- Framework should be holistic, addressing obstacles and encounters.

Prof. Abdul Shaban

- Inclusion of World Happiness Index indicators in the framework.
- Need for clear, distinct definitions of concepts like autonomy, altruism, and pride.
- Variables should be minimal, measurable, and capture the essence of well-being.
- Use methodologies like Mecalin's physical quality of life index.
- Insights from European data on generational happiness non-convergence.

Ms. Disha

- Different needs of people in metro cities.
- Use existing parameters and subdivide them by factors like gender, income, and city type.
- Emphasize qualitative aspects and break monolithic definitions of UAC.

Mr. Gurjeet

- Importance of roots, identity, and ethnicity.
- Cultural and spiritual well-being should include deeper aspects of culture.

Ms. Kamalika

- Strong need to connect with culture, language, and roots within communities.
- Festivals like Durga Puja help people reconnect with their identities.

Mr. Sobins

- Struggles with personal identity due to cultural displacement.
- Importance of linking professional and personal identities with cultural roots.
- Questioning whether life and work contribute to an enriching existence.

Dr. Nidhi

- WHO's culture and gender framework can help define quality of life.

Prof. Mouleshri

- Framework should be dynamic and adaptable to different contexts.
- Clearly articulate the framework's purpose and provide actionable insights.

Ms. Geetanjali

- Diverse support needs across a wide group, including lifestyle diseases.
- Variables should work as a continuum and be personalized to individual definitions.

Prof. Aseem Prakash

- Framework domains: state (green spaces, physical health), market (mental health, financial well-being), and community (social connections).
- Intersections between family, community, market, and state are crucial.
- Qualitative aspects should complement macro-level data for policy alignment.
- NFHS definitions can guide autonomy but lack concepts like altruism.

Prof. Sohini

- Framework should focus on cohesive elements rather than lists.
- Use the Social Norms Index and PEW report to bring gender and societal aspects into the framework.

Annexure 5: detailed discussions Session-3

Prof. Abdul Shaban

- Importance of clearly stating whether the study reflects individual or household surveys.
- Concept of the "creative city" and the "creative class" (e.g., Mumbai's Urdu, Marathi, and Parsi cultural scenes).
- Disconnect between creative classes and their socio-cultural roots.
- Urban mobility issues tied to failures in planning and public goods (e.g., smooth roads, pollution-free city).
- SUBERNA group report: redesigning city spaces to be workable and walkable.
- Public policy as a major obstruction in urban happiness and governance failures.
- Rise of a "new carceral city" separating communities.
- Social media "noise" adds to human misery.

Prof. Sohini Sengupta

- Study on the Indian middle class (income group: ₹2-10 lakh) and their digital engagement.
- Hyper-sociality and the pressure to articulate needs constantly.
- Role of WhatsApp: warmth, private appeal, and personal identity.
- Digital platforms as part of care work (e.g., mothers managing time control).
- Middle-class anxieties: fear of slipping downward socially and economically.
- Caring associated with consumption in a hyper-digital space.

Prof. Manish Jha

- Early observations of Ola and Uber drivers earning well (2015–2016).
- Middle and affluent class anxiety about protecting hard-earned money.
- Role of technology in redefining family dynamics (e.g., BP machines, auto cameras).
- Challenges in research: participant diversity and redefining criteria (e.g., class, caste, tribe).
- Dalit first-generation aspirations and their societal contributions.

Prof. Aseem Prakash

- Re-evaluating the term "aspirational."
- Western sociology of elites as a reference point.
- Five intersectional domains:
    1. Political (e.g., paying taxes without benefits).
    2. Economic (e.g., wealth inheritance).
    3. Social (e.g., community roles).
    4. Family (e.g., generational tensions, children's roles).
    5. Spiritual (e.g., personal growth).
- Intersectionality of caste, tribe, gender, and migrant identities.

Prof. Asha Banu

- Research on Intimate Partner Violence (IPV): silence surrounding personal issues.
- Digital arrest as an emerging issue, irrespective of education.
- Intergenerational caregiving tensions: younger and older perspectives.

Mr. Sobins

- Broader perspective on migrants, including non-labor migrants (e.g., personal family experiences).
- Migrant dilemmas: cultural adjustment and instilling values in children.
- Struggles of small-town individuals adapting to metropolitan settings.

Mr. Gurjeet

- Importance of a gendered lens in occupational roles.
- Self-reflection: reconciling identity and aspirations.

Ms. Kamalika

- Sharp divide in aspirations between south and north Mumbai (e.g., Virar vs. South Mumbai) and similarly between north and south Kolkata.

Group activity output

a. **Sub-Cohorts within UAC**

1. **First-Generation Achievers**
    o Individuals who are the first in their family to achieve significant educational or career milestones.
2. **Geriatric Population**

o   Older adults, including retirees, facing unique challenges in urban environments.

3. **Class, Caste, and Religious Minorities**
    o   Underrepresented groups navigating urban socio-economic structures.

4. **Single Successful Women**
    o   Independent women managing careers and urban lifestyles while addressing societal expectations.

5. **Voluntary Retirement from Corporates**
    o   Mid-career individuals who have chosen early retirement to explore alternative pursuits.

6. **Youth Dynamics**
    o   Including:
        ▪   Teen dating, cyberbullying, and challenges related to social media.
        ▪   Reproductive health concerns.
        ▪   Dating app users.

7. **Homemakers**
    o   Individuals managing households while contributing indirectly to economic and social dynamics.

8. **Retired Professionals**
    o   Former professionals transitioning from structured employment to new roles in urban settings.

9. **Migrants**
    o   Individuals in transition:
        ▪   Recently migrated to cities but not fully settled.
        ▪   Exploring permanence or returning to their hometowns.

10. **Multi-Cultural Groups**
    o   Individuals and families embracing diverse cultural identities.

11. **Youth in Inter-Faith Marriages**
    o   Couples navigating the complexities of cultural and religious diversity within marriage.

12. **Class Heterogeneity Within Families**
    o   Families with varied socio-economic statuses coexisting.

13. **Professionals Working from Home**
    o   Remote workers balancing professional and personal lives in urban spaces.

14. **Child-Free Couples**
    o   Couples choosing not to have children, with unique lifestyle aspirations.

15. **Temporarily Settled Individuals**
    o   Professionals and students in cities for limited durations (e.g., assignments or education).

16. **Those Not Physically Mobile**
    o   Individuals with mobility constraints requiring tailored support.

17. **Occupational Groups**
    o Groups defined by profession, such as armed forces personnel, freelancers, and gig workers.
18. **Retired Armed Forces Personnel**
    o Individuals transitioning from military to civilian life.
19. **Gender, Caste, Class, and Age Dynamics**
    o Sub-cohorts identified by their demographic combinations, requiring deeper study for targeted interventions.

b. **Existing Knowledge on UAC**

ABCEL can address the diverse needs of sub-cohorts within the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC) through a data-driven, inclusive approach. First-generation achievers can benefit from mentorship and financial literacy, while the geriatric population requires tailored care services and senior-friendly urban planning. Efforts for minorities should ensure equitable access to resources and representation. Single successful women need safe spaces and workplace equality programs. Mid-career professionals can be supported with second-career training, and youth initiatives should focus on health and cyber safety. Empowering homemakers through skill-building and providing advisory roles for retired professionals are key. Migrants and multi-cultural families need support for integration, while individuals with physical constraints must have accessibility provisions . Professionals working from home require mental health support, and tailored resources for gig workers and veterans are necessary. ABCEL should collaborate with various stakeholders, advocate for inclusive policies, and establish community spaces to foster equity, sustainability, and a better quality of life for UAC sub-cohorts.

- **Sociological Perspectives**
    o Sociology of Elite.
    o Middle Class and New Middle Class dynamics.
    o Urban Stratification and Development Planning.
    o Elites from Social Margins.
- **Digital Trends and Online Behaviour**
    o Online groups and associations.
    o More expressive on digital platforms than on-ground interactions.
    o Well-connected with multiple groups through digital platforms.
    o Digital media trends.
- **Theoretical Frameworks**

- o Pierre Bourdieu's Distinction.
- o Quality of Life Framework.
- o Better Life Index and European quality of life studies.
- **Market Behaviour**
  - o Market behaviour studies.
  - o Social Norm Report.
- **Challenges and Vulnerabilities**
  - o Breaking families and increasing loneliness.
  - o Fewer outdoor activities for recreation.
  - o Poor citizen engagement in democratic setups.
  - o Security and safety concerns (e.g., theft and fraud).
  - o Burnout of caregivers.
  - o Issues of older adults and intergenerational challenges.
- **Urban Dynamics**
  - o Urban middle class trends.
  - o City planning, smart city initiatives, and urban development.
  - o Recreational activities, including holidays and hobby pursuits.
  - o Health-focused trends, including guided health advisories.
- **Research and Academic Insights**
  - o Studies published in Journal of South Asian Studies, Journal of Asian and African Studies, and Indian Review.
  - o Think Tank reports and policy studies.
  - o Crime data (police records).
  - o Intergenerational projects to promote social belongingness.
  - o Quality of Death Index and end-of-life care considerations.
  - o Activities of Daily Living (ADL) assessments.
- **Educational and Lifelong Learning**
  - o Lifelong learning initiatives like the promotion of Massive Education Programs (MEPs).

ABCEL should leverage the existing knowledge on UAC by tailoring its initiatives to address the sociological, digital, and urban dynamics of these cohorts while integrating theoretical insights and addressing their vulnerabilities. Sociological perspectives, such as urban stratification and the sociology of elites, emphasize the need for inclusive programs that bridge gaps between different urban subgroups. Digital trends highlight the importance of creating hybrid platforms that blend online and on-ground engagement, ensuring inclusivity for those who are more expressive in digital spaces. Theoretical frameworks like Bourdieu's "Distinction" and quality-of-life measures provide a robust basis for designing interventions to enhance UAC's well-being and satisfaction.

Market behaviour insights can guide ABCEL in identifying consumption trends and tailoring initiatives that align with UAC's aspirations. Addressing challenges like loneliness, intergenerational disconnect, and caregiver burnout is critical, with interventions promoting community bonding, secure environments, and better recreation opportunities. Urban development insights underscore the importance of engaging UAC in city planning and providing access to guided health and hobby pursuits. Drawing from academic and think tank studies, ABCEL can facilitate lifelong learning through Massive Education Programs (MEPs) and foster intergenerational projects to promote belongingness. Integrating these multi-dimensional insights will enable ABCEL to create impactful, evidence-based actions to empower UAC.

c. **Data Sources on UAC**

- **Government and Institutional Reports**
  - Census of India.
  - NITI Aayog reports.
  - Ministry websites.
  - SDG reports.
  - Electoral data.
  - NSSO and NFHS data.
  - Economic surveys.
  - NCAER data (multiple waves).
  - MMRDA data.
- **Health and Well-Being Data**
  - LASI/WHO data.
  - Studies on urban health status.
  - Health apps and health-tech platforms.
  - Report on working conditions of professionals (NSSO, NFHS).
  - Quality of life and Happiness Index/Quotient studies.
- **Social and Economic Data**
  - World Inequality Report.
  - Gender Social Norms Index (UNDP).
  - Income tax and insurance data.
  - Market and customer behavior data from research firms.
  - SEO data from social media platforms.
- **Cultural and Media Resources**
  - Biopics and documentaries/cinema.
  - OTT subscription reports.

- o Phew report.
- o Social Norm Report.
- **Travel and Urban Infrastructure**
  - o Tour operator and travel reports.
  - o City development plans.
  - o Research on cities' infrastructure and environmental gaps.
  - o Neighbourhood land studies.
- **Community and NGO Contributions**
  - o NGO and neighbourhood-level studies.
  - o Charitable trust reports.
  - o Alumni events and networks.
- **Economic and Fintech Data**
  - o Data from fintech platforms and financial institutions.
  - o Reports on consumption patterns.
- **Start-ups and Market Research**
  - o Start-up reports and related research.
  - o Data from market research firms.
- **Academic and Research Contributions**
  - o Anthropological studies on cities.
  - o Time-series data on violence and discrimination reported in newspapers.
- **COVID-19 Impact Studies**
  - o Research on the effects of COVID-19 on urban life.

For ABCEL, leveraging diverse data sources on UAC implies developing targeted, evidence-based interventions that address the unique needs of different sub-cohorts. By analyzing government reports, economic surveys, health studies, and academic research, ABCEL can identify gaps in urban infrastructure, healthcare access, and social dynamics. Health and well-being data, alongside insights from fintech and market research, can guide programs addressing quality of life, economic stability, and digital inclusion. Cultural and media resources, travel trends, and start-up reports offer opportunities for creative engagement, while NGO and community studies provide localized insights for grassroots-level action. Incorporating findings from COVID-19 impact studies ensures that interventions are resilient and adaptive to future crises, promoting holistic support for urban populations.

d. **Research Gaps in Understanding UAC**

- **Conceptual and Theoretical Ambiguities**
  - o Ambiguity in defining and conceptualizing UAC.

- Lack of a well-developed theoretical framework to connect data with social concepts.
- Undefined relational constructs (individual-family-community).
- Ambiguity in concepts such as living together versus living separately.
- Limited exploration of identity evolution in urban settings.

- **Data Gaps**
  - Lack of disaggregated data at sub-cohort levels.
  - Absence of micro-level studies focusing on geographical areas, activities, and aspirations.
  - Majority of studies rely on macro-economic indicators, ignoring nuances of sub-segments.
  - Insufficient data on monetary and non-monetary indicators.

- **Social Dynamics and Well-Being**
  - Limited understanding of what drives happiness, safety, and satisfaction.
  - Lack of research on causes of urban segregation and potential public policy solutions.
  - Insufficient studies on barriers to active aging, loneliness, and ageism.
  - Minimal focus on social relationships and connectedness in urban societies.

- **Health and Mobility**
  - Lack of empirical research on access to health, well-being, mobility, and safety.
  - Clock time Versus Social time insights.

- **Engagement and Aspirations**
  - Limited insights into UAC's key engagements, hobbies, and preferred activities (e.g., music, sports, gardening, writing, digital competencies).
  - Unclear understanding of what UAC really needs (money, status, future assurance) and their fears/anxieties.
  - Insufficient exploration of redefining retirement for men and women.

- **Institutional and Policy-Related Gaps**
  - Lack of studies on residential institutions for UAC, their functioning, and additional services required.
  - Minimal intervention studies to address identified needs and vulnerabilities.

- **Social Segmentation and Diversity**
  - Limited understanding of diversity within UAC across caste, tribe, and other social vulnerabilities.
  - Difficulty in defining UAC across different social groups.

- **Cultural and Developmental Factors**
  - Minimal exploration of how to create a culture of learning and development.
  - Lack of focus on UAC's potential contributions to larger developmental work.

- **Psychosocial Factors**
  - Poor understanding of UAC's fears, anxieties, and mindset.
  - Inadequate studies addressing loneliness and micro-aggressions.

For ABCEL, addressing the research gaps in understanding UAC requires a multi-dimensional approach to bridge conceptual ambiguities, data limitations, and psychosocial insights. Actions should focus on generating disaggregated data at sub-cohort levels, conducting micro-level and intervention studies, and creating a robust theoretical framework that connects identity evolution, well-being, and social dynamics in urban contexts. Exploring UAC's diverse aspirations, barriers to active engagement, and their contributions to societal development can guide tailored interventions. ABCEL should also prioritize studies on institutional support, ageism, and loneliness, alongside promoting inclusive policies that reflect the diversity of urban populations across caste, class, and other social factors. By addressing these gaps, ABCEL can foster actionable insights for sustainable urban well-being.

e. **Existing Interventions for UAC**

- **Health and Wellness**
  - Mental health interventions.
  - Geriatric care and memory clinics.
  - Health and wellness programs.
  - Yoga and meditation practices.
  - Art therapies.
  - Formal care services (quality and affordability).
  - Citizen help centers on medical/financial issues.
- **Social and Community Engagement**
  - Laughter clubs.
  - Housing society groups, voluntary groups, and resident welfare associations (RWAs).
  - Mohalla committees for community building and social belonging.
  - Elderly groups and morning walkers' groups.
  - Sporting groups, including veteran events.
  - Kitty parties, Tupperware parties, and family functions.
  - Online and offline meetups and activity groups.
- **Recreational and Lifestyle Activities**
  - Travel clubs and recreational packages by the hospitality industry.

- Online cooking, gardening, and music classes.

- Mindful living programs and spiritual anchoring spaces.

- Experiences to rediscover passions and reinvent youth.

- Social work, fundraising, and charity events.

- **Elderly Care and Living Arrangements**

  - Private retirement homes and elderly-specific residential societies.

  - Assisted care living services.

  - Societies with inclusive infrastructure for elderly citizens.

- **Digital and Financial Services**

  - Online helplines and home delivery services.

  - Better digital, banking, and financial management services.

  - Gig work aggregators for specific needs.

- **Spiritual and Religious Engagements**

  - Spirituality-based groups like temple and church committees.

  - Wisdom circles for meaningful engagement.

- **Government and NGO Initiatives**

  - Smart city approaches for improved public infrastructure.

  - NGO interventions to bridge neighbourhood gaps and build spaces.

  - AGNI initiatives and neighbourhood collaborations.

- **Infrastructure and Accessibility**

  - Improved green spaces and access to public spaces.

  - Better and more accessible transportation.

- **Hobby and Social Clubs**

  - Clubs and associations, both formal and informal.

  - Start-ups creating virtual and physical community spaces.

  - Sporting clubs and therapy groups.

- **Intergenerational and Family Connections**

  - Family get-togethers and lifecycle events.

  - Alienation from family addressed through family functions and meetups.

- **Specialized Services**

  - Assisted living and memory care services.

  - Veteran groups and therapy programs.

For ABCEL, leveraging existing interventions for UAC requires integrating diverse health, social, and recreational programs into cohesive, accessible models tailored to specific sub-cohorts. Expanding mental health, geriatric care, and wellness services while ensuring affordability and quality is vital. Promoting social engagement through community groups, laughter clubs, and intergenerational activities can address loneliness and foster belonging. Encouraging hobbies, online skill-building, and spiritual practices adds depth to personal fulfilment. Partnerships with government, NGOs, and private sectors should enhance digital access, financial management, and infrastructure like green spaces and public transportation. ABCEL can act as a facilitator for creating inclusive and innovative spaces, fostering urban resilience and holistic well-being.

f. **Experts and Groups Working on Urban Aspirational Class (UAC)**

Academic Experts and Institutions

- **Professors:**
    - Prof. Ashutosh Varshney (Brown University)
    - Prof. Abdul Shaban (TISS, Mumbai)
    - Prof. Vijay Raghavan (TISS, Mumbai)
    - Prof. Mouleshri Vyas (TISS, Mumbai)
    - Prof. Ranu Jain (TISS, Mumbai)
    - Prof. Sujata Patel
    - Prof. Surinder Jodhka (JNU)
    - Prof. Manish Jha (TISS, Mumbai)
    - Prof. Asha Banu Soletti (TISS, Mumbai)
    - Prof. Sanjay Srivastava
    - Prof. Aseem Prakash (TISS, Hyderabad)
    - Prof. Leela Fernandes
- Social Work Institutes conducting research.
- Urban Health Experts under NHM.

NGOs and Social Organizations

- Good Fellows NGO.
- HelpAge India (Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed).

Professional Experts

- Market research experts.

- Narcotics enforcement officials and experts.
- Counsellors.
- Social scientists.
- Policy makers.

Community and Social Bodies

- Family groups.
- Spiritual groups and religious leaders.
- Political parties.

Sectors and Professionals

- Researchers and scholars.
- Businesspersons, entrepreneurs, and media professionals.
- Health professionals and palliative care units.
- Banking, investment, and insurance industry professionals.

Others

- ABCEL.
- Online influencers/social influencers.
- Religious bodies/institutions.

To advance ABCEL's engagement with the Urban Aspirational Class (UAC), collaboration with a diverse array of experts and institutions is essential. Academic partnerships with prominent scholars and social work institutes can provide theoretical frameworks and evidence-based insights. Collaboration with NGOs like HelpAge India and Good Fellows, along with social scientists and health professionals, can address gaps in care, social engagement, and well-being. Engaging market research experts and online influencers can help identify emerging trends and aspirations, while alliances with policy makers and community bodies can shape impactful interventions. ABCEL should act as a bridge, integrating expertise from diverse sectors to develop comprehensive, actionable strategies for UAC development and inclusion.

Annexure 6 – detailed discussion in Session-4

Group A

- Migration status, caste, tribe, religion, and roots of participants.
- Family composition: retired or mid-career individuals.

- Aspirations for permanence in metros versus returning to hometowns.
- Lack of micro-level and qualitative data.

Group B

- Research gaps in Urban Aspirational Class (UAC).
- Absence of state-level role in family interventions in India.
- Need for intervention-based studies exploring social relationships and societal disconnection.
- Urban disconnection: why many left cities during the pandemic.
- Digital engagement and hyper-social behaviour from digital apps.
- Health concerns for senior citizens, including "Quality of Death Index" and dignity in death (e.g., fulfilling last wishes, family dynamics, place of death).
- Data sources: OTT subscription data, income tax records, LASI survey, etc.
- Rise in adult orphans, substance abuse, botox, and anti-aging clinics.
- Importance of building social connectedness.

Key Points highlighted-

Ms. Nupur

- Research should fuel actionable outputs targeting smaller cohorts, such as seasoned citizens.
- Focus on building an "Enrichpedia" and EL index as a living framework.
- Collaboration with armed forces to mentor and help them transition to corporate or non-security roles.

Mr. Sobins

- Concept of "seasoned citizens" who experience significant changes post-retirement.
- Need to operationalize UAC studies with diverse surveys.
- Large numbers in CRPF, state police, and Agniveers should be considered.

Ms. Disha

- Address employability gaps due to mismatched skills and job markets.
- Clarify intervention types and expected outcomes from ABCL initiatives.

Prof. Mouleshri Vyas

- Focus on single individuals across gender and occupation.
- Clubs like gardening, book, music, and theatre can foster community and serve therapeutic purposes.

- Activities like theatre can be adapted for assisted homes.

Prof. Aseem Prakash

- Vulnerability of successful single women aged 50-55 due to sudden life shifts.
- Intersectionality in research is essential (caste, tribe, gender, and migrant communities).
- Suggests foundational reports or white papers to raise public awareness, akin to the Human Development Index.

Prof. Manish Jha

- Advocates for empirical mapping of UAC before interventions.
- Questions the emphasis on novel cohorts over those facing greater vulnerabilities.
- Suggests small-scale studies to concretize ideas and guide new PhD admissions.

Prof. Bipin Jojo

- Importance of intersectionality to avoid monolithic perspectives in studies.
- Proposes white papers for broader visibility and collaboration.

Prof. Asha Banu

- Proposes examining retirement homes and global efforts for older adults' rights.
- Highlights vulnerability due to age and heterogeneity in older populations.

Prof. Sohini Sengupta

- Gardening clubs as platforms for affluent individuals to connect with less privileged groups.
- Potential for green spaces and small business models (e.g., balcony herb gardens).

Ms. Kamalika Guha Thakurta

- Theatre and artistic activities as a form of therapy, not just performance.

General Suggestions

- Explore intergenerational interactions via social media.
- Define focus areas for interventions and research outputs.
- Collaboration between ABCL and other organizations for targeted action.
- Leverage PhD fellowships to address UAC themes through structured research.

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