

# IMPACT ASSESSMENT OF THE DHUN PROJECT

*AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY*



# BACKGROUND

Prison and Prisoner Reformation has been a relatively neglected section in the development landscape of India. Given the large proportion of people admitted in jails in a given year, its imperative for prisoner reformation and rehabilitation to take prominence in the policy domain in order for it to generate positive internalities and externalities critical for a crime averse society.

*As per the Prison Statistics India Report, a total of 16,55,658 (2017) inmates were admitted to various jails in India during the whole year of 2017 which is a 54% increase over the same statistics of 2016 with 10,74,353 inmates.<sup>1</sup>*

In the recent years, the discourse on punishment has shifted drastically from punitive towards detention with reformation at its core, yet the contemporary prison system is plagued with overwhelming challenges such as overcrowding, understaffed personnel, delay in trial, neglect of health and hygiene, ill-treatment, deficiency in communication, lack of vocational and educational opportunities, among others.

*As per Prison Statistics India report 2017, India has a total of 1361 prisons with 4, 50,696 prisoners of which 68.5% comprise of under-trials.<sup>1</sup>*

A tenuous reformation structure and a complacent administrative setup has created a lacunae in the system which has given root to multiple non-government organizations to actively strive towards correctional programs to produce positive outcomes through external interventions.

## India Vision Foundation

The India Vision Foundation, under the aegis of Dr Kiran Bedi, aims to fill this lacunae and aspires to address the current gap in the system by striving to promote correctional programs for prisoner reformation in order to endow them with a

skill set and an education which is both empowering and therapeutic in nature. In 2017, India Vision Foundation launched its flagship program called the “The Dhun Project”, across 5 prisons in India (Dasna, Kasna in UP and Haryana, Ambala and Rohtak in Haryana), in collaboration with Sony Network Pictures India Pvt. Ltd.

## Objectives of The DHUN Project

The objective of the Dhun Project is to train male prison inmates in vocal and instrumental music in order to:

1. Enhance the overall well-being of Dhun beneficiaries
2. Reduce recidivism
3. Generate post employment opportunities for released beneficiaries

Currently, the project is in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year and has enrolled over 305 inmates across the 5 prisons over the last two years.

## Purpose of the Impact Study

The purpose of the impact study is to assess the impact generated by the Dhun Project across the three objectives mentioned above. However, India Vision Foundation's post release rehabilitation and employment generation activities have been limited, hence, in consensus with their management, we have restricted our impact study to answer the following research questions only:

1. *What is the impact of the Dhun Project on the overall well-being of its beneficiaries?*
2. *Can the Dhun Project lead to a reduction in recidivism?*

1) National Crime Records Bureau, M. o. (2016). Prison Statistics India, 2016 ;  
2) National Crime Records Bureau, M. o. (2017). Prison Statistics India, 2017

## Mushtaq Alam

Dhun Beneficiary

Kasna Prison



SOURCE: PROVIDED BY IVF WITH THE CONSENT OF BENEFICIARY

*Mushtaq had moved to the National Capital Region from his hometown in West Bengal a few years ago in search of professional opportunities. He was arrested soon after and has since been facing trial while being incarcerated in the Kasna Prison for over four and a half years now. Being a Bengali, he knew very little Hindi and felt very hesitant in communicating with the people around him. Due to this linguistic barrier, he was often subjected to bullying. He suffered from chronic depression and anxiety until he joined the Dhun project in 2017, where he started vocal and instrumental training in music, without any prior experience.*

*In words of the Kasna prison coordinator, Gagan, "When he started out, he would cry whenever he would talk of his case, but soon he started channelizing his stress into music practice. We gave him several personal sessions on personality development, behaviour change and language in order to groom him. Today he has established himself as a Master Trainer out of sheer hard work and demonstrates confidence in himself and immense proficiency in music".*

*He performs confidently on stage and has participated in several inter & intra prison music competitions. In a 'Jail Diwas' Program held recently, he was awarded the first prize among all the participants.*

*During a personal interview with him, he shared feelings of positivity and contentment. Upon his release, he aims to pursue music and expressed his aspiration to participate in the 'Indian Idol' and hopefully join the music industry someday. He says, "Dhun has helped me earn the respect and recognition I never knew I could receive in a prison".*



# METHODOLOGY

## Type of Design

We have resorted to a combination of quantitative and a qualitative techniques in order to assess the overall impact of the project. Surveys and Interviews were conducted based on the stakeholder in question, in order to gain insights and feedback, for the purpose of data collection.

We have designed a Theory of Change Framework which clearly distinguishes the inputs and activities from the outputs, outcomes and overall impact of the Dhun Project. We have relied on this framework to guide our understanding of the project and to design a structure to assess and evaluate its long term impact. Refer to Table 1

## Qualitative Surveys

Stakeholder engagement is integral to understand the overall impact generated by the Dhun Project.

The different stakeholders identified for the benefit of this study are as follows with the objective and mode defined for each in Fig 1.

## Primary Stakeholders

1. Prison Inmates (Master Trainer)
2. Prison Inmates( Treatment Group)
3. Prison Inmates (Control Group)

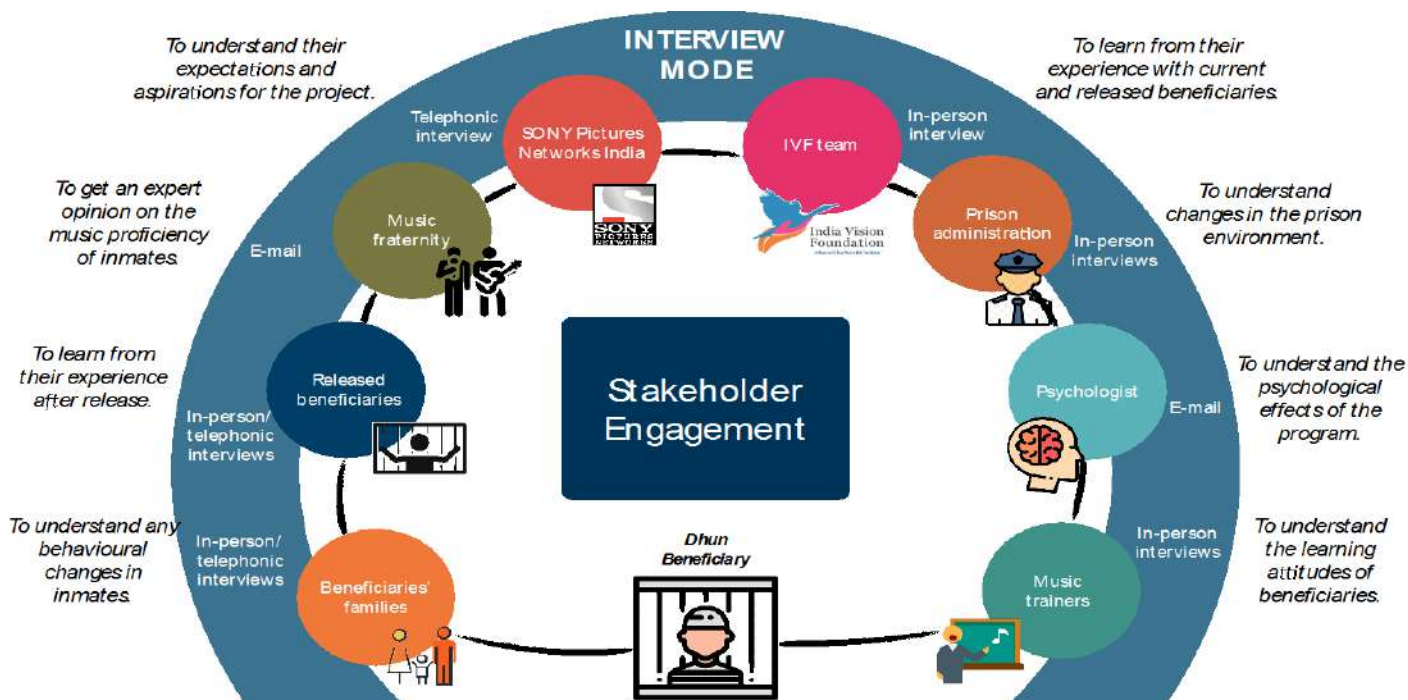
## Secondary Stakeholders

1. Prison Administration
2. Music Trainers
3. India Vision Foundation Team
4. Released Dhun Beneficiaries
5. Psychologist
6. Music Fraternity
7. Sony Pictures Networks India
8. Families of current Dhun Beneficiaries

Given that the prison inmates are the primary stakeholders, a rigorous quantitative sampling and analysis is undertaken, explained in the succeeding section.

However, the objective to engage with the secondary stakeholders is to understand the breadth and depth of impact, generated by the Dhun Project, given their experience, knowledge and association with the primary stakeholders i.e. prison inmates.

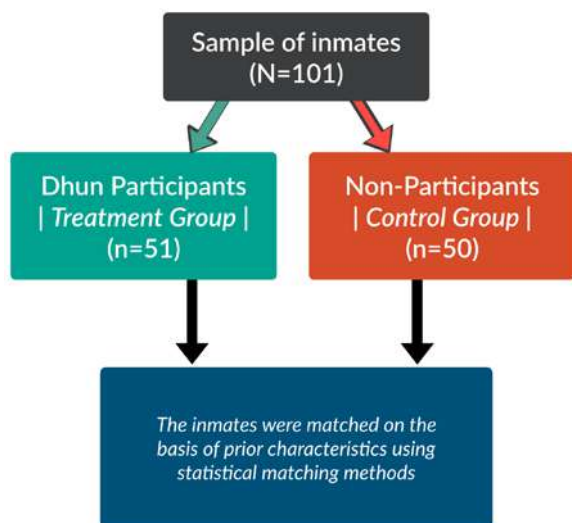
Fig 1. Mode & Intent of stakeholder interviews



## Quantitative Surveys

To test the quantitative impact of the Dhun project on the primary stakeholders i.e the prison inmates, we interviewed 101 inmates across 5 prisons. 51 inmates were part of the treatment group (the inmates participating in the Dhun project) and the other 50 inmates were part of the control group (the inmates not participating in the Dhun project).

We used a *Matched Control Design* to assess the impact of the intervention (the Dhun Project) by comparing the outcomes between the Treatment Group and the Control Group.



## Selection of Metrics

### Well-being

We adopted the Friedman Well-Being Scale, a 20 item scale which measures composite well-being across 5 broad sub scales.

We decided to group two of these together, to have 4 sub-scales which are :

Well-Being Sub-Scales
Happiness
Sociability
Emotional Stability
Self-Esteem

### Recidivism

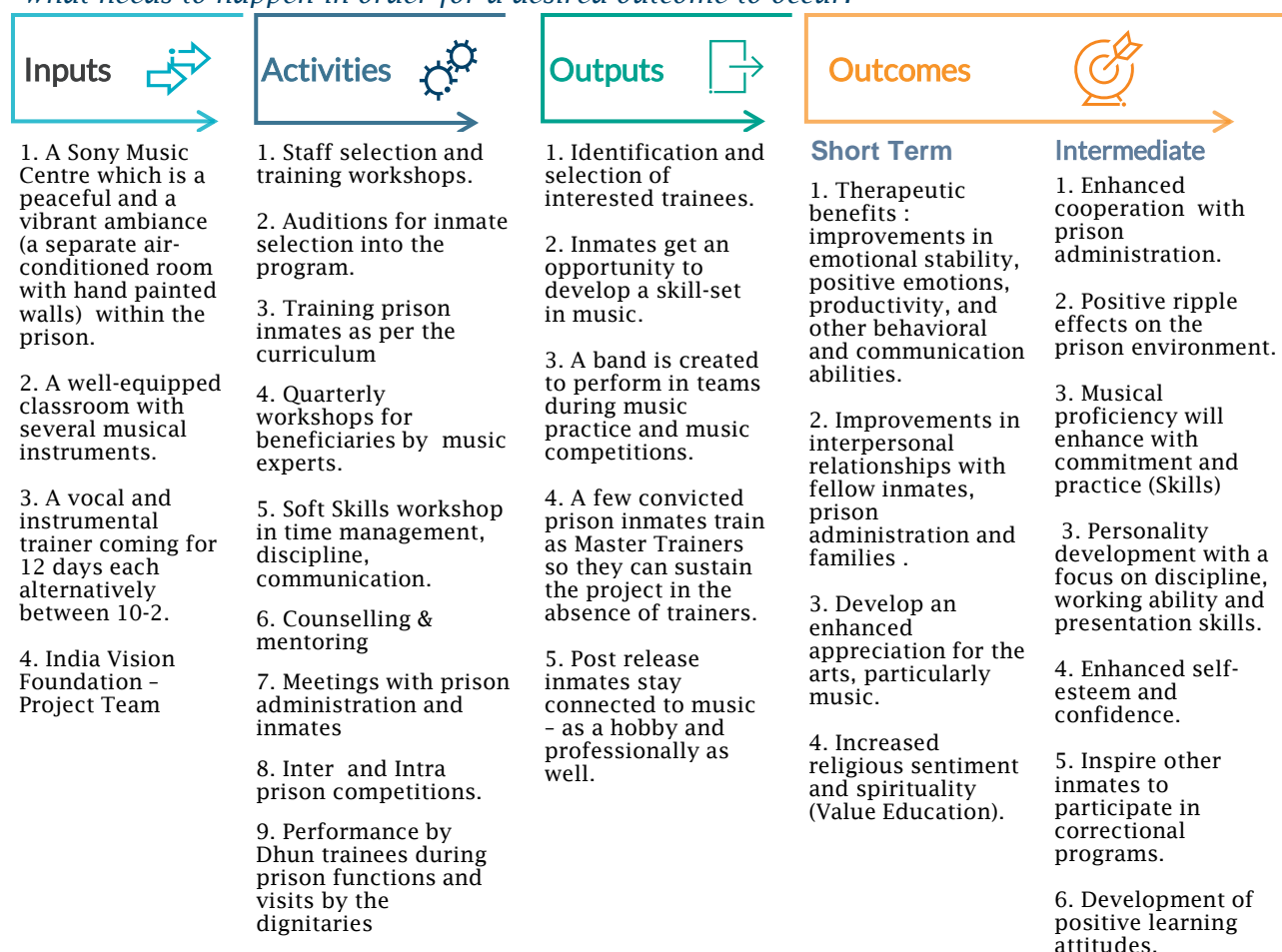
To assess Recidivism (defined as the risk of a released inmate to re-offend) scores, a family of actuarial risk assessment tools known as Level of Service Instrument (LSI/LSI-R/LSI-CMI) showed us considerable promise. It is the most favored choice of instrument for predicting risk of recidivism.

It considers certain static and dynamic factors which are highly correlated with recidivism in order to be appropriate predictors.

Recidivism Sub-Scales	
Static Risk Factors	Criminal History
	Education & Employment
	Family / Marital
	Financial Difficulties
	Accommodation
Dynamic Risk Factors	Leisure & Recreational habits
	Companionship
	Alcohol & Drug Abuse
	Emotional Interference
	Attitudes & Orientation

# DHUN PROJECT - THEORY OF CHANGE

Theory of Change is a methodology for planning, participation, and evaluation of social change. It is a roadmap that outlines the steps to achieve long term goals. *As defined by Grantmakers for Effective Organizations, a theory of change “is a systematic assessment of what needs to happen in order for a desired outcome to occur.”*



## IMPACT

- Enhance overall well-being of prison inmates.
- Reduce recidivism .
- Generate livelihood opportunities for inmates post release.
- Replicate such a model in other prisons as well
- Generate public awareness and sensitization towards inmates which will help them receive support and respect post release
- Appreciation for the arts, particularly music.

## ASSUMPTIONS AND RISKS

- Drop out & release of inmates may impact the target of the Project
- Fights/conflicts in prison may affect the functioning and timelines of the project
- Trainers leaving project frequently
- Program activities may be affected due to change in head of Prison (SP)
- Trainees selected may not be hardworking and dedicated.
- 6. Post release, it may be hard to form bands as people are usually very scattered geographically
- 7. Due to financial and contextual constraints, pursuing a career in music may be challenging.

**Table 1. The Dhun Project's Theory of change**

## Lakshmi Narayan

Released Dhun Beneficiary

Kasna Prison



SOURCE: PROVIDED BY RELEASED BENEFICIARY HIMSELF

*A Yoga teacher by profession, Lakshmi Narayan, was incarcerated for about two months in Kasna jail while facing trial.*

*Despite having little knowledge of music and no prior training before Dhun, he started his voyage in music under the guidance and tutelage of Jitendra Singh Maan, the vocal trainer in Kasna jail, and Gagan, the Project coordinator.*

*Today, he runs a music studio from his home in UP, where he composes, writes, and records his own music and often trains others in music. He has sold his music to multiple agencies and records devotional music for the brand Patanjali.*

*Since his release, he is constantly in touch with his mentors from the prison who continue to guide him on which instruments to purchase, give advice on tutorial lessons and about building a successful career in the music industry. To give back, he got the Patanjali team to donate a hundred shirts to be distributed in the prison.*

*He accredits the Dhun program for helping him find his calling and developing a passion which he can pursue as a career as well. In a letter of gratitude to the India Vision Foundation, he applauds their dedication, commitment and reformatory model for reforming the lives of people within the prison system, a subset of the population ignored by most.*

# FINDINGS

The overall impact of the Dhun Project on the Prison Inmates can be defined as **substantially positive**.

## Overall Well Being

As per our quantitative analysis, using the Friedman Well Being Scale-Adapted, there is a **29%-33% increase in the composite well being** of the Dhun participants. Details of scores on individual sub-scales can be seen in Fig 2 and Fig 3.

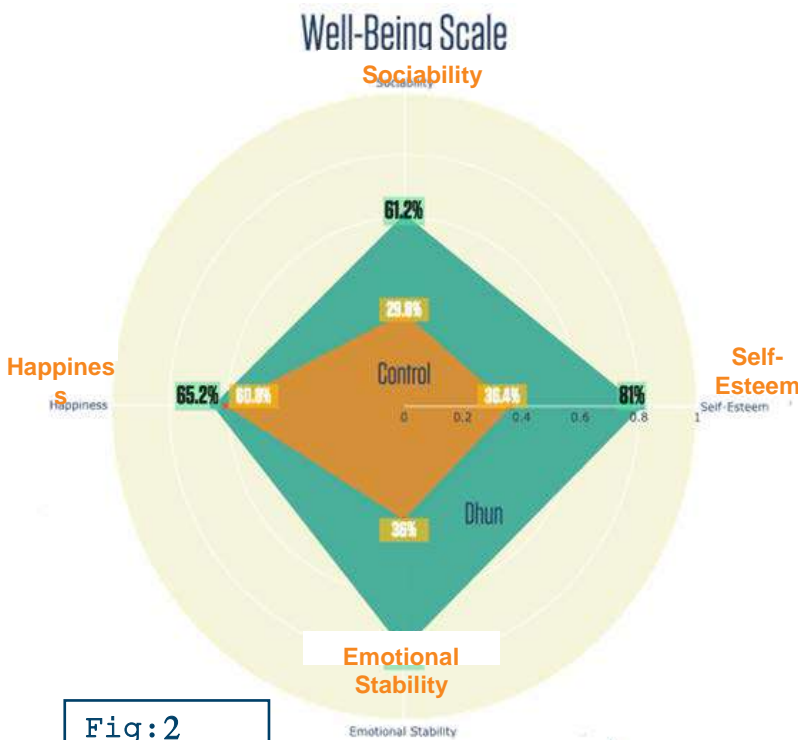


Fig 2. Individual Friedman Well-Being sub-scale scores for comparison between Dhun participants and non-Dhun participants across Sociability, Self- Esteem, Emotional Stability and Happiness.

**The overall well-being score for Dhun participants is approximately 82% more than that of non-participants.**

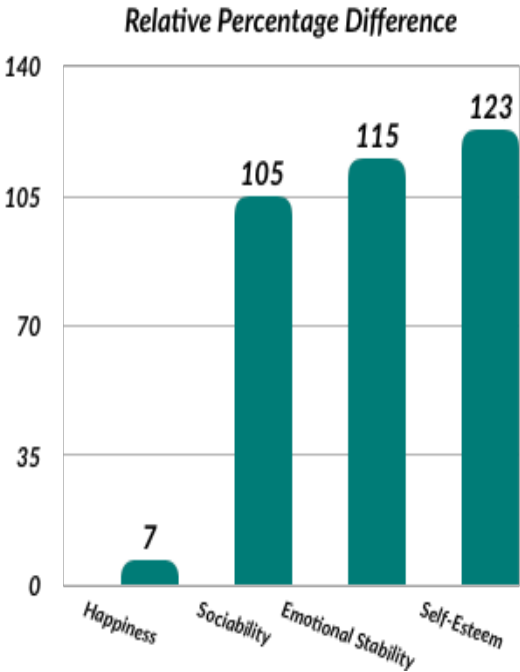


Fig 3. The sub-scales are arranged in order of increasing relative difference (between dhun participants and non-dhun participants) in percentage terms.

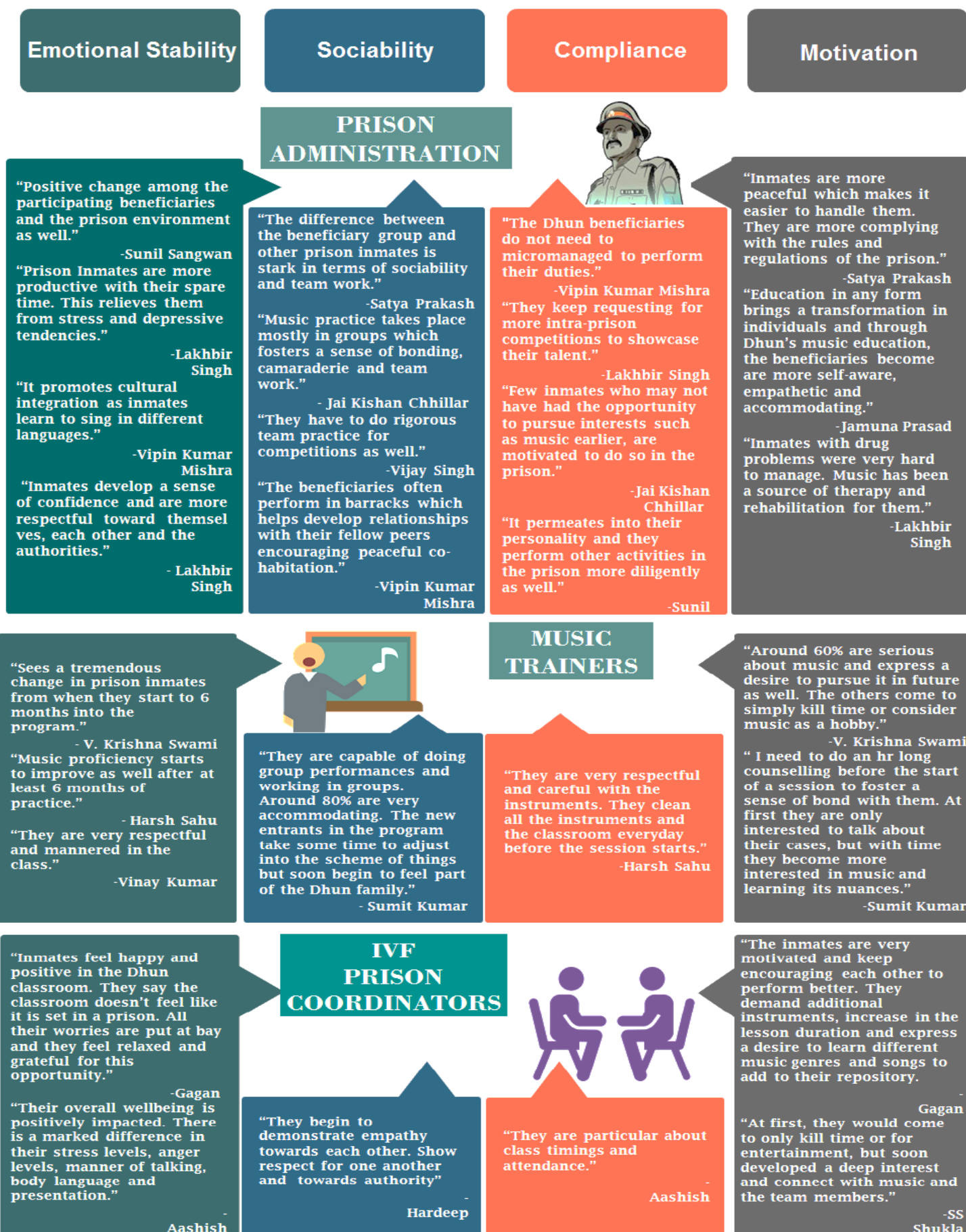
The Dhun Project has been especially significant in increasing prisoner's Self-Esteem, Emotional Stability and Sociability as the participant group scores are more than twice the scores of the non-participants.

Also for our qualitative analysis we have resorted to a testimonial oriented approach relying on secondary stakeholder feedback to draw conclusions about the impact. Refer to Table 2\* PTO.

Fig:3



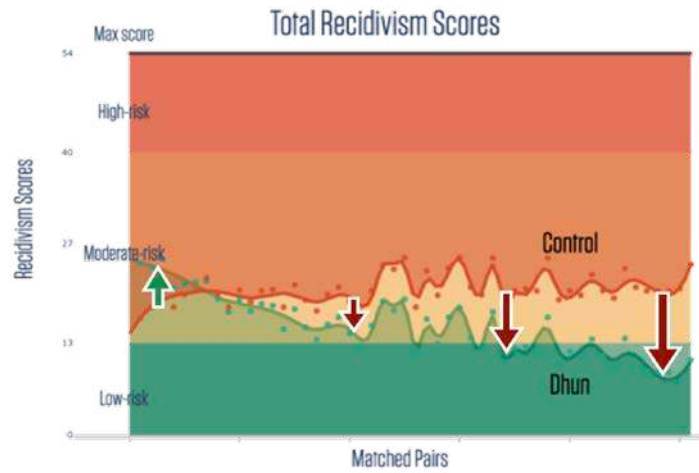
Table 2 Stakeholder comments on beneficiary behavior



Reduction in Recidivism

As per LSI-R, which gauges the inmates over certain static and dynamic factors, we can statistically claim :

- 1. 10% reduction in the probability of the Dhun beneficiaries from reoffending
- 2. The total mean recidivism risk-score for Dhun participants (15.3 points) is almost 26% lower than that of non-participants(20.6 points). Refer to Fig. 4



The average recidivism score for Dhun participants is approximately 26% lower than that of non-Dhun participants.

Fig 4. Scatter plot with interpolated curve of the total recidivism score.

The LSI-R score has 10 subcomponents, but the first 5 components which are static risk factors do not change in the long term (or change at a very slow pace). The other 5 called dynamic risk factors are generally targeted by interventions as these are more adaptable and promising targets. The composite dynamic sub-scale score for Dhun participants on 4 of the 5 dynamic sub-scales is 38.6% lower than that of non-participants. Refer to Fig. 5

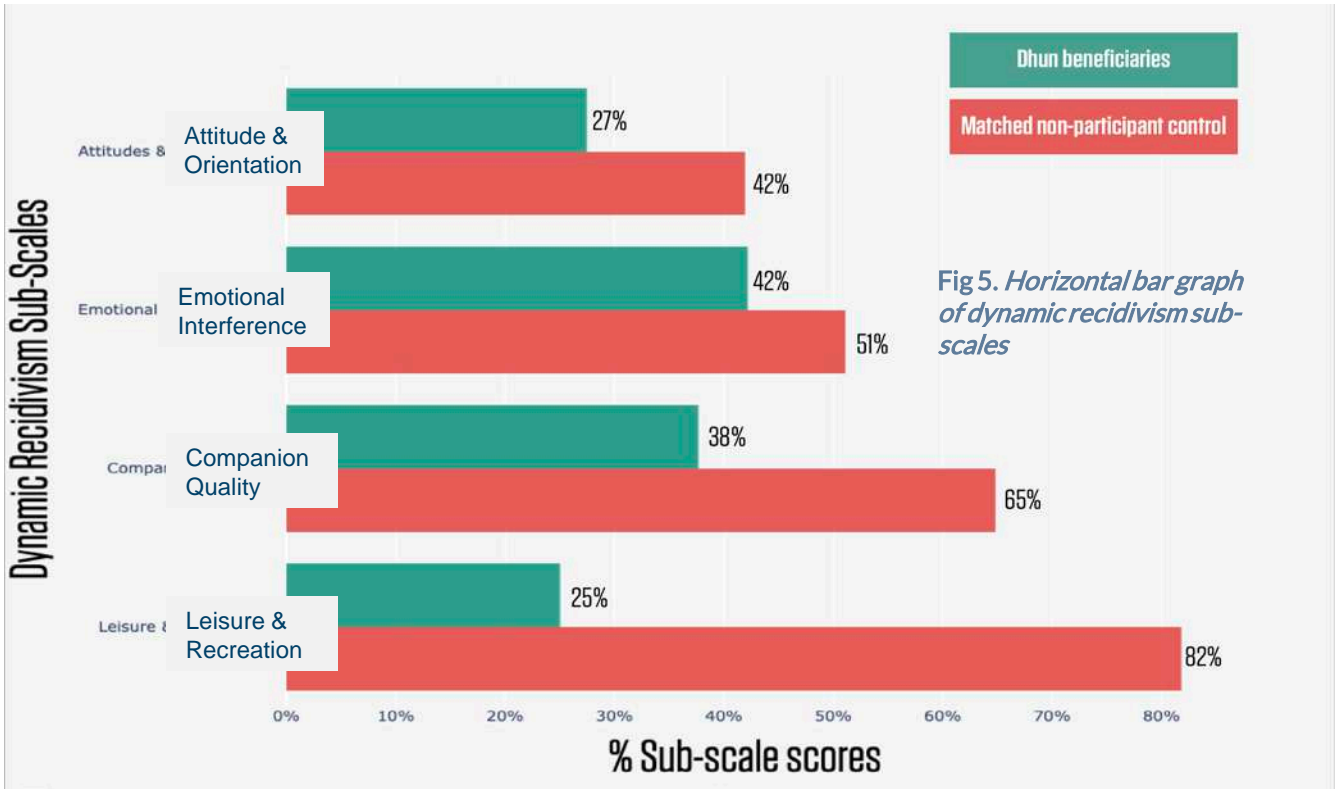


Fig5. Horizontal bar graph of dynamic recidivism sub-scales

## Q1 | What made you start this initiative?

We have been using music as a therapy with prison inmates since 2012. We formed groups and inmates started singing using pots and metals as instruments. They would write and compose songs as well.

They started performing Kirtan and pujas during festivals in the barracks. Inmates felt a spiritual awakening in them and felt at peace with themselves. It was a superstition among them that whoever took up music in prison, got bailed out sooner. The numbers in the music groups began to increase with time and inmates expressed a desire to formally learn music. Hence, Dhun was conceptualized from a very demand driven place.

We met Sony soon after and it all began to formalize. Dhun was born out of the Gurugram prison first. Our journey was very gradual and slow.

We believe that more often than not people turn to crime due to their circumstantial conditions and it's essential to give them another chance at a better life.

## Q2 | What challenges do you face in implementing the project?

- Sustaining consistent enrollment numbers since under trials often get released mid-year
- Ensuring that music isn't just seen as a source of entertainment but an educational endeavor yielding therapeutic social returns.

## Q3 | How satisfied are you and your team with this project?

**Well-being-** *There has been a drastically positive change in terms of behavior modification and prisoner well-being.*

**Recidivism-** *It's hard to predict.*

**Employment Opportunities-** *We intend to do a lot more in this direction going forward.*



**Monica Dhawan**  
**Director**  
**India Vision Foundation**



## Q4 | What changes are you looking forward to in the future?

1. Increase our reach.
2. Creating awareness about as India Vision Foundation programs and activities.
3. Conduct regular workshops for Dhun beneficiaries
4. More Inter-prison competitions.
5. Video documenting the achievements so we can replicate it in other prisons and states. Also, a source of motivation for the inmates.
6. Involving prison officials and integrating them into the program. Encouraging them to perform with the inmates will foster a sense of camaraderie, empathy and understanding (During the 25th Jubilee Anniversary of as India Vision Foundation , inmates and wardens performed together on stage). It will also generate awareness and sensitization towards these inmates as they have to eventually integrate back into the civil society.
7. To consistently monitor, track and document learnings.

## CHALLENGES & RECOMMENDATIONS

### Motivation



- Professional counselling support
- Released Dhun beneficiary visits
- Scaling up the program
- Innovation in the program structure
- Video documenting and showcasing performances
- Creation of a formal band

- Enroll inmates in educational and language lessons



### Language Barriers

### Absentee trainers



- Better incentives for trainers
- Virtual lessons in the interim
- Proficient Master Trainers

- Creating awareness in the prison about IVF activities
- Frequent public performances



### Project enrollment

### M & E mechanism



- Bi-annual data collection
- Database with updated information of all stakeholders
- Regular third party Impact Assessments

- Sensitizing prison officials by holding workshops
- Involving prison staff in activities and programs



### Administrative Support

### Post-release support



- Certification courses in music will enhance employment prospects post release
- Placement opportunities
- Increased Engagement



### Q1 | What was your objective for investing in the Dhun Project?

1. *To promote music in the country especially among people who are deprived of it such as these prison inmates who have no connect with the outside world.*
2. *To enhance inmate productivity levels by engaging them in music and encouraging them to use their time more judiciously.*
3. *To boost confidence by empowering inmates with a strong music skill set which will help them gain employment opportunities post release.*



**Rajkumar Bidawatka**  
CSR Head  
SONY Pictures Networks India

### Q2 | What are your expectations going forward?

1. *India Vision Foundation can impart intensive music training of professional standards to inmates in the prison.*
2. *They should connect the beneficiaries with some champions or gurus post release as well to ensure professional prospects in music.*
3. *Share with SONY some inmate success stories we can publish to garner greater attention to the cause of prisoner reformation and the initiatives made by Dhun in this direction.*



*Ek India Happywala*

### Q3 | How satisfied are you with this project?

1. *I am very impressed with the overall project in terms of:*
2. *Numbers achieved*
3. *Musical proficiency of inmates as witnessed during the as India Vision Foundation 25th Jubilee function.*
4. *Quarterly and annual reports shared with Sony on progress made.*

## **Dharmendra's Family**

*Dhun Beneficiary*

*Gurugram Prison*



SOURCE: TAKEN DURING PROTIVITI TEAM'S BENEFICIARY FAMILY VISIT

*Dharmendra, a DJ by profession, has been serving his term in the Gurugram Prison for more than four years now. Dharmendra's life is marked with tragedy. When he was only a teenager, his father passed away from cancer, forcing him to drop out of school to support the family. At the age of just 21, he was arrested and incarcerated along with his elder brother.*

*We visited his residence, a two bedroom construction, in the outskirts of Gurugram, home now to five people, the mother, the youngest brother, who is a dancer by profession, and three sisters, one of whom is married, another who now supports the family financially, and the youngest one in college.*

*A year ago, Dharmendra joined the Dhun Project at the Gurugram Prison. His mother and younger brother visit him quite frequently. According to his younger brother, he has seen a drastic change in him in terms of his disposition.*

*He says, "Dharmendra was very quiet and distressed at first. He would barely talk to us when we would visit him. But ever since he joined Dhun, he has opened up a lot. He looks forward to meeting us and shares his experiences in Dhun. When he comes back on parole, (21 days of release accorded to convicts), he plays Tabla all day and often discusses his aspirations of pursuing music upon release. He talks about how he and I could collaborate our passions for dancing and music and create an entertaining duo."*





“

The focus is what is right before you – to give it your best. It sows the seeds of tomorrow. ”

**Dr. Kiran Bedi**



#### **Authors**

Ms. Mannat Jaspal, Mr. Aditya Chhabra

#### **Advisory Members**

Mr. Puneet Gupta, Managing Director, Protiviti India

Mr. Amit Bundi, Associate Director, Protiviti India

Mr. Ananay Jain, Manager, Protiviti India

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