

# Impact Assessment Report

## Republic of Zoofari – Petting Zoo

A CSR Initiative of Sonalika International



## **Impartiality and Independence Statement**

At CauseBecause, we are committed to upholding the highest standards of impartiality and independence in our evaluation and assessment processes. We firmly declare that our operations are devoid of any biases or conflicts of interest. Our evaluations of social projects, initiatives, programs, and schemes—regardless of whether they are implemented or managed by corporate groups, non-governmental organizations, government bodies, or any other entities—are conducted with absolute neutrality and objectivity.

As an independent stakeholder, our primary objective is to ensure that all social projects that we assess of have an opportunity to add value to, achieve their intended impact and align with their overarching goals. We strive to support initiatives that contribute positively towards nation-building, as well as the well-being of the planet and its people.

CauseBecause operates solely with the intention of fostering meaningful progress and supporting efforts that lead to sustainable and transformative outcomes. Our commitment to impartiality and independence is integral to our mission, and we take all necessary measures to safeguard these principles in every aspect of our work.

## **Our commitment to OECD**

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) DAC Network on Development Evaluation (EvalNet) has defined six evaluation criteria – relevance, coherence, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability – and two principles for their use. These criteria provide a normative framework used to determine the merit or worth of intervention (policy, strategy, programme, project, or activity). They serve as

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## Executive Summary

The **Republic of Zoofari**, an upcoming petting zoo in Delhi, is a pioneering CSR initiative by **Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS)**, the philanthropic arm of **International Tractors Limited (ITL)**.

Conceptualized by **Ms. Akanksha Mittal**, this project seeks to bridge the growing disconnect between urban children and nature by providing an immersive, interactive environment with animals, greenery, and recreational spaces.

### Key Highlights of the Assessment

- **Objective:** The zoo aims to foster **environmental awareness, empathy towards animals, and mental well-being** among urban children who lack exposure to natural habitats
- **Design & Facilities:** The 2.5-acre facility includes **animal enclosures, play zones, water bodies, and educational spaces** to create a holistic nature experience.
- **Current Status:** Construction began in **September 2022**, with completion expected by **October 2023**.
- **Expected Impact:**
  - **Educational:** Teaches children about biodiversity, animal care, and conservation.
  - **Social:** Encourages family bonding and community engagement.
  - **Environmental:** Promotes **in-situ conservation** by housing rescued animals.
- **Recommendations:** Focus on **sustainability, staff training, and expanded outreach programs** to maximize long-term benefits.

## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Overview of Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS)

Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS) was established in 2015 as a CSR arm of M/s International Tractors Ltd. (ITL). The foundation of SSDS marks a significant step towards advancing ITL's commitment to corporate social responsibility, focusing on impactful community initiatives.

The organization operates under several legal and regulatory frameworks to ensure transparency and accountability, including registrations with the Registrar of Societies, Income Tax Department, and Department of Companies Affairs.

### 1.2 Mission and Vision

SSDS aims to foster social development through welfare programs focusing on health, education, and community empowerment. Its vision is to cultivate a sustainable and equitable society through impactful CSR initiatives and active community engagement.

#### About this report

CauseBecause has been commissioned by **Sonalika Tractors** to conduct an independent **impact assessment** of the "Republic of Zoofari" CSR initiative, implemented by **Sonalika Social Development Society (SSDS)**.

This study evaluates the **project's developmental progress, anticipated social impact, and alignment with SSDS's mission** to reconnect urban children with nature through an interactive petting zoo experience. The assessment focuses on **construction milestones, educational value, animal welfare standards, and community engagement potential**.

Using a robust mixed-method approach, the assessment combines desk research (reviewing project reports and stakeholder data) with field interviews (engaging beneficiaries and partners). A dedicated team, guided by research experts, analyzed findings to measure reach, effectiveness, and alignment with SSDS's mission and CSR compliance. The insights will help refine the initiative for sustained positive outcomes.

## 1.3 CSR Compliance

SSDS ensures its alignment with the CSR Law's requirements. This organization operates within the legal framework established for CSR activities, thereby enhancing its credibility and commitment to social responsibility. The compliance with CSR regulations underscores the organization's dedication to maintaining high standards of transparency, accountability, and ethical conduct in its social initiatives.

## 2. Impact Assessment Methodology

Team CauseBecause studied the project concept and its objectives thoroughly and also had brief discussions with Team CSR at Sonalika before devising the assessment methodology.

### 2.1: Desk review of available documents

As a first step, a thorough desk review of all the available material related to the project was done. This included literature provided by Team CSR as well as the Clinic.

The documents included:

- I. Project concept notes and implementation framework
- II. Project monitoring reports and project progress reports
- III. Names and coordinates of stakeholders, especially the project beneficiaries
- IV. Thorough details of courses and other activities under the project
- V. Monitoring reports by the company or third-party entities

### 2.2: Field research

The research team applied the following techniques for assessing the outcomes of the project:

- Thorough discussions with direct and indirect stakeholders of the project, including Sonalika team and the partner NGOs
- Interviews (virtual meetings and telephonic talks) with project stakeholders.

### 2.3: Qualitative data analysis

In order to collect essential information from the sampled participants, a professional team of management trainees, communication executives and market research interns worked under senior research professionals.

- **Quality control during collection**

CauseBecause project lead and supervisors engaged in the interviews.

- **Data verification post-collection**

Project lead verified interviewees' responses through random sampling. They also did a post-interview satisfaction survey.

- **Data analysis**

Experienced research professionals and the IT team at CauseBecause worked together for data analysis. The latest version of IBM® SPSS® platform, an effective statistical software, was used for extraction of accurate insights.

### 3. Need Assessment Summary

The Republic of Zoofari serves as an innovative solution to these urban challenges through its multifaceted approach:

- **Hands-on Learning:** The petting zoo provides children with direct interaction opportunities, fostering empathy and responsibility as they care for and learn about different animal species.

These experiences create lasting impressions about wildlife conservation and ecological balance.

- **In-Situ Conservation:** By housing rescued animals like rabbits, guinea pigs, and various bird species, the facility offers a safe habitat while educating visitors about animal welfare and preservation efforts.
- **Therapeutic Benefits:** Research confirms that animal interactions significantly reduce stress and anxiety in children. The zoo's carefully designed spaces will provide calming environments where children can decompress while forming positive connections with nature.

## KEY FINDINGS

### 4. About the Project: Republic of Zoofari

#### 4.1 Project Concept

The Republic of Zoofari represents a visionary approach to urban environmental education and recreation. Designed as a sanctuary for both children and animals, the project's core philosophy centers on creating meaningful connections between urban youth and nature.

The vision statement, "*A sanctuary where children reconnect with nature through gentle animal interactions,*" reflects a commitment to fostering environmental stewardship from an early age.

The tagline "*Bringing storybook worlds to life*" encapsulates the magical experience the zoo aims to create, transforming childhood fantasies about animals and nature into tangible, educational encounters.

This conceptual framework addresses the growing nature-deficit disorder observed in urban children while promoting values of compassion and conservation through carefully curated animal interactions.

#### 4.2 Geographic Scope

Strategically located in Dera Mandi, Chattarpur, the 2.5-acre facility occupies a prime position in South Delhi's developing green belt. This location was carefully selected for its accessibility to key demographic groups, being within a 10-kilometer radius of numerous international schools, residential communities, and family entertainment hubs.

The site's topography features natural elevation changes that will be creatively incorporated into the zoo's landscape design, while its proximity to major arterial roads ensures good connectivity for visitors across the NCR region. Future expansion plans include developing dedicated parking facilities and exploring public transport partnerships to enhance accessibility for visitors from across Delhi.

### 4.3 Proposed Animals & Enclosures

The zoo's animal selection and enclosure design follow international best practices for petting zoos while adapting to local environmental conditions:

- **Rabbit & Small Mammal Zone (338 sq ft)**  
This climate-controlled habitat will house domesticated rabbits, hamsters and guinea pigs in naturalistic settings with burrow simulations. The design emphasizes gentle interaction opportunities while ensuring animal welfare, with separate resting areas that allow creatures to retreat when needed.
- **Grazing Animal Area (278 sq ft)**  
The open-air goat and sheep enclosure features artificial rock formations, shaded areas, and specially designed feeding stations that allow safe interaction. This zone will demonstrate traditional animal husbandry practices while teaching visitors about ruminant digestion and the importance of grazing animals in agricultural ecosystems.
- **Avian Conservation Zone (110 sq ft)**  
The walk-through aviary will showcase indigenous pheasant species and domesticated turkeys in a planted environment that mimics their natural habitats. Interactive feeding stations and educational talks will highlight the ecological roles of birds in seed dispersal and pest control.
- **Aquatic Ecosystem (2,500 sq ft):** The centerpiece water body incorporates a recirculating filtration system to maintain water quality while supporting aquatic plants, fish, and visiting bird species. This living laboratory will demonstrate wetland ecology principles through guided exploration activities and microscope stations for plankton observation.

### 4.4 Play & Educational Zones

The zoo's recreational infrastructure blends fun with learning through carefully designed activity areas:

- **Physical Development Zone:** The adventure area features a spring-loaded trampoline for motor skill development, a therapeutic sandpit with excavation tools for sensory play, and a child-scale bowling alley that teaches physics concepts through play. These installations are designed by child development specialists to promote coordination and spatial awareness.

- **Aquatic Discovery Center:** The indoor aquarium complex showcases local freshwater species in biologically accurate habitats, while the artificial waterfall demonstrates erosion and water cycle principles. Interactive touch screens provide information about conservation threats facing Delhi's aquatic ecosystems.
- **Creative Learning Spaces:** The storybook-themed library nook offers nature literature and quiet reading spaces, while the balloon decor workshop area allows children to create animal sculptures under instructor guidance. These zones stimulate imagination and artistic expression while reinforcing ecological concepts introduced during animal encounters.

#### 4.5 Rules & Safety Measures

The zoo implements a comprehensive safety framework developed in consultation with veterinary experts and child safety specialists:

- **Supervision Protocols:** All animal interaction areas will maintain a 1:10 staff-to-visitor ratio during peak hours, with trained facilitators guiding every encounter. Staff will monitor both animal stress signals and child behaviour to ensure positive experiences for all participants.

**Hygiene Infrastructure:** Strategically placed handwashing stations feature child-friendly designs and temperature-controlled water. The zoo will implement a color-coded wristband system to track which visitors have completed hygiene protocols after animal contact.

- **Behavioral Guidelines:** Clear pictorial signage will communicate interaction rules at each enclosure. Prohibited behaviors include sudden movements near animals, feeding without supervision, and any actions that might distress the creatures. The zoo will employ positive reinforcement techniques to encourage respectful behavior from young visitors.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** The facility includes a dedicated first-aid station staffed by certified personnel, with specific protocols for potential animal-related incidents. All staff undergo regular training in emergency response and conflict de-escalation techniques

## 5. Assessment Findings

### 5.1 Construction Progress (2022-23)

The Republic of Zoofari has made substantial progress since construction commenced in September 2022. As of the latest assessment, approximately 80% of core infrastructure - including the administration block, primary animal enclosures, and play zones - has been completed. The admin building features specialized spaces for veterinary care, staff training, and visitor services, with interior finishing works currently underway. Animal habitats have been constructed following international zoo design standards, incorporating safety features like double-gated entry systems and proper drainage.

However, several critical components remain in development. The water body and landscaping elements, which form the ecological heart of the project, are approximately 40% complete.

Delays have occurred due to the complex engineering required for the recirculating water system and the need to establish proper aquatic plant life before introducing fish species.

The team is working diligently to address these challenges while maintaining the projected October 2023 launch date, though some soft-opening adjustments may be necessary to ensure all habitats meet welfare standards before public access.

### 5.2 Strengths

- **Professional Execution**

The project benefits tremendously from the involvement of specialized architects and contractors with proven zoo design experience. The design team from M/s Idal Archs has successfully incorporated innovative features like climate-controlled small mammal enclosures and accessible viewing platforms. Construction firm M/s Argus Techno has demonstrated particular expertise in creating safe, durable animal habitats that balance visitor interaction opportunities with animal welfare needs.

- **Holistic Approach**

What sets Republic of Zoofari apart is its seamless integration of education, recreation and conservation objectives. The layout strategically positions learning stations adjacent to corresponding animal habitats, creating natural opportunities for experiential education. Play areas have been designed not just for entertainment, but to develop specific skills - like the sandpit that teaches archaeological concepts alongside motor skills. Conservation messaging is woven throughout the visitor experience, from signage explaining species' ecological roles to visible sustainability features like solar panels and rainwater harvesting systems.

- **Community-Centric Design**

Every aspect of the zoo has been planned with its diverse user groups in mind. School groups will benefit from dedicated programming spaces and curriculum-linked activity sheets. Families can enjoy well-planned picnic areas and stroller-friendly pathways. The event lawn has been strategically sized to accommodate community gatherings while maintaining safe distances from animal areas. This thoughtful approach extends to operational planning as well, with timed ticketing systems to prevent overcrowding and ample rest areas positioned throughout the site. The zoo's success will largely depend on this ability to serve multiple visitor needs simultaneously while maintaining excellent animal welfare standards.

### 5.3 Challenges

- **Regulatory Approvals and Compliance**

The project has obtained necessary clearances from municipal authorities and animal welfare boards. The complex approval process for housing and exhibiting animals in an urban environment has required multiple rounds of documentation submissions and site inspections.

- **Environmental Considerations**

Developing the water body and landscaping elements has proven more complex than initially anticipated due to Delhi's extreme seasonal weather variations. The summer heat has accelerated water evaporation rates in the prototype lake, requiring redesign of the circulation and filtration systems.

Soil quality testing revealed contamination issues in certain zones, necessitating expensive remediation before safe planting could begin. These unexpected environmental factors have not only impacted timelines but also required substantial additional investment in sustainable solutions like native drought-resistant plants and solar-powered water pumps.

- **Operational Readiness**

The project team has had to develop comprehensive training programs from scratch, including animal behavior management, child engagement techniques, and emergency response protocols. This human resource challenge threatens to delay the soft opening unless addressed through partnerships with veterinary colleges and accelerated training initiatives.

- **Community Engagement**

The team has had to invest extra effort in communicating the zoo's conservation mission and demonstrating how it will benefit local schools and families, rather than becoming just another commercial attraction. Building this community trust has proven time-consuming but essential for long-term success.

## **6. Recommendations**

- i. **Enhanced Educational Programming**

Develop structured educational modules aligned with school curricula to maximize learning outcomes. This should include:

- Age-appropriate guided tours with trained educator-naturalists
- Interactive digital learning stations at key animal habitats
- Take-home activity kits reinforcing conservation concepts  
Partner with Delhi's education department to become an official field trip destination, ensuring regular student visitation.

ii. **Advanced Staff Training Program**

Implement a comprehensive training framework for all personnel:

- Specialized animal handling certification for caretakers
- Customer service training focusing on child engagement
- Emergency response drills conducted quarterly
- Continuous professional development in zoo management best practices  
Establish partnerships with veterinary colleges for internship programs to build a talent pipeline.

iii. **Sustainability Upgrades**

Incorporate additional eco-friendly features to strengthen environmental credentials:

- Install solar panels to power 50% of zoo operations
- Implement water recycling system for animal enclosures
- Create composting facility for organic waste
- Develop native plant nursery supporting habitat restoration  
These measures will reduce operational costs while providing tangible examples of sustainability for educational purposes.



## 7. Conclusion

The Republic of Zoofari represents a visionary step toward reconnecting urban children with nature through immersive, educational, and interactive experiences. By combining animal encounters with play-based learning, the project addresses critical gaps in environmental awareness and outdoor engagement for Delhi's youth. Its well-planned infrastructure, professional execution, and community-focused design position it as a model for future urban petting zoos, with the potential to inspire similar initiatives across India.

To maximize its impact, the zoo should prioritize educational programming, staff training, sustainability measures, and community engagement, ensuring long-term success. With these enhancements, the Republic of Zoofari can become not just a recreational space but a transformative hub for conservation education, fostering a generation of environmentally conscious citizens. As it prepares for its opening, the project stands as a testament to the power of CSR initiatives in creating meaningful social and ecological change.

*As the Project is at Construction / Development Stage and expected to be completed in Oct-2023 and hence a thorough Impact Assessment study will be conducted after inauguration/start of the project in the year 2023-24.*



Glimpses of work in progress









For detailed discussion and presentation, contact:

**Ranjan Rayna**

Director & chief strategist

ranjan@causebecause.com



**Saucepan Media Pvt. Ltd**

M10, FF, Greater Kailash 2

New Delhi – 110048

[www.causebecause.com](http://www.causebecause.com)