BioSpect
the business of Bi
24 years of leveraging the business of Bio
www.biospectrumindia.co

Bank CSR funds shift towards cancer infrastructure as NCD burden mounts

10 August 2026 | News

Oncology is where the convergence is sharpest

India has committed to reducing premature mortality from non-communicable diseases (NCD) by one-third by 2030, in line with the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Meeting that target requires diagnostic and treatment capacity that the public system alone has struggled to build.

As per the FY26 annual and ESG reports of the country's five largest banks suggests corporate social responsibility funding is beginning to move into that gap.

The pattern is consistent across ICICI Bank, HDFC Bank, State Bank of India, Axis Bank and Kotak Mahindra Bank. Healthcare is a named CSR focus area at all five, and the money is going into equipment, hospital blocks and institutional capacity rather than the screening camps and one-off outreach that characterised earlier CSR cycles.

Oncology is where the convergence is sharpest. ICICI Foundation, the CSR arm of ICICI Bank, has two cancer blocks under construction at Tata Memorial Centre facilities in Visakhapatnam and Navi Mumbai, and has tied up with 15 institutes on the National Cancer Grid. It is also setting up a cancer research centre with the Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, which will house an MRI LINAC and take up work on AI-based early detection. The Foundation's healthcare interventions have reached 30 lakh people across 600 hospitals since 2020.

"ICICI Foundation has been engaging with renowned and large health institutions to facilitate treatment of non-communicable diseases, recognising it as a key focus area. In fiscal 2026, healthcare support initiatives positively impacted approximately 500,000 individuals, primarily in the areas of cancer care, cardiac care and vision care," said Pradeep Kumar Sinha, Chairman, ICICI Bank, in his message in the bank's ESG report for 2025-26.

Cardiac and vision care follow the same institutional model. ICICI Foundation supported four cardiac institutions during the year with heart-lung machines and catheterisation labs, working towards a decentralised network capable of intervention within the golden hour. In vision care, it funded two new floors for uvea and glaucoma treatment at Sankara Nethralaya, Chennai, along with dedicated units for rare ocular cancers.

Kotak Mahindra Bank equipped 30 hospitals with ambulances and diagnostic machines including PET-CT, CT and MRI. Its paediatric oncology support runs through about 15 accommodation facilities across 12 cities for families of children under long-term treatment. State Bank of India funded a medical equipment package at the Bagchi Sri Shankara Cancer Centre and Research Institute, Bhubaneswar, biomedical equipment for a neurosurgery department in Kolhapur, and a digital mammography unit in Vijayawada.

Axis Bank has described its approach as systems-oriented, infrastructure-led and patient-centric, prioritising cancer care, mental health and paediatric healthcare. Its FY26 work went into long-term capacity building rather than short-term service delivery, reaching over 16,000 people directly across Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and West Bengal, besides pan-India projects.

Strengthening the primary layer

Not all of the funding sits at the tertiary end. SBI upgraded 453 primary health centres during the year and supplied 12 types of medical equipment to 216 sub primary health centres in Dharashiv, Maharashtra. Its healthcare and sanitation programmes reached just over 30 lakh people.

HDFC Bank has focused on access in difficult terrain. Eight mobile medical units run with Smile Foundation across Jammu and Kashmir, Ladakh, Punjab and Uttarakhand reached nearly four lakh people with consultations, screening for hypertension, diabetes and anaemia, and referrals into public health centres. In Assam, the Maripur Health Centre in Barpeta was upgraded into a Health and Wellness Centre, widening NCD screening.

Thus, what emerges from the five reports is a funding pattern aligned closely with the NCD agenda. Cancer, cardiac disease, vision loss, diabetes and hypertension are the conditions these banks have taken up, and the institutions receiving the support, from Tata Memorial Centre and IISc to district-level primary health centres, span the full width of the care pathway.