





### Micro VC funds in India

## Emerging players in Indian startup funding landscape



### **Foreword**

India has a vibrant and prosperous Startup ecosystem which is booming. The growth of these Startups is supported by investors ranging from angels and incubators to large global VC funds. In the past decade, Micro VCs (including funds with latest active fund size of <US\$ 30M and angel networks) have emerged as promising players in the Indian Startup investor landscape providing capital as well as mentorship to their portfolio companies.

This report is intended to provide startups, investors and various other industry stakeholders an overall perspective on these Micro VCs and the role that they are playing in the Indian Startup ecosystem. The report in particular talks about the evolution of Indian Micro VC ecosystem in terms of number of Micro VCs, capital infused and investments made by them, and their role in supporting the Indian Startups.

This study includes insights from a survey of 46 Micro VCs on their investment strategies, as well as their value proposition for LPs and Startups. We also present case studies of recently founded Micro VCs, and of Micro VCs that graduated to larger funds.

Micro VCs are undoubtedly playing a material role in the growth of Startups in India. They are giving the much needed risk capital as

early stage Startups seek to achieve product market fit and become ready to scale with stable business models. Though the cumulative dollar spending of the entire lot maybe equal to the largest Series D or E financing, but the impact of the Micro VC funded universe can be 10x larger in the long-term. We are excited to see how the Micro VC ecosystem evolves over time. This report reflects our perspectives as of 18th February 2021. Contact us for further updates.

We, at Praxis Global Alliance, IVCA and AWS, look forward to continuing this discussion and exchanging notes with our friends in this segment and beyond.

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Madhur Singhal Managing Partner & CEO, Praxis Global Alliance

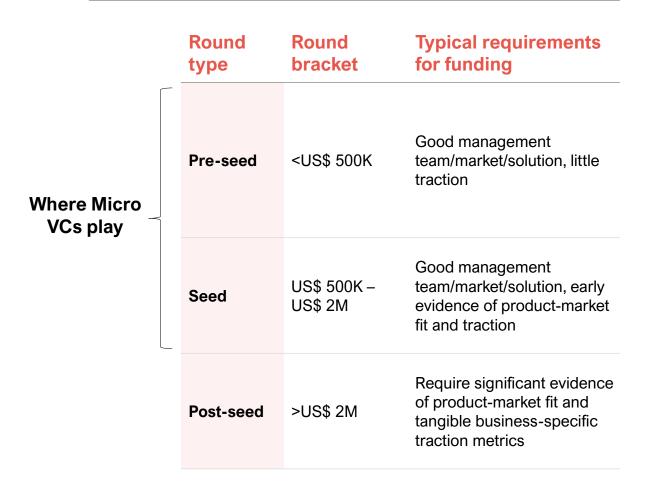
Rajat Tandon President, IVCA

# For the purpose of this report we have included funds with latest active fund size of <US\$ 30M and angel networks\* in the definition of "Micro VCs"

#### Micro VC definition

- Six types of investors in Startup ecosystem
  - Angels
  - Incubators and accelerators
  - Family offices
  - Micro VCs
  - India focussed large funds
  - Large global VC funds
- For the purpose of this report, we have included funds with latest active fund size of <US\$ 30M and angel networks\* in the definition of "Micro VCs"
- Most Micro VCs operate in the pre-seed and seed space with few of them participating in post-seed rounds, or making follow-on post-seed investments
- We have also seen funds graduating to post-seed segment over time, as they raise more LP capital, in the backdrop of successful exits

#### **Seed funding landscape**



# Context: High risk, high return seed cheques have yielded fantastic returns in the past, highlighting the gap, need and rationale for early stage investing and Micro VCs

Early stage investments in Indian Startups						
Startup	Current valuation	Investor	Round size	Round stage	Investment year	Returns
Flipkart 🙀	US\$ 26B	helion venture partners	US\$ 800K	Seed	2008	16.7x
оуо	US\$ 8.4B	ONSUMER PARTNERS	US\$ 1.25M	Seed	2014	~6x returns
OLA	US\$ 4B	-ORIOS	US\$ 156K	Angel	2011	~375X
zomato	US\$ 3.85B	info <b>edge</b> ventures	US\$ 1M	Seed	2010	Stakes worth US\$ 752M
<b>9</b>	US\$ 3.45B	ELEVATION	<us\$ 1M*</us\$ 	Seed	2015	>10x returns
unacademy	US\$ 1.9B	BLUME	US\$ 1.6M	Seed	2016	-

## Seed stage investors make contrarian bets enabling multiple Startups become household names

"News of Uber Angel Investors making 3600x return while most passed on it, reminds me of the time I approached Angel's to co invest with me in Ola, most were like "yaar I can wave my hand and get a cab", so I ended up writing 70% of the round!"

- Rehan Yar Khan, OriosVP

"We had invested in Zomato, when it wasn't even called so. It was called Foodiebay then. When we had started investing, there was no SoftBank – we were in the mindset to start investing in businesses that we understand."

- Hitesh Oberoi, CEO, Info Edge

"Towards the end of 2014, multi-stage investment firm SAIF Partners got an opportunity to evaluate a food tech firm for an investment. It was not an easy decision. The food tech firm, only a few months old, was delivering just a handful of orders in the Koramangala area of Bengaluru at that time, even as it was scouting for its first institutional cheque"

- Livemint

### **Executive summary**

- Micro VCs are either funds with latest active fund size of <US\$ 30M or angel networks. They invest primarily in preseed and seed rounds
- High risk, high return seed cheques have yielded fantastic returns and have enabled creation of several unicorns as we know now → highlighting the rationale and need for early stage investing and Micro VC funds
- Number of Micro VCs in India is growing → There are 88 Micro VCs in 2020 up from 29 in 2014
  - Increase in Micro VC numbers is driven by India's booming Startup ecosystem, Micro VCs ability to fill the funding gap between institutional and angel investors and increasing domestic LP interest in Startups
  - Top factors driving LP investment in Micro VCs include better return potential, small cheque size requirement, deep operational expertise, flexible deal terms and co-investment opportunities
- Micro VCs have infused US\$ 341M in the Indian Startup ecosystem through 730 deals across 566 Startups in the past 3 years
- Micro VCs typically invest in the sunrise sectors, ~60% of Micro VC investment in 2020 were in SaaS/ Al sector, consumer apps & platforms, e-commerce and listing platforms
  - Of the 46 Micro VCs surveyed in the study, 52% are sector agnostic; SaaS/AI, BFSI, Healthcare & life sciences are the major focus verticals for Micro VCs
- GP track record in Micro VCs is solidifying as some Micro VCs have grown to larger fund sizes → Blume Ventures,
   3one4 Capital that started out as Micro VCs have already raised or have target fund sizes of >US\$ 100M

### **Summary: Evolving Micro VC ecosystem in India**

88

**US\$ 341M** 

566

**730** 

Number of Micro VCs in India in 2020. Up from 29 in 2014 Capital infused by Micro VCs in Indian Startup ecosystem in the last 3 years Startups funded by Micro VCs in the last 3 years

Deals made by Micro VCs in the past 3 years

#### **Trends in Indian Micro VC ecosystem**



Number of Micro VCs have been increasing due to their potential of addressing a funding gap and booming Indian Startup ecosystem



LPs invest in Micro VCs due to higher return potential, smaller cheque size, flexible deal terms, co-investment opportunities and deep operational expertise



GP track record in Micro VCs is solidifying as some Micro VCs have grown to larger fund sizes



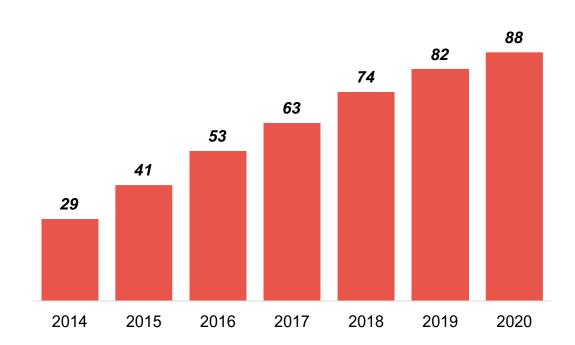


SaaS/AI, Consumer app and platforms, Ecommerce and listing platforms were the top 3 sectors that Micro VCs invested in 2020

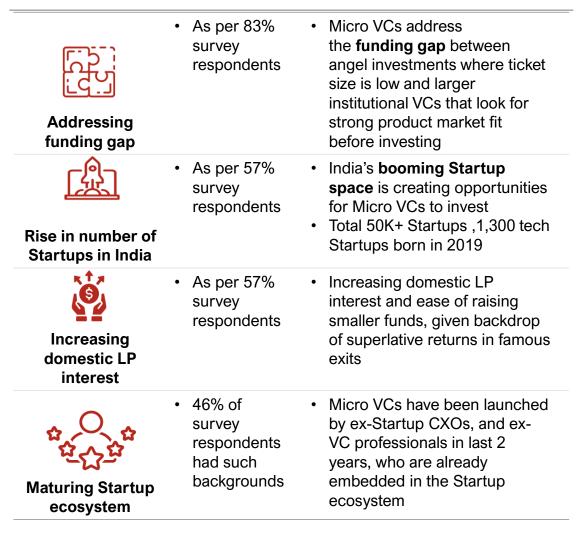
# Number of Micro VCs in India has grown from 29 in 2014 to 88 in 2020 driven by their potential to address a funding gap and booming Startup ecosystem in India

# Micro VCs in India has grown from 29 in 2014 to 88 in 2020

#### # Micro VCs in India 2014-2020



#### **Factors driving growth of Micro VCs**



### Multiple Micro VCs have been founded in recent years

2016 2017 2018 2019 2020









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**ROOTS** VENTURES















**PENTATHLON** 







Sauce vc













Omphalos Venture Partners, LLC

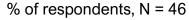


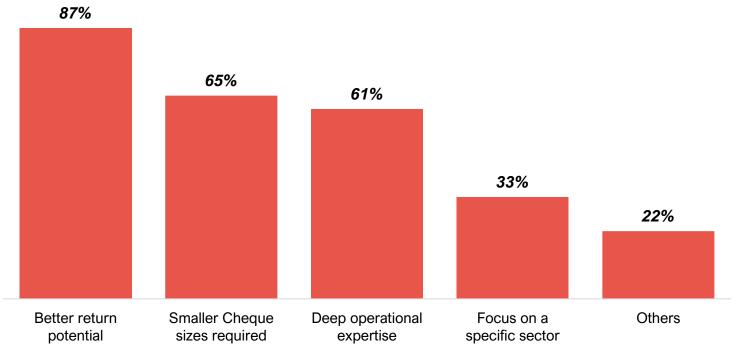
# LPs invest in Micro VCs due to higher return potential and smaller cheque sizes; flexibility, operational expertise and co-investment options are other major reasons

LPs invest in Micro VCs primarily due to better return potential and requirement of smaller cheque sizes

Q. What is the advantage for LPs to invest in Micro VCs (over say other VCs)? (N = 46)







"Strong network to enable portfolio growth & deep operational expertise"

- An India based *Micro VC* 

"Portfolio diversification with minimum capital outlay and allowing investors to 'Double up on Winners' via co-investment mode" are the main reasons why LPs invest with Micro VCs"

- An India based Micro VC

"Micro VCs have more flexible models for their LPs. For example, Better is a 0% fee fund with a standard 20% carry and offers a deal by deal access and optionality"

-Better Capital

### Micro VCs have invested US\$ 341M in 730 deals across 566 Startups between 2018-20

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Micro VCs have invested US\$ 341M between 2018-20

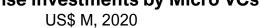


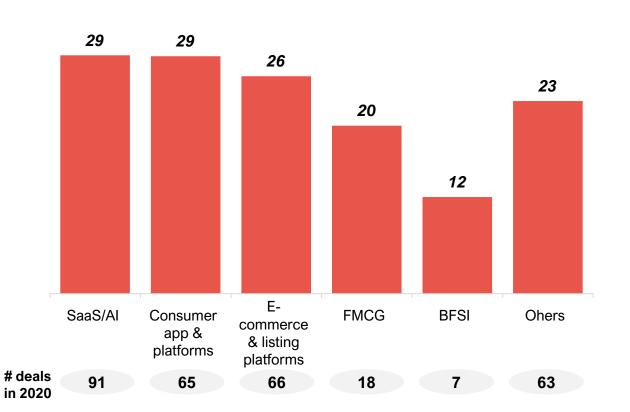
### While SaaS/AI, consumer apps and platforms were the top sectors Micro VCs invested in 2020, healthcare and life-sciences, BFSI are also becoming their focus areas

SaaS/AI, Consumer apps and platforms were the top invested sectors by Micro VCs in 2020

52% of Micro VCs are sector agnostic, SaaS/AI is a focus sector for 41% Micro VCs



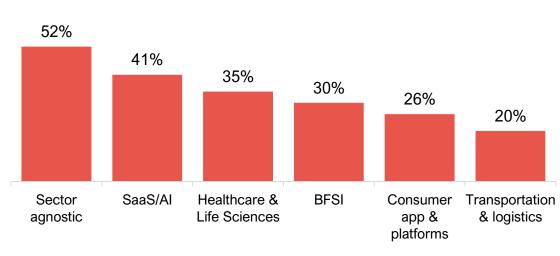




Q. Which are your focus Verticals/Sectors for your Startup investments? (N = 46)

#### Focus verticals / sectors

% of respondents, N = 46



## Case study: Blume Ventures → Graduating from a US\$ 23M Micro VC fund in 2011 to \$102M early-stage fund today







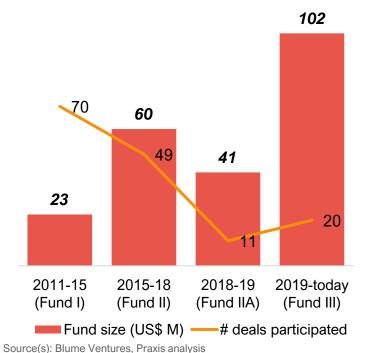
**Headquarter** Mumbai



No of investments

#### Fund raising and investment journey

## Fund size (US\$M) and number of rounds participated



#### **Select perspectives**

#### How did Blume Ventures grow so fast?

Our Fund I was almost entirely HNIs & family offices (average cheque size <US\$ 0.5M), while almost 75% of Fund III is institutional investors such as Sovereigns, Multi Family Offices, Investment Houses etc. (whose average cheque size is US\$ 10M). Thus institutionalization of the fund capital base has been a key contributor to the growth of Blume's AUM. Institutionalization in turn is spurred by the success demonstrated by Blume's investment team in partnering with the right Startups, as well as the growing profile and brand of Blume Ventures over last ~10 years



#### Role played by Micro VCs in Indian Startup ecosystem

"In an ideal ecosystem, Micro VCs would've grown faster but Indian VC was built by the imported valley model for the first 10 years. Micro VCs are willing to take more smaller sized risks and bets than larger VCs. This is healthy. They create a lower cost environment for a proliferation of Startup talent and products that fuel the ecosystem. The cumulative \$ of the entire lot maybe equal to the largest Series D or E financing but the impact of the Micro VC funded universe can be 10x larger in the long-term."

















# Case study: 3one4 Capital → Platformed approach to investments, deep involvement with portfolio enabled 3one4 Capital raise a fund every year since 2016





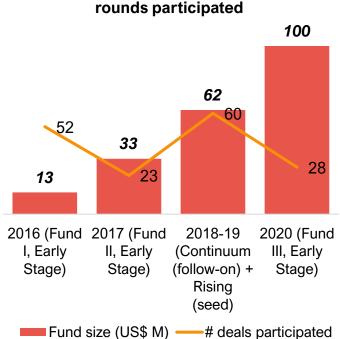




Rounds participated 163

#### Fund raising and investment journey

## Fund size (US\$M) and number of rounds participated



#### **Select perspectives**

#### How did 3one4 Capital grow so fast?

3one4 Capital focuses on tech-enabled market mapping/ idea selection, deep-involvement with portfolio, and calibration of portfolio growth, to enable maximized returns. This forms basis of its TENET® framework (Tech-first operationalization, Entrepreneur incentivization, Network effects maximization, Efficient governance, and Thought leadership) which helps deliver portfolio outperformance. This in turn has allowed the firm to align with its investors for the long term to establish a base of continuous capital that supports the firm's rapid growth

#### Role played by Micro VCs in Indian Startup ecosystem

"Micro VC teams with the right experiences can match deep market insights with domain experts to help craft India's next generational companies. Further, with large markets, a deep talent pool, and world class products coming out of India, governance and institutional readiness are the new moats in the early stage and imperatives for the best-in-class companies aiming to be market leaders. 3one4's rapid journey from a Micro VC to an early-stage fund within half a decade is a working example of how homegrown fund managers are working with young companies to align with global standards from day one and consistently build towards market leadership."

-Pranav Pai, Founding Partner, 3one4 Capital

















# Case study: Better Capital → A leading pre-seed fund pioneering new trends in VC industry, and sought after by founders for its high conviction investing









#### **Fund strategy**

#### **Investment thesis**

- Focused on "India as a thesis" betting on Indian founding teams building:
  - For India (FinTech, EdTech, Agri etc)
  - For the world (SaaS, Software, DeepTech)
- Market-first investor with focus on being the first cheque into a company.

Better has pioneered several trends in India, with characteristics that set it apart:

- Solo GP fund
- Performance focus: 0% fees, 20% carry
- Open fund structure: Investing across sectors, markets, check sizes, stages, etc.
- 'Deal by deal' fund providing flexibility, access & optionality to the LPs
- Public annual portfolio update newsletters
- 30+ Startup advisors from companies like Google, Facebook and others

#### **Select perspectives**

#### Why founders chose Better Capital?

"Better is one of the few seed stage investors in India who can see the big picture and able to ask the right question to judge the potential of the team. Better helped me with my seed stage funding where they exceeded the funding goal by 140% in a matter for 5 days. If you have a crazy dream, determination to chase it and can build the right team to execute, I strongly recommend talking to Better."

- Amit Gupta, Co-founder, Yulu and ex-Co-founder, InMobi

"Better has been the perfect backer for us right from the start. Vaibhav truly cares for his portfolio companies and is always trying to help. He made numerous introductions and helped us connect to right mentors/partners."

- Nukul Upadhye, Co-founder, Bijak

#### A note from Vaibhav Domkundwar, Founder & CEO, Better Capital

"We have created a new model for early stage investing that allows us to invest in the most innovative and disruptive companies at the earliest stages without the constraints around largeness of markets and outcomes which are hard to judge at the founding stages. Uber and AirBnB are great examples. This has helped us partner early with founders at Open, Teachmint & many others."

















# Case study: WaterBridge Fast Forward (WFF) → a transparent, fast and standardized approach to seed investing launched by WaterBridge Ventures









#### **Fund strategy**

#### **Investment thesis:**

 Seed stage business models across B2B or B2C in key sectors including but not limited to B2B SaaS, Consumer internet, eCommerce, Education, Financial services, Gaming, Health, and Mobility

Fast Forward provides a unique and transparent investment process to Startups:

- Fully remote and online process
- Feedback within 7 business days of application submission
- Yes/No investment decision after single pitch directly to the WBV partnership
- Fair and transparent process with Term
   Sheet template shared with Founders ahead of partner call
- "One to One" and "One to Few" sessions with WBV Portfolio Founders

#### **Select perspectives**

#### **Background of WaterBridge Ventures (WBV):**

WaterBridge is an India focused, home grown, early-stage VC with a **portfolio of 24 leading investments** spanning across consumer and enterprise businesses with a preference for tech-led business models. WBV is currently investing out of Fund II and has a combined AUM of \$150 Million across its 2 funds. WBV is typically the first institutional VC on the cap table with a preference to lead rounds with a first cheque size ranging from \$250K to \$2.5 Million across the Seed – Series A spectrum.

#### Why WaterBridge launched Fast Forward?

Seed funding is often subject to (long) cohort selection processes and delays. Funding amount is sometimes contingent on future deliverables and investment decision timelines are prolonged and therefore unsettling for early-stage founders for whom seed funding is the critical first step to start building. Fast Forward cuts through the noise and gets seed capital in the hands of the most deserving entrepreneurs in an easy and transparent fashion and is designed to be time and process efficient for Founders. Apart from the initial seed cheque, follow-on capital is also reserved for these investments, that are treated on-par with the rest of the portfolio.

Indicative portfolio companies

WaterBridge Fast Forward









WaterBridge Ventures









# Case study: Inflection Point Ventures (IPV) → Institutionalizing angel funding through active portfolio engagement









#### **Fund strategy**

#### Investment thesis

 Sector agnostic, early to mid-stage disruptive Startups backed by strong founding team

#### Why founders choose IPV?

IPV 'invests first in the Founders, later in the Startup'

- Active Market access Diverse network of 3500+ members spanning across more than 15 countries & 25 industries.
- Expert panel Sessions & 1:1 interactions with 15+ Empaneled domain experts to guide & counsel portfolio Startups
- Active Assist 3 VC Connect programs per year connecting portfolio Startups with >70 VCs & Family offices for follow-on rounds
- Experiential Growth Capital Quarterly review call of each Startup with investors, for guidance & business growth support

#### **Select perspectives**

#### How is IPV democratizing Angel investing?

IPV is a **3500+** strong members angel investing firm which supports newage entrepreneurs, providing them monetary & experiential capital by connecting them with a diverse group of investors. Some of the reputed IPV members include: Aniruddha Malpani (Malpani Ventures), Sanjay Mehta (100xVC), Pramod Kabra (TrueNorth LLP), Prakash Iyer (Haldiram Group), Amit Dalmia (Blackstone Group), Rahul Bothra (Swiggy) and Deepak Chandran (Wipro Consumer Care & Lighting).

IPV envisions to be the world's most accessible angel-investing network providing funding & non-monetary support to Startups to enable them to scale & grow. IPV is democratizing Angel investing through:

- Minimum ticket size of INR 2,50,000 per investor per Startup
- In-depth business & financial due diligence of early-stage Startups
- Industry-first & proprietary scorecard & valuation summary, accessible to all members for investment decision-making

IPV believes Indian Startup ecosystem is evolving & investors recognize the need to identify Startups early & help them in their journey through not just capital but also mentorship & network resulting in the rise & growth of the Micro VC in India













## Portfolio companies of Micro VC survey respondents [1/2]

Micro VC fund	Notable portfolio companies	Micro VC fund	Notable portfolio companies
100X.VC	Doc32, SAWO Labs, Knorish, Fyllo, The Renal Project, Vitra.Al, Solvio	Caspian Impact Investments	Equitas, Ujjivan, Jana SFB, Aptus, MHFC
1Crowd Fund (1Funds Domestic Scheme I)	Lightsaber Food Ventures Pvt. Ltd., Hoi Food Concepts Pvt. Ltd, Voiro Technologies Pvt. Ltd, Rocketium.com Technologies Pvt. Ltd.	Eagelwings Ventures Alliance Network	GalaxyCard, Nidra, Celcius
50K Ventures	Automate.io, Analystt.ai	First Cheque	Fleetx, Fashinza, DrinkPrime, YoloBus, Saveo, Kutuki
9Unicorns Accelerator	Mitron TV, Toch, Klub	Gemba Capital	PlumHQ, Finly, SleepyCat, Zuper, ClickPost, Airmeet
Fund	Cropin Technologies solutions, StringBio, Bighaat Agro,	Ideaspring Capital	Lavelle Neworks, Karomi (ManageArtworks), Worxogo, ConvertCart, Mihup
Ankur Capital	Niramai health analytix, ERC eyecare, Jiny	IPV Advisors Pvt. Ltd.	Milkbasket, Toch, Otipy, Truly Madly, Niki.ai, Vested
Arali Ventures	Finbox, Wingman, Insent, Unbox Robotics, oivi	ITI Growth Opportunities Fund	ECom Express, Grab.in, RevOS, Inventor Robotics, Hubhopper
Arka Venture Labs	Firsthive, Nirmata, Enact	July Ventures Fund	Stockal
Artha Venture Fund	Agnikul, LenDenClub	Luminaire Capital	MyGate, Mobile Premier League
Better Capital	Open, Rupeek, Khatabook, Teachmint, Dukaan, Bijak, Airmeet, Skill Lync, Jai Kisan, Yap, Jupiter, Stoa School, Growfix	Mount Judi	MedTech, BioTech, Innaccel, 4basecare

Source(s): Micro – VC survey (N = 46) © Praxis Global Alliance | 17

## Portfolio companies of Micro VC survey respondents [2/2]

Micro VC fund	Notable portfolio companies	Micro VC fund	Notable portfolio companies
Omphalos Ventures India LLP	Arzooo, Phable Care, GegaDyne Energy, Matelabs	Speciale Invest	Agnikul Cosmos, Wingman AI, ePlane Company, Astrogate, Cynlr
Pentathlon Ventures	DeepTek.ai, TurboHire, Tripeur	Sprout Venture Partners	Goals101, Trell, Pyxis Al, Ripplr
PointOne Capital	Kashware, Finin, ConnectedH, Tamasha, KahaniBox, ProtectPay, Opmagic, Kiwi, Vahak	StartupXseed Ventures	DarwinBox, Bellatrix, CloudSEK, SteradianSemi, AlphalCs, SmarterBiz
Pravega Ventures	Innovaccer, Fyle	Turbostart	Ken42, TRANSO, Argoid, Sciative, Pichain, Tathya.earth
Prophetic Ventures	Jai Kisan, Newton School, Vernacular.ai	Upsparks	Decentro, Pyxis, Hobspace
Rockstud Capital Investment Fund (RCIF)	Lilac Insights Pvt. Ltd.	Varanium NexGen Fund	Riskcovry
Samyakth Capital	BharatPe, Rentomojo, Dukaan, Liquiloans, Home Capital	Veda.VC	Dukaan, Flickstree, Wobot, Vernacular.ai, Agnikul, One Impression, Fitso
Sauce.vc	XYXX Innerwear, The Whole Truth Foods	WaterBridge Ventures	Unacademy, DoubtNut, MagicPin, Bijnis, Chalo, PocketPills, Atlan, 9Stacks, ZipLoan, Nymble
SEA Fund	Inc 42, Wigzo, Genrobotics, Bestdoc, Advarisk	White Unicorn Ventures	Drivezy, Square yards, Inc42, Aisle
She Capital	Clovia and Samosa Singh	Windrose Capital	Ideaforge Technologies, Invento Robotics, Biddano, Nivesh

Source(s): Micro – VC survey (N = 46)

### **About IVCA**



**IVCA** is the oldest and most influential PE & VC industry body in India, its purpose is to promote the Alternative Investment Asset class. IVCA supports the ecosystem by facilitating advocacy discussion with the Government of India, policymakers, regulators, and supports the entrepreneurial activity, innovation, and job creation in India.



Rajat Tandon
President, IVCA

This is a wonderful report defining the Indian Micro VC ecosystem and covering data and insights around how India has witnessed a growth in the number of Micro VCs and their investments. Micro VCs play an interesting role in the Startup investor landscape supporting Startups at a very early stage when the product-market fit hasn't been significantly demonstrated. Micro VC investments are starting to bear fruit as some Startups funded by Micro VCs have become unicorns and many have gone to raise their next funding rounds. Micro VCs have been able to add value to their portfolio companies as well as generate some good exits. We expect Micro VCs to play a prominent role in the Indian early-stage Startup funding space ??

#### **About AWS**



Amazon Web Services (AWS) is the world's most comprehensive and broadly adopted cloud platform, offering over 200+ fully featured services from data centers globally. Millions of customers—including the fastest-growing startups, largest enterprises, and leading government agencies—are using AWS to lower costs, become more agile, and innovate faster. AWS has unmatched experience, maturity, reliability, security, and performance that our customers can depend upon for the most important applications.

AWS works with the Private Equity (PE) and the Venture Capital (VC) community across the world, to offer technology, go-to-market, and engagement support to their portfolios.



Promotional cloud credits as part of the AWS Activate program, for companies to get started with cloud infrastructure & services



Training and Certification programs to upskill Portfolio Employees



Technology to decrease operation costs, drive operational efficiencies, modernize applications and build with highest standards for privacy and data security



Innovation through Analytics, Machine Learning, Robotics, IoT and Al



Go-to-market with enterprise introductions, event sponsorships, sponsored webinars, sell-through & sell with AWS representatives



Public visibility through blog posts, video interviews, case studies and speaking engagements at our/partner events

If you are a PE/VC Fund, or other Startup-enabling organization and would like to become an AWS Activate provider, please scan the QR Code or access the link below

https://aws.amazon.com/activate/providers/







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### How we help our clients

We work with leading financial sponsors and strategic investors to identify opportunities, build investment thesis and maximize shareholder value. Our agile business delivery model coupled with our deep network of industry practitioners enables clients to deploy our capabilities on any deal.



#### **Fund strategy**

Help investors in identifying growth drivers, investment themes, attractive sub-sectors and potential targets in alignment with the fund thesis



#### Operational due diligence

Help investors to understand the operational strengths and weaknesses of the target to scale up and meet the b-plan goals



#### Full scale commercial due diligence

Assessment of market potential, customer proposition, competitive positioning, operational efficiency, channel value creation & risk mitigation



#### Tech due diligence / Digital diligence

Assessment of current capabilities and future requirements of tech & infrastructure of the target



#### Value creation blueprinting

Advise portfolio companies on business transformation, go-to-market strategy, enhancing organization productivity etc.



#### **Fund retainer**

Help investors in end-to-end fund operations from maintaining deal pipeline, evaluating shortlisted deals to deal closure support

