

# 2017

## STATE OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA

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युवा कार्यक्रम और खेल मंत्रालय  
MINISTRY OF  
**YOUTH AFFAIRS AND SPORTS**



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# **STATE OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA**

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**2017**



**TABLE OF CONTENTS****LIST OF FIGURES****LIST OF BOXES****LIST OF CASE STUDIES**

<b>OVERVIEW</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>1. YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA</b>	<b>22</b>
Evolution of volunteerism in India	23
Defining youth volunteerism in India	26
Manifestations of volunteering by youth in India	29
Discourses around youth volunteering in current times	33
Measuring youth volunteering in India	34
Conclusion	36
<b>2. ECOSYSTEM SURROUNDING YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA</b>	<b>38</b>
Government	40
Civil Society	53
Private Sector	62
Conclusion	64
<b>3. YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA</b>	<b>66</b>
Profile of respondents	67
Nature of volunteering	69
Volunteer motivations	71
Modes of communication about volunteering opportunities	79
Perceived barriers to volunteering and challenges faced	80
Perceptions of impact created on community and self	81
Conclusion	84
<b>4. IMPACT OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING INITIATIVES IN INDIA</b>	<b>86</b>
Volunteerism and education	87
Health and well-being	90
Gender equality and justice	93
Hunger	96
Water and sanitation	98
Climate change and disaster relief	100
Social entrepreneurship	103
Social inclusion	105
Peace, justice and strong institutions	108
Conclusion	111
<b>5. CONCLUSION: WAY FORWARD</b>	<b>114</b>
<b>ACKNOWLEDGMENTS</b>	<b>127</b>

## LIST OF FIGURES

<b>FIGURE 1:</b>	Ecosystem - youth volunteering	40
<b>FIGURE 2:</b>	Age group	67
<b>FIGURE 3:</b>	Educational qualification	68
<b>FIGURE 4:</b>	Hours devoted to volunteering	69
<b>FIGURE 5:</b>	Type of volunteers	70
<b>FIGURE 6:</b>	Activities undertaken by volunteers	71
<b>FIGURE 7:</b>	Motivations to volunteer	72
<b>FIGURE 8:</b>	Volunteer motivation, personal benefits	74
<b>FIGURE 9:</b>	Modes of communication	79
<b>FIGURE 10:</b>	Effectiveness of modes of communication	80
<b>FIGURE 11:</b>	Perceived barriers	80
<b>FIGURE 12:</b>	Challenges faced by volunteers	81
<b>FIGURE 13:</b>	Volunteers' perception on having created impact	82
<b>FIGURE 14:</b>	Impact on self	83
<b>FIGURE 15:</b>	Areas of prioritization for promoting youth volunteerism	117

## LIST OF BOXES

<b>BOX 1:</b>	Excerpt from the Briefing Note for Countries on the Human Development Report, 2016	15
<b>BOX 2:</b>	Excerpt from the 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development	16
<b>BOX 3:</b>	Examples of secular voluntary action initiatives	24
<b>BOX 4:</b>	National consultation on youth volunteerism, 2013	33
<b>BOX 5:</b>	NYP 1988	41
<b>BOX 6:</b>	Feedback from NSS volunteers	45
<b>BOX 7:</b>	Definition of the voluntary sector as per the steering committee on the voluntary sector for the twelfth five year plan (2012-17)	53
<b>BOX 8:</b>	Fellowships for volunteers	54
<b>BOX 9:</b>	Online volunteering platform – connectfor.org	60
<b>BOX 10:</b>	NSS volunteers perception on remuneration for volunteers	69
<b>BOX 11:</b>	Volunteer compact code of good practice, UK	117
<b>BOX 12:</b>	Creating awareness on the importance of volunteering - Lebanon	124
<b>BOX 13:</b>	Prominent campaigns - India	125

## LIST OF CASE STUDIES

<b>CASE STUDY 1:</b>	Service delivery and philanthropy	29
<b>CASE STUDY 2:</b>	Paheli's eco-friendly sanitary pads	31

<b>CASE STUDY 3:</b>	The Anna Hazare Movement	31
<b>CASE STUDY 4:</b>	NSS - literacy campaign	43
<b>CASE STUDY 5:</b>	Contribution by NSS volunteers during natural disasters	45
<b>CASE STUDY 6:</b>	Contribution of NYKS volunteers – I	47
<b>CASE STUDY 7:</b>	Contribution of NYKS volunteers - II	47
<b>CASE STUDY 8:</b>	NYKS contribution to generating awareness on the dangers of substance abuse in Manipur and Punjab	48
<b>CASE STUDY 9:</b>	Mondrita Chatterjee - Sanitation Champion (Jharkhand)	51
<b>CASE STUDY 10:</b>	i-Saksham - PMRDF initiative being implemented in Bihar	51
<b>CASE STUDY 11:</b>	Meena Bagthariya - Rajkot	52
<b>CASE STUDY 12:</b>	Barefoot College in Rajasthan	56
<b>CASE STUDY 13:</b>	Navjeevan Trust, Gujarat	56
<b>CASE STUDY 14:</b>	Robin Hood Army, New Delhi	57
<b>CASE STUDY 15:</b>	Pehchaan Street School, Mumbai & New Delhi	57
<b>CASE STUDY 16:</b>	Community-based institutions' contribution to curtailing drug menace in Himachal Pradesh	58
<b>CASE STUDY 17:</b>	Helper of Handicapped, Kolhapur, Maharashtra	59
<b>CASE STUDY 18:</b>	Video volunteers	60
<b>CASE STUDY 19:</b>	Global Citizens India	60
<b>CASE STUDY 20:</b>	Global Himalayan Expedition - creating impact through volun-tourism	61
<b>CASE STUDY 21:</b>	Corporate - NGO partnerships promoting employee volunteering	63
<b>CASE STUDY 22:</b>	Vayali Folklore group, Kerala	73
<b>CASE STUDY 23:</b>	Vidhayak Sansad, Maharashtra	74
<b>CASE STUDY 24:</b>	Compassionate Kozhikode	75
<b>CASE STUDY 25:</b>	Arunachalam Muruganantham - Tamil Nadu	76
<b>CASE STUDY 26:</b>	Anil Kumar Misra, Chattisgarh	77
<b>CASE STUDY 27:</b>	Fellowships in India - education	88
<b>CASE STUDY 28:</b>	Teach India - skill development	89
<b>CASE STUDY 29:</b>	Chhattisgarh Mitandin programme	91
<b>CASE STUDY 30:</b>	The Banyan, Chennai	92
<b>CASE STUDY 31:</b>	Kudumbashree initiative, Kerala	94
<b>CASE STUDY 32:</b>	Breakthrough, Delhi	95
<b>CASE STUDY 33:</b>	Going organic in Katekalyan village, Chattisgarh	97
<b>CASE STUDY 34:</b>	Anbodukochi, Kerala	99
<b>CASE STUDY 35:</b>	Nature and adventure club, Gujarat	101
<b>CASE STUDY 36:</b>	UNV - Disaster relief	102
<b>CASE STUDY 37:</b>	Honey Bee Network	104
<b>CASE STUDY 38:</b>	YWSEDP with Udyogini, Jharkand	104
<b>CASE STUDY 39:</b>	Oscar foundation, Mumbai, Maharashtra	106
<b>CASE STUDY 40:</b>	Arushi, Bhopal	107
<b>CASE STUDY 41:</b>	Grihini, Raipur-Chhattisgarh	107
<b>CASE STUDY 42:</b>	Naga Mothers' Association Campaign	108
<b>CASE STUDY 43:</b>	Nirbhaya case, 2012	109

**List of Acronyms:**

Acronym	Terms / Details
ADS	Area Development Societies
AIF	American India Foundation
ANM	Auxiliary Nurse Midwife
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BNV	Bharat Nirman Volunteers
BPO	Business Process Outsourcing
CAF India	Charities Aid Foundation India
CBO	Community based organization
CDS	Community Development Societies
CHW	Community Health Workers
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CSR	Corporate Social Responsibility
DYC	District Youth Coordinator
DRM	Disaster Risk Management
FBO	Faith-based Organizations
GIAN	Gujarat Grassroots Innovation Augmentation Network
Gol	Government of India
HDI	Human Development Index
HoH	Helper of Handicapped
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
ICP	Innovations in Civic Partnership
ICT	Information and communication technology
IIM-A	Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organization
IRCS	Indian Red Cross Society
IRDP	Integrated Rural Development Programme

**List of Acronyms:**

Acronym	Terms / Details
IYV	International Year of Volunteers
MAD	Make a Difference
MDWS	Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation
MHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MHRD	Ministry of Human Resource Development
MNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MoYAS	Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports
MWCD	Ministry of Women and Child Development
MYRADA	Mysore Resettlement and Development Agency
NABARD	National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development
NCC	National Cadet Corps
NFSA	National Food Security Act
NGO	Non-Government Organizations
NHRM	National Rural Health Mission
NHGs	Neighborhood Groups
NIF	National Innovation Foundation
NRC	National Reconstruction Corps
NSS	National Service Scheme
NSVS	National Service Volunteer Scheme
NYC	National Youth Corps
NYK	Nehru Yuva Kendra
NYP	National Youth Policy
NYKS	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan

**List of Acronyms:**

Acronym	Terms / Details
OBR	One Billion Rising
PMRDF	Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellows Scheme
PRADAN	Professional Assistance for Development Action
RA	Residents' Associations
RSY	Rashtriya Sadbhawana Yojana
SC	Scheduled Caste
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SHG	Self Help Group
SRISTI	Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions
SSA	Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST	Scheduled Tribe
SWVR	State of the World Volunteering Report
TARA	Technology and Action for Rural Advancement
WHO	World Health Organization
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNV	United Nations Volunteers
UTA	University Talk Aids Programme
VSO	Voluntary Service Overseas
YCS	Youth Citizen Service
YWSEDP	Young Women's Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme
YRC	Youth Resource Centers

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26<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

### Foreword

With 65% of India's population under 35 years of age, and 41% below the age of 20, India is on its way to become the youngest country in the world, by 2020.

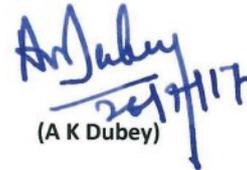
India is poised to emerge by 2025 as a country with strong economic and social growth. To achieve this and the Sustainable Development Goals, efforts have to be made on several accounts, as we must recognize that we have a bright but tough route ahead. While the Government of India sensitive and committed in this regard, these objectives cannot be achieved without the active participation by the civil society, private sector and most importantly, youth volunteers. Here comes the moment to harness the immense potential of our youth through volunteerism.

This is a first-of-its-kind action report on the State of Youth Volunteering in India. It seeks to deep-dive into the potential of youth volunteering in India, looks at the current impact of youth volunteerism and scope for future opportunities and makes recommendations to strengthen the current volunteering programmes.

The chapters brings out how the concept of volunteerism evolved in India and explains various notions of youth volunteering as understood by stakeholders and the ecosystem surrounding youth volunteering.

Taking volunteerism as a means of channelizing the energy of the youth for nation building activities, the report also seeks to understand the motivations behind volunteerism in order to develop future strategies and to highlight stories of impact that youth volunteers have created.

This report is the need of the hour, and I am happy that the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports was instrumental in bringing it out. I hope that the suggested strategies will lead to greater partnerships and trust-building between the Government, private sector, civil society and our youth as together, we can play a vital role in creating a world that is more peaceful, equitable, and sustainable.

  
(A K Dubey)

एल. के. गुप्ता  
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28<sup>th</sup> July, 2017

## Foreword

The first State of Youth Volunteering in India report visualizes the need for a framework to empower the youth in India to ensure their personal development as well as the development of our country, particularly in light of achieving the SDGs. It delves right into the heart of volunteering as it existed, its current form, various notions as understood by the stakeholders and the eco system surrounding volunteerism. The report also brings to the fore stories of impact that youth volunteers have created in order to understand how to keep them engaged and motivated and on the way forward towards leveraging India's immense youth potential through volunteering.

This report has been developed after multiple consultations with the ministry, government agencies, civil society organizations, and of course, youth themselves. The report also took into account India's diversity by visiting 12 states to ensure adequate representation. Additionally, an online perceptions survey was conducted to understand youth perceptions of volunteering and working group discussions/consultations were held to seek deeper insights from stakeholders on the way ahead.

Immense effort has been put into the creation of meaningful yet feasible strategies to make this report a reality. I hope that this study can be incorporated into the long-term strategies to ensure that young volunteers are at the forefront of development in India.

*L.K. Gupta*  
28/7/17  
(L. K. Gupta)

## United Nations Development Programme



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### Message

Young people are central to achieving the 2030 sustainable development agenda and India recognizes the enormous opportunity offered by what will be the largest population of young people in the world.

India's far reaching National Youth Policy 2014 outlines key priorities for youth development and is complimented by the efforts of the National Service Scheme and the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan. The spirit of volunteerism is gaining pace in the country.

This report analyzes the contribution of youth volunteerism towards the nine developmental goals charted out in the National Youth Policy 2014, including education, health, water and climate change.

Young people are active drivers of change in local communities and have a role to play in engaging people at the grassroots. Volunteerism is important as young people and youth-led organizations need to have the platform and space to participate in policy making, implementation, review and in ensuring institutions are accountable to the young citizens of India.

Building a sustainable and healthy planet is a shared vision for all people around the world, but it is the youngest that will be affected the most. Catalyzing the aspirations, spirit and action of youth will be a powerful enabler of success in achieving this global vision.



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### Message

Young people can be compelling agents of change within their communities. Given the opportunity, they bring energy, creative ideas and unique perspectives to development processes. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is dependent on public participation, ownership and solidarity. Volunteerism is one of the clearest expressions of solidarity in action, and instrumental for empowering youth to shape their development realities.

Youth volunteerism has become an important means to engage young people in global peace and sustainable human development. Through volunteering, youth gain opportunities to develop their capacities, build their confidence and enhance their employability.

Today, 65 per cent of India's population is 35 years of age or under. This demographic dividend presents India with an opportunity to leverage the potential of youth through volunteerism.

As a longstanding partner, UNV is working with UNDP and the Government of India to strengthen youth volunteering schemes that reach more than 11 million young people. Together, we aspire to support young people in realizing their full social, economic and human potential and to instil a strong sense of civic engagement in youth.

In 2012, UNV published perspectives on *Volunteering in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses*. This publication elaborated on crucial factors that promote and sustain volunteerism for peace and development, illustrating the vital and powerful social capital in India.

The current report, *State of Youth Volunteering in India*, provides an in-depth analysis of youth volunteering in the country. It outlines the motivations of youth, as well as the enabling environment for and impact of youth volunteering initiatives.

Published jointly by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, UNV and UNDP, this report recognizes the potential of youth volunteerism and provides an impetus to promote youth participation. In strengthening the evidence base on volunteering in India, we are paving the way for future youth volunteer engagement in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Olivier Adam".

**Olivier Adam**  
Executive Coordinator

# OVERVIEW

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## BACKGROUND

The world today is by many measures, more prosperous than ever before<sup>1</sup>. From 1993 to 2003, the number of people living below the poverty line<sup>2</sup> fell by 1 billion globally, with the biggest declines observed in India and China. Due to the advances in medical science, societies around the world enjoy better health and longevity. Global literacy rates have been rising and secondary and tertiary education have seen drastic growth<sup>3</sup>. The world has also been witness to incredible progress in social and green innovation as well as technology.

### BOX 1: EXCERPT FROM THE BRIEFING NOTE FOR COUNTRIES ON THE HUMAN DEVELOPMENT REPORT, 2016

“There are imbalances across countries; socioeconomic, ethnic and racial groups; urban and rural areas; and women and men. Millions of people are unable to reach their full potential in life because they suffer deprivations in multiple dimensions of human development.”

However, in the paradox that defines our world today, human development has been uneven; 767 million people continue to live in extreme poverty, subsisting on less than USD 1.90 a day<sup>4</sup>. Persistent socio economic failure continues to affect many contemporary societies. In this era of modern global economic development, inequality between the rich and poor has widened. Communities and societies continue to experience vulnerability and voices around the world are demanding leadership and solutions on poverty, inequality, hunger and climate change. This discontentment is not just limited to economic issues, but is also driven by legitimate concerns over discrimination and social exclusion.



Towards this end, sustainable development is crucial. For it to be achieved, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) –“Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, focus on harmonizing three core elements: economic growth, social inclusion and environmental protection. These elements are interconnected and crucial for the wellbeing of individuals and societies. The SDGs, adopted by 193 countries in 2015, are a set of 17 goals with 169 associated targets to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity for all. Towards developing these goals, the UN conducted the largest consultation programme in its history to gauge opinion on what the SDGs should comprise, including working group discussions, 11 thematic and 83 national consultations, and door-to-door surveys<sup>5</sup>.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls on all countries, including India, to begin efforts to meet the SDGs and invites the participation, ownership and engagement of all stakeholders, including Government, civil society, private organizations and individuals, in addressing them as depicted below.

<sup>1</sup>Progress: Ten Reasons to Look Forward to the Future. By Johan Norberg

<sup>2</sup>As per the International Poverty Line set by the World Bank in 2015 (consumption or income)

<sup>3</sup><https://ourworldindata.org/global-rise-of-education>

<sup>4</sup>World Bank report, calculated at purchasing-power parity and 2011 prices

<sup>5</sup><https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2015/jan/19/sustainable-development-goals-united-nations>

**BOX 2: EXCERPT FROM THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

“Today we are taking a decision of historic significance...we can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet...”

What we are announcing today - an Agenda for global action for the next fifteen years - is a charter for people and planet in the twenty-first century. Children and young women and men are critical agents of change and will find in the new Goals a platform to channel their infinite capacities for activism into the creation of a better world... we acknowledge the natural and cultural diversity of the world and recognize that all cultures and civilizations can contribute to, and are crucial enablers of, sustainable development...

We acknowledge also the essential role of national parliaments through their enactment of legislation and adoption of budgets and their role in ensuring accountability for the effective implementation of our commitments. Governments and public institutions will also work closely on implementation with regional and local authorities, sub-regional institutions, international institutions, academia, philanthropic organizations, volunteer groups and others.

We acknowledge the diversity of the private sector, ranging from micro enterprises to cooperatives to multinationals. We call on all businesses to apply their creativity and innovation to solving sustainable development challenges...”

-Outcome document of summit for development of the post 2015 development agenda

**THE INDIAN CONTEXT**

India is one of the most rapidly growing economies in the world. Culturally rich, with abundant soft power potential<sup>6</sup>, India is committed to democratic institutions, the rule of law and human rights. Along with a large workforce, it has a huge and talented diaspora. Ambitious programmes have been launched by the Government of India, aimed at boosting socio-economic development in the country such as ‘Make in India’, ‘Digital India’, ‘Smart Cities’ and the ‘Skill India’ initiatives.

However, in keeping with the global dichotomy, India is also home to the largest population of poor in the world.

The country has one of the highest levels of income inequality in the Asia-Pacific region<sup>7</sup> and shows large increases in inequality since 1990 with its net Gini index of inequality<sup>8</sup> (based on income net of taxes and transfers) rising from 45.18 in 1990 to 51.36 in 2013. Additionally, India’s Human Development Index value (HDI) for 2016<sup>9</sup> is 0.624. This is below the average of 0.631 for countries in the medium human development and positions India at 131 out of 188 countries and territories. When the value is discounted for inequality, the HDI falls further to 0.454, which is a further loss of 27.2 percent<sup>10</sup>.

With regard to achieving the SDGs<sup>11</sup>, India has also ranked 110<sup>th</sup> out of 149 nations assessed on where they stand, and despite significant progress, the country continues to face major challenges across all SDGs.

The challenges that India faces are inter-generational issues for which today’s young generation are future custodians. Therefore, the importance of the Indian youth as key stakeholders cannot be taken out of the equation as their ownership and participation in achieving the SDGs is critical.

<sup>6</sup>A persuasive approach to international relations, typically involving the use of economic or cultural influence; a concept developed by Joseph Nye, Harvard University

<sup>7</sup>International Monetary Fund (IMF) report on the Asia-Pacific Region

<sup>8</sup><http://www.investopedia.com/terms/g/gini-index.asp>

<sup>9</sup>A summary measure for assessing progress in three basic dimensions of human development: a long and healthy life, access to knowledge and a decent standard of living.

<sup>10</sup>Briefing note for countries on the Human Development Report 2016 (India)

<sup>11</sup>Sustainable Development Goal Index and Dashboard - The Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) and the Bertelsmann Stiftung

## HARNESSING INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC DIVIDEND THROUGH VOLUNTEERISM

India has an unrivalled youth demographic: 65% of its population is 35 years of age or under and by 2020, it is forecasted to become the youngest country in the world, with a median age of 29<sup>12</sup>. As 250 million people prepare to join India's workforce by 2030, this group stands to be either India's biggest asset or its biggest vulnerability. To deliver on this asset, it is imperative that India invests in its youth by skilling them, creating new jobs and providing them with opportunities (through volunteerism or otherwise) to develop functional and soft skills such as interpersonal skills, time management and the ability to present their thoughts and ideas; all skills that are important for young people to emerge as future leaders. At the same time, through volunteerism, India can also leverage on the immense potential of its youth in addressing the persistent and inter-generational developmental challenges that it faces.

Studies in developed and developing regions have found that former volunteers have an increased sense of connection with their communities, and feel more empowered to help and participate in community life beyond the volunteerism experience. By widening participation, volunteerism addresses social exclusion while building a sense of ownership and community<sup>13</sup>, and assists in developing a generation of young people who are willing to make a commitment to developing their communities<sup>14</sup> and themselves. Volunteering provides a number of personal benefits to youth volunteers – from building social and support networks to giving young people more opportunities, choice and power.

The idea of engaging youth to meet India's developmental challenges through youth volunteerism is not a new one, India has a rich history of people's participation through volunteerism by way of religious commitments, philanthropy, mutual aid and value systems embedded within Indian society. Volunteerism has also played a significant role in the growth of social reform movements in India.

"In religion, India is the only millionaire .... The one land that all men desire to see and having seen once, by even a glimpse, would not give that glimpse for all the shows of all the rest of the globe combined."

- Mark Twain, American Author 1835-1910

In Indian culture, the values of charity, 'shramdaan' (giving of effort / labour) have been placed on a high pedestal and manifest in various ways based on religious or humanitarian beliefs, feelings of community, kinship and reciprocity. Although these take on different forms based on socio-economic, cultural and regional backgrounds, the spirit of volunteerism is intrinsically woven into the fabric of our society and communities.

For example, it was observed that in Kerala, collecting and distributing parcels of meals by students and youth clubs to the less fortunate was a regular practice, in urban and rural areas alike. Another tradition, which has now almost disappeared in most parts of India, was witnessed in Rajkot, where "Chabutaras" or the more modern paper bird feeders, were kept outside people's houses to feed and provide a resting place for birds.

However, to leverage the potential of youth volunteers, a supportive environment and opportunities are necessary. The Government of India has affirmed its intention to ensure that youth volunteers are a part of the conversation and action in meeting India's development goals.

The Government formulated the first National Youth Policy during the seventh five year plan and launched the National Service Scheme (NSS) and Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS), both volunteer-based programmes which now have a base of almost 3.6 million volunteers and 1.25 lakh youth clubs across the country, respectively<sup>15</sup>. More recently, in 2015, the Government also commissioned the NITI Aayog, its 'Think Tank' which is meant to provide directional and policy inputs. NITI Aayog aims to have a pro-people, pro-active and participative development agenda and in keeping with this, invites citizens' perspectives on policy matters through its MyGov Group. Additionally, a strong Indian civil society complements the Government's macro social safety net using youth volunteers in many ways to tackle many of India's needs in human and social infrastructure.

<sup>12</sup>State of the Urban Youth India 2012: IRIS knowledge foundation on a commission by UN-Habitat Global Urban Youth Research Network

<sup>13</sup>UNV Youth volunteering strategy 2014-17

<sup>14</sup>Young volunteers: the benefits of community service – University of Nevada

<sup>15</sup>As per discussions with NSS and NYKS officials, New Delhi

The State of the World Volunteering Report (SWVR) 2011 states that, “At no point in history has the potential been greater for people to be primary actors, rather than passive bystanders, in their communities, to affect the course of events that shape their destiny.”

There is no doubt that youth volunteers, through civil society or otherwise, are the primary actors, who have played, and are continuing to play a fundamental role in meeting India’s development challenges. This has been witnessed among numerous youth in rural areas who tirelessly work on the causes they believe will benefit their communities or villages. This has also been seen among urban youth, as young people are increasingly coming forward to work with NGOs, join fellowships or start their own social enterprises. Others volunteer through their workplace or join social campaigns, movements or projects for causes that they believe in. The Government of India has also involved youth in the provision of public services such as health and education, and has leveraged on its population by making these services “people-powered”.

All of this lays the groundwork for positive contributions and a demographic dividend from India’s large population through volunteering.

However, as one of the youngest democracies in the world, India is also witnessing a cultural shift where individual empowerment becomes the focus and young people are developing clear ideas of what success looks like. These are closely related to quality of life, freedom of choice, access to infrastructure and facilities, education, employment and recognition. Surging growth and employment in cities have been a powerful magnet, with predictions that India’s urban population will soar from 340 million in 2008 to 590 million in 2030<sup>16</sup>. With increased urbanization, the traditional culture that has been held together by relationships- immediate family, extended family, clans, tribes, and communities – is seeing a natural breakdown.

Growing up in an era of continued globalization, Indian youth today are experiencing development processes that simultaneously bring people closer together and yet widen the divisions between them. This division is particularly felt among urban and rural youth due to the vast differences between them along social, economic and infrastructural lines.

While rural youth from certain socio-economic backgrounds often have aspirations that reflect those of their urban counterparts, many sections of people in India’s rural areas have, to a large extent, not been able to reap the benefits of globalization. Cognizance must also be given to the fact that almost 30 percent of India’s population falls under the World Bank’s USD 1.90-a-day poverty measure<sup>17</sup>, and spiritual development and expression of values can be brought about only after basic requirements for human existence are adequately met.

Understanding the varying realities and contexts of Indian youth – urban and rural, students and young adults, regional and state-wise differences – will be important areas of consideration while developing frameworks to broaden and deepen the participation of youth and engage them in India’s journey towards sustainable development.

## UNDERSTANDING THE STATE OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

Since the United Nations’ International Year of Volunteers (IYV) in 2001, there have been strong efforts to define and map volunteer movements and impact of volunteerism across the world. This report on the ‘State of Youth Volunteering in India’ is one such effort in India.

The ‘Volunteering in India: Contexts, perspectives and discourses’ report published by United Nations Volunteers (UNV) in 2012 provided a perspective on volunteering in India and its various dimensions based on the experiences of eminent personalities and volunteers from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. It is an important document that through its interviews and case studies has become a major source of information and knowledge on volunteering in India.

This report on the ‘State of Youth Volunteering in India’ does not aim to duplicate this existing work but wishes to add to it by exploring the understanding of volunteerism in India with a specific focus on youth. This, however, has not been without its challenges.

<sup>16</sup><http://www.mckinsey.com/global-themes/urbanization/urban-awakening-in-india>

<sup>17</sup>The World Bank’s Global Monitoring Report for 2014-15 on the Millennium Development Goals

“India is too vast in its area and too diverse in its races. It is many countries packed in one geographical receptacle...but India tolerated difference of races from the first, and that spirit of toleration has acted all through her history.”

- *Nationalism in India, Rabindranath Tagore*

Within the Indian context, it is important to understand that the expression of volunteerism takes different forms that are often determined by the cultural and socio-political-economic context within which volunteering occurs. Spanning 3,287,263 square kilometers, India is home to all the major religions of the world. Its Constitution lists 22 “scheduled” languages, and with over 2000 ethnic groups, has faced the challenge of “welding together into one body” various ethnic groups.

Further, India’s 29 states and seven union territories are at different stages of demographic and economic evolution. The per capita gross domestic product of states, a marker of their inhabitants’ affluence or deprivation, depicts that the gap between India’s many people remains large. For example, the GDP per person of Bihar, one of India’s poorest states, is only a fifth of Haryana’s and little more than a tenth of Goa’s.

Considering this diversity, there are various challenges in ensuring representation of all states or of all stakeholders engaged in volunteering initiatives in the nation.

Therefore, to account for state-specific differences in terms of culture, society, and economic evolution and in light of the limited secondary information available on youth volunteering in India, the research involved visiting 12 states across India to ensure regional representation across the north, south, the northeast, east and central India.

Exploratory in nature, the research drew insights from literature review as well as primary research and met a variety of stakeholders including Government representatives, representatives from NSS and NYKS, civil society and beneficiaries of programme, faith-based institutions, academic institutes, experts and youth volunteers. Additionally, an online perceptions survey was conducted to understand youth perceptions of volunteering, their areas of work, their motivations to volunteer as well as the challenges faced.

Working group discussions / consultations were also held with the objective of seeking insights from the Government, international agencies, civil society, private sector and youth volunteers on the key findings and conclusion of this report and the way forward.

Furthermore, the term ‘volunteerism’ is understood in many different ways with definitional boundaries that are not clear. The concept of ‘volunteering’ has been interpreted as per the UN working definition of volunteering: “Activities ... undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor<sup>18</sup>.”

The concept of ‘youth’ is also interpreted in a variety of ways. The National Youth Policy (NYP) 2014 defines youth as those within the ages of 15-29. The United Nations (UN), for statistical consistency, defines youth as those persons within 15-24 years of age, while UNESCO uses different definitions of youth depending on the context. For activities at the international or regional levels, UNESCO uses the United Nations’ universal definition. For activities at the national level, for example when implementing a local community youth programme, UNESCO will then adopt the definition of ‘youth’ as used by a particular Member State<sup>19</sup>. For the purpose of this report, this action research understood ‘youth’ as those persons between the age group of 15 and 29 years as per the NYP 2014. However, it also maintained a certain amount of flexibility to take into account the on-ground realities, which saw people up to the age of 35 or beyond actively participating in youth-led organizations, activities and clubs.

Another area of concern is that there has been little systematic research on civil society in India. There are therefore associated challenges in understanding the diverse contexts and identities of volunteers within civil society. At the macro level, the Government of India’s statistical system does not currently take into account those initiatives / activities, which are not paid for. Similarly, the Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and institutions that engage volunteers do not have measures in place to gauge the contribution of volunteers. This challenge therefore, exists both at the micro and macro levels.

<sup>18</sup>UN working definition; adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 2001 (Resolution 56/38), further quoted in the quoted in the Russell Commission consultation document in 2004 and in the SWVR 2011, p.4

<sup>19</sup><http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-definition/>



Despite the fact that the overall volunteer participation rate is estimated to be high in India, the absence of any precise statistics and impact assessment of efforts of volunteers makes it difficult to estimate the number of volunteers and staff engaged in the NGO sector, or their contribution.

Thus, this report aims to delve into the heart of youth volunteerism in India and its evolution, right to its various manifestations today. Chapter one therefore explains how the concept of volunteerism has evolved in India and the current discourse around youth volunteering. It explores the various notions of 'youth volunteering' as understood by stakeholders, how volunteering is being manifested and expressed and the subsequent challenges in measuring the contributions of volunteers.

The ecosystem surrounding youth volunteering has been explored in chapter two along with the role of stakeholders and the platforms and avenues they provide for youth to volunteer.

Chapter three seeks to understand how and why youth volunteer, what their motivations are as well as the barriers and challenges faced in order to appropriately develop strategies to engage youth in volunteering.

In chapter four, the report also highlights stories of impact that youth volunteers have created in order to understand the different models that are used by various stakeholders to engage and maximize their contributions. By showcasing successful models where youth volunteers created positive impact and identifying factors that contributed to its success, this report suggests that if appropriately coordinated and channeled, youth volunteers can be important drivers of inclusive growth in India. The final chapter details out conclusions drawn from the research and analysis and the way forward to strengthen future volunteer engagement.

The first State of Youth Volunteering in India report, therefore, seeks to understand the many manifestations of youth volunteerism in India and provide information on the depth and breadth of volunteer action, taking into account on-ground realities and good practices. It aims to establish a preliminary evidence base of the contribution of youth volunteers towards India's developmental goals and provide recommendations for future volunteer engagement. It is meant to be the beginning of a larger discourse on volunteerism to ensure that this information can translate into tangible and far-reaching change, which will enable the post-2030 development agenda in India.



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## Chapter -1

# YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA





A universal concept, volunteerism is a manifestation of people's needs to participate in their societies and to believe that they matter to others; it is a basic expression of human relationships<sup>20</sup>. People volunteer for various reasons – to help those in need, eliminate poverty and discrimination, to facilitate awareness and access to rights and to contribute to causes that they believe in, among others. The ethos of volunteerism is infused with values of solidarity, reciprocity, mutual trust, belonging and empowerment, all of which contribute significantly to quality of life.



### EVOLUTION OF VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

India has been the birthplace of several major religions followed around the world; religious influences were therefore naturally strong in pre-colonial India and played an important role in shaping the concept of volunteerism in India. For example, during the Vedic period, daanam (giving / sharing) was more or less confined to the occasions of big sacrifices patronized by chieftains or kings, however, in the post-Vedic period, daanam became a much more prevalent practice among the common people. Traditional expressions of religious philanthropy in India were the establishment of temples, mathas (saints' abodes), pathshalas (schools), madrasas (Islamic religious schools), dharmashalas (sheds for travellers), gaushalas (cowsheds), community halls, dispensaries and hospitals, construction of wells, ponds and roads, feeding the poor through kitchens in temples or on special occasions<sup>21</sup>.

Another important factor that has influenced volunteerism in India has been the traditions, value systems and institutions of the diverse cultures and religions that shaped the sub-continent's history in ancient and medieval times. Cultural and religious values from rulers brought new ways of assistance, for example, the practice of Zakat (a percentage of income given to charity), during the Mughal dynasty. During the reign of the Mauryas and Guptas (4th century BC to 5th century AD) and in later periods, a strong village community based on social cohesion came into existence across the country<sup>22</sup>; this sense of community can be seen across India's villages and rural communities till today.

<sup>20</sup>State of the world's volunteerism report, UN Volunteers, 2011

<sup>21</sup>Current Status of Philanthropy in India - Centre of Philanthropy and Non -profit Studies

<sup>22</sup>India's Struggle for Independence - Bipin Chandra

The moral obligation arising from such theological beliefs and societal relationships in ancient and medieval India, may therefore be seen as one of the major motivating forces behind the concept of volunteerism in India, often manifested in the forms of charity and philanthropy.

During the colonial period, voluntary efforts received a boost with new religious, cultural and social surroundings. The Laissez Faire policy of the British Government in economic, religious and social matters encouraged the 'self-help' form of volunteerism. Schools and colleges were established by educational societies set up by English-educated natives and affluent businessmen, traders and zamindars (land owners). Voluntary organisations proliferated and actively participated in various fields of social action during the British rule and were mainly engaged in social welfare activities, literary and relief works.

The introduction of western ideas and Christian faith by the end of the eighteenth century also precipitated the widespread emergence of religious and social reform movements in India during the first half of the nineteenth century (1800-1850) such as Brahmo Samaj, Arya Pratinidhi Sabha, Arya Samaj, Prathana Sabha, Indian National Social Conference etc. Social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Rabindranath Tagore, Jyotiba Phule, Dayananda Saraswathy, Iswara Chandra Vidyasagar, Kesava Chandra Sen, Ram Krishna Paramhansa, Sayyed Ahmed Khan, Swami Vivekananda, among others, created organisational structures which were based on social support and participation and focused their social actions against social evils and practices like Sati (practice of a widow throwing herself onto her husband's funeral pyre), child marriage, prohibition of widow remarriage, caste-directed practices and rituals driven by superstition. In addition to this, Christian missionaries began to participate in charity reform activities by providing services in the fields of education and health, particularly in rural and tribal areas.

Further, the development of organized charity and volunteer work in the country received an impetus with the formation of the Ramakrishna Mission in 1898 by Swami Vivekananda, which through the effort of numerous volunteers, provided high quality services for education, health and relief. Other organizations such as the Arya Samaj and Swami Narayana sect also undertook social / community service activities.

The second half of the nineteenth century witnessed a process of further consolidation and institutionalisation of social and religious movements. For example, the establishment of 'Servants of India' in 1905 by Gopal Krishna Gokhale which united and trained Indians of different ethnicities and religions to devote themselves to the underprivileged, rural and tribal people, emergency relief work, the increase of literacy, and other social causes, was one of the movements that laid the foundation for secular voluntary action in India. The wave of the 'Swadeshi Movement' also marked the beginning of the mass involvement of people thereby inculcating the spirit of strengthening voluntary action through self-help and autonomy.



### BOX 3: EXAMPLES OF SECULAR VOLUNTARY ACTION INITIATIVES

Rabindranath Tagore's rural reconstruction programme in 1921 involved volunteers from his unconventional, open-to-sky school in Shantiniketan in serving communities in villages around the school. Gurusaday Dutta founded the 'Bratachari movement' in 1932 to inspire Indian youth to serve the cause of the country's development, to preserve folk culture and to inculcate the virtue of physical labour.

During the struggle for independence, Mahatma Gandhi's movement of self-reliance and political independence, one of the largest and most successful volunteer movements in India, gave an impetus to volunteerism and laid great emphasis on the role of voluntary social workers in bringing about social change and in nation-building. The 'Constructive work' programme that started between 1922-28 became a mass national movement of political freedom; Gandhiji's call for people's participation at grassroots levels enabled volunteerism to spread to the villages and inspired many other individuals to take up experimental projects.



After Independence, voluntary initiatives gained momentum with many seeing the first twenty years of Independence as the nation-building phase. Volunteers joined hands to tackle the emerging needs and tasks of nation-building with a focus on health, agriculture and community development.

By the end of the nineties, particularly during the ninth Five-Year plan, the Government of India saw volunteering through the lens of 'yuvashakti'<sup>23</sup>, which means using the power of rural and urban youth for nation building and as a practical response to solving India's developmental challenges while empowering youth themselves. This continues to the present day where an estimated 50 lakh of women volunteers work across various Government schemes such as the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), National Rural Health Mission (NHRM) and mid-day meal (MDM) cooking. Through these volunteers, the country is trying to meet its development goals.

There is some debate on whether such persons may be called volunteers, as they receive an honorarium and often have fixed hours of work, however, these workers do not receive minimum wages as per Central Government Pay Scale nor do they enjoy the status of workmen as defined by the law. The honorarium that the volunteers receive is often their primary source of income and in the recent past there has been growing unrest with their unions (All India Anganwadi workers federation, Karnataka Anganwadi workers) demanding that their work be recognized as 'real work' as opposed to volunteerism and that they be paid a minimum wage on par with Central Government employees.<sup>24</sup>

Over the years, India also has built up a strong civil society with an estimated 3.3 million NGOs as of 2009<sup>25</sup>; however, the flexible composition of this sector makes it difficult to reach an accurate figure. This sector includes societies, trusts, not-for-profit companies and often, entities such as private foundations, hospitals, schools, sports clubs, and resident welfare associations. Research also indicates that the bulk of NGOs often work in a few select thematic areas (e.g. community / social service, environment, education, sports / culture, health)<sup>26</sup>. This could be attributed to the fact that the presence of NGOs is often an outcome of funds available, rather than the other way around<sup>27</sup>. NGOs may use a combination of full-time staff, programme contracted staff (who sometimes consider themselves volunteers) and part-time volunteers to deliver their mandate. Terms such as professionals, social worker, volunteers and activists are often used interchangeably to define persons working within this sector and there is no definite estimate of how much employment is generated<sup>28</sup>. Interactions with NGO leads across the country also bring out that the total number of volunteers remains limited when considered alongside the magnitude of development challenges that India faces. Citizens' engagement in the development process is therefore crucial for bridging the gap<sup>29</sup>.

<sup>23</sup>Further explained in chapter two, in the analysis of the five year plans

<sup>24</sup><http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/recognise-anganwadi-volunteers-as-workers/article5651183.ece>

<sup>25</sup>As established by a study commissioned in 2008. Shukla, A, 2008. Retrieved from the study 'Volunteering in India, Contexts, perspectives and discourses'

<sup>26</sup>Invisible yet widespread: the non-profit sector in India, 2002, PRIA

<sup>27</sup>Designing Philanthropy for impact: McKinsey & Co, 2013

<sup>28</sup>Status of the voluntary sector in India: Vani and Action Aid

<sup>29</sup>Interviews with various NGO leads



“Active citizenship refers to the ability of (young) people to be engaged in social action in every walk of life. Where people take ownership for common spaces and act to make change by addressing important social justice issues. This citizenship is boundary-less...not defined by state, caste, religion, language”.

*Presentation by Meenu Venkateswaran, CEO, Pravah at 'Nurturing Active Citizenship among Youth in India: A Consultation'*

The concept of active citizens has been growing in India as part of a larger global discussion on young people as agents of social change; this has been given further impetus in this age of fast-paced information flow and social media. Active citizens, previously seen in different forms (Swadeshi movement in 1905, Anti-Corruption Movement by Anna Hazare in 2011, Nirbhaya Movement in 2012), inspire young people to understand and engage on social issues while allowing them to increase their self-awareness. This puts an emphasis on stakeholders, including Government, civil society and other organizations that work with young people to create a facilitative ecosystem for active citizenship and to provide young people with exposure and opportunities.

## DEFINING YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM IN INDIA

With India projected to be the youngest nation in the world by 2020, there has been a renewed focus on youth in the country in recent years; engaging with youth and encouraging their participation across sectors has been seen as essential for national development and enabling inclusive growth.

Any discussion on youth volunteerism primarily brings into context the definition of youth. Youth is often best understood as a period of transition from the dependence of childhood to adulthood's independence. Hence, as a category, 'youth' is more fluid than other fixed age-groups. Thus, given the socio-cultural context in each country, the definition of youth tends to vary. In countries such as Jamaica, those from the age of 12 years are considered youth; and in Bangladesh, from the age of 18 years. In some countries it is not strictly defined, as in Hungary, where the youth secretariat deals with both 0-14 year-olds and 15 to 26 year olds. The upper age limits for defining youth range from around 24 (Jamaica) to even 35 or 40 (Kenya, Pakistan). The United Nations defines youth as those between 15 and 24 years of age<sup>30</sup>.

In India, the definition of youth has also changed between the National Youth Policies (NYP) of 2003 and 2014. While the NYP 2003 defined youth as persons between the age groups of 13 and 35 years, the NYP 2014 defined youth as persons in the age-group of 15-29 years<sup>31</sup>. However, youth volunteers in the Indian context do not strictly fall into the specified age groups; it is common to find persons in older age groups (beyond their thirties) being part of the youth wings of CSOs and participating in many youth schemes promoted by the Government. For example, in many youth clubs (formed under the NYKS), persons in their thirties or forties also contributed to community development as club members. As per discussions with NGOs and youth clubs, this fluid practical application of the term 'youth' allows a larger group of people, many of whom have settled in their jobs and have time and money to spare, to give back to society.

Similarly, while defining volunteerism, various definitions have been posited in literature. Although "volunteerism has transcended all cultural, linguistic and geographic boundaries"<sup>32</sup>, each country has developed its own values of giving and sharing and arriving at a commonly accepted definition has been challenging<sup>33</sup>. A multitude of definitions exist depending on regions, contexts and considerations. Each country and even individual organizations and Governments posit their own understanding and definition of 'who a volunteer is' or 'what constitutes volunteerism'.

For example, the Australian Government defines volunteering in the formal space as 'an activity which takes place through not for profit organizations or projects undertaken – to benefit the community and the volunteer; of the volunteer's own free will and without coercion; for no financial payment; and is designated in volunteer positions only'.

Within the context of youth volunteerism, the NYP 2014 of the Government of India states that "Youth must be encouraged to participate in community service and development activities, especially in the most backward regions. The youth of India must have a strong sense of moral responsibility towards their fellow citizens, especially those that are less fortunate than themselves. Youth of the country must be encouraged to fulfill their duties as citizens and thus create an environment in which all citizens enjoy the rights guaranteed in our Constitution"<sup>34</sup>.

Academic literature however, often refers to Debbie Haski-Leventhal's definition, which defines volunteerism as 'an activity that is done completely of one's free will, with no material rewards whatsoever, to complete strangers and within an organization or as long term behavior' (ibid, 29).

In recent times, the most widely accepted definition of volunteerism is the UN working definition that states that the terms volunteering, volunteerism and voluntary activities refer to a wide range of activities, including traditional forms of mutual aid and self-help, formal service delivery and other forms of civic participation, undertaken of free will, for the general public good and where monetary reward is not the principal motivating factor<sup>35</sup>.

<sup>30</sup>Census of India and UNFPA and (2014) A profile of Adolescents and Youth in India, Office of the Registrar General and Commissioner of Census, New Delhi India 2014

<sup>31</sup>[http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication\\_reports/Youth\\_in\\_India-2017.pdf](http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/publication_reports/Youth_in_India-2017.pdf)

<sup>32</sup>UN Secretary General, Ban-Ki-Moon, 2012

<sup>33</sup>Volunteerism – An Evolving Notion, Analysis of the current situation in Cusco, Peru; DurayAurelie, 2012-13

<sup>34</sup>Ministry of Youth affairs and Sports(2014) National Youth Policy pp.21.

<sup>35</sup>UN General Assembly Resolution, A/RES/36/58, www.icnl.org

**The State of World's Volunteering Report (2011) notes that the three criteria of free will, non-pecuniary motivation and benefit to others can be applied to any action to assess whether it is volunteerism. To elaborate:**

- Free will is when the individual must choose whether or not to act; it is not an obligation, contract or academic requirement.
- The act should not be undertaken primarily for financial reward. Volunteerism would therefore include cases where a company forgoes an employee's fully paid time so they can volunteer. Similarly, programmes that provide for local subsistence costs are also considered within the purview of volunteerism; covering the living costs of volunteers or offering reimbursements for expenses etc. is often considered good practice.
- The action should be for common good. It should directly or indirectly benefit people outside the family or household; else benefit a cause.



**In India as well, though volunteering has been a distinguishing feature of societies and communities, definitional challenges pertain more to developing a common understanding of what constitutes volunteerism. The action research has brought out certain questions that are relevant to the Indian context:**

- Whether activities that are carried out by rural communities within their own areas, such as feeding and arranging water for cattle; distribution of sweets in schools on national days, serving food during marriages, tree plantation or clearing village roads, constitute activities undertaken 'for the general public good'
- If the Self Help Group (SHG) movement can be described as a volunteer movement, with all SHG members being volunteers and whether their activities fall under the purview of 'common good'
- Whether volunteering programmes run by academic institutions as part of their programme or as an option in an academic course fall within the ambit of 'activities undertaken out of free will'
- Whether fellowships and internships offered by Government / public sector / private sector companies / CSOs, often with competitive monetary benefits to work on a social cause, can be perceived as volunteerism

For example, several participants of Fellowship Programmes who were interviewed did not consider themselves volunteers as they believed that the expected commitment of fellows and related exit barriers were much higher than for volunteers who they believed, could choose their locality, hours, and the role that they wanted to play.

Similarly, there were opposing views on whether volunteers should receive any reward, financial or otherwise. While several organizations believed that rewarding volunteers did not align with the spirit of 'seva' or 'shramdaan', other groups believed that volunteers should be provided with incentives such as stipends, employment or Government jobs.

India is seeing an increasing trend where structured volunteering programmes may pay stipends, provide scholarships, offer opportunities for travel / employment within the organization and / or cover living expenses of volunteers. This is a motivating factor for many to volunteer and serves to create an inclusive environment where young people from all backgrounds can volunteer.

The SWVR 2015 also adds another dimension to the term volunteerism, by understanding volunteering as overlapping with social activism. It recognizes that not all activists are volunteers, although the terms volunteerism and social activism are not mutually exclusive.

It is therefore important to recognize the multifaceted nature and manifestations of volunteerism - whether managed formally or expressed informally, whether rewarded or unpaid, various differences in volunteers' time commitments and scale of impact - in order to fully understand the contribution of volunteerism in India.

Within the Indian context, the UNV definition appears to be the most relevant; it is suitably broad and allows the encompassing of acts of volunteerism outside the formal context. Scholars however, are still attempting to define volunteerism in a manner that accurately encompasses all its forms.

## **MANIFESTATIONS OF VOLUNTEERING BY YOUTH IN INDIA**

The most well understood expression of volunteerism is philanthropy. Several schools of thought also consider formal service delivery as a form of philanthropy. A thin line of distinction between philanthropy and service delivery would be that while philanthropy is usually considered as donation of resources, service delivery is an actual service provided to those in need.

This form of volunteering – philanthropy or service delivery - normally takes place through established structures or groups and could be undertaken in a range of social, cultural and development fields. Youth from different walks of life come together to contribute time and resources towards the wellbeing of fellow citizens. While youth volunteers who are studying or unemployed tend to donate their services of labour, employed youth volunteers donate financial resources or their skills / expertise based on their time commitments.

### **CASE STUDY 1: SERVICE DELIVERY AND PHILANTHROPY**

Renjit Joseph, 48, runs a study circle supported by Matrabhumi a local newspaper. His study circle provides support to the community in terms of nutrition, medicines, sanitation and cultural activities. "Most of my tuition students are involved in these activities" he says, "and after they get a job, 90% of alumni provide us with a sum of Rs. 1000 each. This money that is collected helps us to provide scholarships to deserving students in the community." Apart from donating financial resources, many alumni who work in the area provide their time and involvement as and when they can.

This form of volunteerism has had a great impact in India and globally. As mentioned earlier while tracing the evolution of volunteerism in India, several individuals and faith-based organizations began service delivery to serve under-served populations and those in need, prior to and after independence. Over the years, this has become more organized, with several NGOs and private foundations providing services across domains – health, education, water and sanitation etc. in the country.



Service delivery models of some organizations have demonstrated such success, that they have been adopted by the Government. For instance, the model on newborn care, established by Society for Education Action and Research in Community Health (SEARCH), Gaddchiroli<sup>36</sup> in 1986, in a tribal location in Maharashtra, was later adopted as a model for newborn care and to reduce infant mortality by the National Rural Health Mission. Similarly, the Participatory Learning and Action model to improve birth outcomes in Jharkhand, established by Ekjut<sup>37</sup>, was adopted by the health systems in Jharkhand and Odisha between September 2010 and December 2012. There are several such examples, across sectors where service delivery initiatives with the help of volunteers, have had a great impact on communities.

The second form of volunteerism is mutual aid or self-help, where people with shared needs, problems or interests cooperate to address them. Consequently, a larger population may also benefit from this engagement.

India has a strong and successful Self Help Groups (SHG) movement, where women across the country are part of local village-level groups. Members of these groups make small regular savings until the group has sufficient capital to begin lending. This helps inculcate a culture of saving, which enables funds to be lent to those in need. SHGs have also been used as a medium to impart skills and education to women and raise and address issues of concern to them.

<sup>36</sup><http://searchforhealth.ngo/shaping-policy/>

<sup>37</sup>Effect of a participatory intervention with women's groups on birth outcomes and maternal depression in Jharkhand and Odisha, India: a cluster-randomised controlled trial; PrasantaTripathy, Nirmala Nair, Sarah Barnett, RajendraMahapatra, Josephine Borghi, ShibanandRath, SuchitraRath, RajkumarGope, DipnathMahto, Rajesh Sinha, RashmiLakshminarayana, Vikram Patel, Christina Pagel, Audrey Prost, Anthony Costello; [www.thelancet.com](http://www.thelancet.com) -Published online March 8, 2010 DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(09)62042-0

## CASE STUDY 2: PAHELI'S ECO-FRIENDLY SANITARY PADS

Seeing the lack of hygienic and biodegradable sanitary pads in Goa's villages, Jayshree Parwar and three other women started Paheli, an SHG in Goa's Bicholim taluka, two years ago. The SHG manufactures and sells eco-friendly sanitary pads. Today, about 50 packets a day are manufactured at Jayshree's home and sold at a cost of Rs 40 per packet. Till date, 1,000 pads have been sold. Seeing the SHG's commitment, many organisations have come forward to help market the product. One such organization is the Goa Institute of Management (GIM), Sakhali, which under its initiative, Abhigyan GiveGoa, will help Paheli brand, promote and market these cost-effective and biodegradable pads.



Mutual aid is also found in professional affiliations such as trade unions, where the primary motive is to protect the interests and promote welfare of group members. They also address the social concerns of society.

Another form of volunteerism is civic participation. Examples of civic participation include – local advocacy campaigns / lobbying with local authorities for issues such as provision of street lighting, cleanliness, noise reduction during social functions and marriages etc. Usually, civic participation volunteerism is limited to local, small-scale campaigns of limited duration and is led by strong leaders, mentors or organizations.

## CASE STUDY 3: THE ANNA HAZARE MOVEMENT

In 2011, Anna Hazare initiated a movement towards a stronger anti-corruption Lokpal bill in Indian Parliament. Anna Hazare's hunger strike captured the imagination of Indian youth and gained the support of millions all over the country, making it a one-of-a-kind movement in decades, with some online signature campaigns such as 'Avaaz' getting more than ten lakh signatures in six hours. The Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013 was passed by the Indian Parliament paving the way for establishment of a Lokpal (Ombudsman) to fight corruption in public offices and ensure accountability of officials. The movement was named among the "Top 10 News Stories of 2011" by Time Magazine.



In some cases, however, small volunteer action can build momentum and become a state level / national movement, such as the Chipko movement in India<sup>38</sup> in 1970s, which originated in Uttarakhand and spread across the country to protect forests or the 2011 anti-corruption movement held by Anna Hazare, where thousands joined in. The present times are seeing significant public engagement in cleanliness, owing to the ‘Swachh Bharat Movement’ announced by the Prime Minister of India in 2014. Across states and cities – small and large informal and formal groups, such as youth groups, resident associations among others, are working towards cleaner localities.

While most civic movements relate to local causes and are small and led by local leaders to address community needs, movements that represent a larger ideology or gather media attention and / or have communication efforts associated with them tend to become large movements, across different locations, involving a greater number of people. For example, in the past, the media provided a filter and information was only considered important if it was on the front page of a newspaper.

Today, social media is playing an important role in shaping events. Anyone can write about an issue affecting him or her without the need to ask for permission-be it a distraught victim or a vigilant citizen. A small group of passionate people can influence others who are more reticent, until still others take notice and also join it. Ultimately, a movement may ensue.

Such manifestations and expressions of youth volunteerism in India are closely linked to the platforms and avenues which are available; these have been further described in Chapter four.

<sup>38</sup>Sourced at <http://edugreen.teri.res.in/explore/forestry/chipko.html>

## DISCOURSES AROUND YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN CURRENT TIMES

The SWVR 2011 states that ‘healthy societies need young people who are involved with their communities; and volunteer action can be a highly effective route towards such involvement’. The SWVR 2015 further highlights that youth volunteerism is particularly important in countries where young people predominate and where rapid social change is leading to dislocation, loss of traditional structures and unemployment.

This holds true in the case of India, which is home to one of the largest and fastest-growing youth populations in the world. Various stakeholders are deliberating on how this demographic dividend can be best leveraged to participate, contribute and maybe even catalyze economic opportunities and social change.

While the Government of India and corporates in India rightfully focus on skill development and job creation, there is also an urgent need to build youth leadership, to bring about sustainable change and create a generation of active, committed and empathetic individuals deeply connected to society and with the skills to intervene effectively<sup>39</sup>.

In India, traditionally, most youth development programmes have seen youth as ‘clients’ of development interventions. A more recent ‘youth for development’ approach sees young people as skilled resources who can be utilized to work towards development goals. Such an approach uses the energy of young persons, without adequately addressing their concerns. A more positive approach on ‘youth development as an end in itself’, looks at a youth-centric approach - building the leadership potential in young persons, helping them develop skills and values needed to be active citizens in their communities.<sup>40</sup>

This came through, following cross-country consultations undertaken with young people by two youth-led organizations on their expectations post 2015 and the role that youth could play in realizing these expectations. One of the key outcomes of the consultation was that youth volunteerism emerged as a key strategy from this exercise where it was suggested that youth volunteerism should be recognized as a lifelong learning process and mainstreamed into service delivery platforms and curriculums in school and out of school contexts. Further, it was espoused that youth volunteerism should be linked with increased access to better opportunities and equitable livelihoods (career, higher education, business, cross-sectoral learning)<sup>41</sup>. The need to continue national integration programmes that build bridges between young people from different parts of the country and foster a feeling of “oneness” was also highlighted. Further, apart from engaging youth as volunteers for community and national benefit, the need to enable opportunities for youth and their development, were identified as the key to the success of any youth volunteerism initiatives.

### BOX 4: NATIONAL CONSULTATION ON YOUTH VOLUNTEERISM, 2013

Apart from volunteers contributing to development and nation-building, a great impact of volunteerism is also on the volunteer itself. Volunteerism helps to:

- Enable young people to become active leaders and citizens, and serves as an important tool for engagement in society
- Strengthen the bond between young people and their communities
- Improve employment prospects for young people through practical experiences which enhance both hard and soft job-related skills

The need to recognize volunteers and link them to better opportunities for livelihoods, provide support and mentorship for volunteers, enhance youth participation in governance and promote social entrepreneurship, among others, were identified by stakeholders in India as key to promoting and developing youth volunteerism.

An impact assessment of youth active citizenship interventions, undertaken by Innovations in Civic Partnership (ICP) and Pravah, both organizations working in the field of youth civic engagement based out of Washington DC and New Delhi, respectively, identified four socially legitimate spaces that young persons occupy, namely, education and livelihoods, leisure and lifestyle family and friends. The study highlights that the ‘fifth space’ commonly associated with active citizenship – is currently located at the margins of a young person’s existence.

<sup>39</sup>The Ocean in the Drop: Inside-out Youth Leadership by Ashraf Patel, MeenuVenkateswaran, Kamini Prakash, Arjun Shekhar

<sup>40</sup>ICP and Pravah( undated) Making Youth work visible : Impact Assessment of Youth Active Citizenship Interventions, ICP andPravah

<sup>41</sup>Restless Development and the Youth Parliament Foundation (2013) National Consultation on Youth Volunteerism. November 2013

This was not always the case; during the freedom struggle, youth were at the center of the movement and involved in various protests. However, post-independence, the representation of youth in governance has been extremely poor. By 2020, India will be the youngest country in the world ruled by possibly the oldest cabinet. It is postulated that this marginal status in governance is one of the reasons that the 'fifth space' is not legitimized. Moreover, young people are also often discouraged by parents, who see such activities as a waste of time and a distraction from studies.

In recent times, there have also been approaches looking at community youth development, which build on positive youth development and emphasize on young people as contributors to and active shapers of their communities<sup>42</sup>. A programme run by an Odisha-based youth organization, Patang, uses this approach. The programme encourages young people between the ages of 18 and 25 to volunteer and work in villages; they are expected to develop projects to address issues they are passionate about. This programme helps build their leadership and programme management skills. Some colleges, such as the St. Stephens College in Delhi University, also have social leagues / youth groups that help during disaster relief, organize blood camps, read to the visually impaired etc.

Another focus has been youth engagement through youth resource centers. These centers are spaces where young people can meet, discuss social issues, build skills and undertake activities. For example, the Thoughtshop Foundation in Kolkata has transformed traditional neighborhood clubs into youth resource centers, while CINI in West Bengal and Jharkhand engage youth through its Adolescent Resource Centers.

"To empower the youth of the country to achieve their full potential, and through them enable India to find its rightful place in the community of nations", the NYP 2014 provides a holistic vision for youth in India. A key objective of this vision is to instill social values and promote community service and engagement. Youth volunteerism has been seen as an important component to enable the above<sup>43</sup>.

## MEASURING YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA

In recent years, there have been several efforts to measure youth volunteerism across countries and globally. Various techniques including measuring hours contributed by volunteers, to the impact of volunteer work captured across various parameters, capacities built among volunteers, etc., have been attempted. Yet, measuring the value created by volunteering remains a challenge. The lack of adequate measurement may have consequences, causing citizens, societies and Governments to under-invest in volunteering activities relative to their potential social benefit. Some of the challenges faced in measuring volunteerism include:

- Defining and describing the range of diverse forms of volunteerism.
- Capturing the size, scope and scale of different kinds of volunteerism through quantitative measures.
- Organizations may not have specific job roles for volunteers and volunteering hours may be flexible, making it difficult to attribute value to the contribution of volunteers.
- Nuances, distinctions and complex contributions may be better captured through more qualitative case studies.

The above-mentioned challenges are global and apply to the Indian context as well.

The 'Volunteering in India'<sup>44</sup> report also identifies some valid challenges on gathering data on youth participation and volunteerism; lack of systematic assessments to understand the current status of youth and the challenges that they face, lack of concerted efforts by stakeholders working with youth to map and assess programmes, indefinitely running volunteer-based programmes without adequate evidence of youth engagement and impact.

In India, social development policies anticipate the pro-active participation of people towards successful implementation of Government-run programmes. Many programmes focus on ensuring people's participation and ownership through formation of village-level committees, for example, school management committees, water users committees, village health committees to ensure effective implementation of interventions. There have also been efforts to enable community monitoring of Government programmes such as a pilot effort for the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare between 2007 and 2009 in nine states, as well as efforts by the Department of Women and Child Development through the formation of Mothers Committees and Jaanch Committees in Odisha.

<sup>42</sup>Rethinking youth work in India: Does youth development approach make sense? Social Entrepreneurship: A livelihood option with social transformation", ISBN: 978-81-923019-5-2

<sup>43</sup>National Youth Policy 2014, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports

<sup>44</sup>Volunteering in India: Contexts, perspectives and discourses, United Nations Volunteers, 2012

However, the lack of adequate information on the functioning of such initiatives and the inability to effectively engage communities in these activities has been a challenge. Also, unlike Western countries where being a part of citizens' initiatives are considered acts of volunteerism, in India it may not be recognized or accounted for as volunteerism.



Measurement and evidence on youth volunteerism in India is expected to help in better planning and allocating funds for a National Youth Volunteer programme. For NGOs and organizations involved in volunteerism, improved measurement of impact could help direct volunteer resources to where prospective benefits are the greatest. For companies and businesses, a better appreciation of the benefits of volunteering could help in improving the quantity and quality of their existing volunteer programmes.

Measuring volunteer activities would also help to appropriately recognize individuals and organizations for their efforts. The Government through various platforms has made efforts to recognize volunteers such as recognizing persons who donate the most blood. Awards are given for best performing youth clubs in districts and states and competent volunteers are given opportunities to be part of exchange programmes in other countries. iVolunteer awards<sup>45</sup>, a private platform also recognizes the work of volunteers. At present, all of these awards / recognitions are determined through applications and their review by a panel of experts. There is no regular data collected on efforts and volunteer programmes that could facilitate this process.

There are therefore several benefits of measuring volunteerism and concrete steps are needed to better measure volunteer contribution in India.

## CONCLUSION

Diverse cultures and religions have shaped this sub-continent's history. In India, both theological and societal relationships have had an important part to play in nurturing the concept of 'volunteerism' as it exists today.

People's participation was core to various social and political reform movements in pre and post-colonial India. This was re-enforced by the policies of the Government of India which attempted to use the power of rural and urban youth to solve India's developmental challenges; till today the country leverages its youth in the provision and delivery of public services such as education and healthcare. "People-powered" also takes on a new meaning in today's India with technology and social media ensuring that youth are more aware of their surroundings and are increasingly engaged in social and political action, whether on-ground or online.

While there is a broad agreement that volunteerism comprises activities undertaken for the good of the public or of communities, there is lack of common clarity on how it can be defined, how it is manifested, what its "boundaries" are; opinions are based on socio-cultural values and backgrounds.

Today, in the midst of discussions on how India's demographic dividend can be best leveraged to contribute to social change, it is important for all stakeholders to have a common understanding of what constitutes 'youth volunteering' and what it can achieve, while keeping in mind India's diversity, on-ground realities, technology and the interests of today's youth.

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<sup>45</sup><http://www.ivolunteerawards.org/about-the-awards>



## Chapter -2

# ECOSYSTEM SURROUNDING YOUTH VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA



The provision of public services such as healthcare, education, sanitation and enforcement of rights is a key task for the Government of India, and is fraught with complex challenges, brought on by factors such as India's size and diversity, burgeoning and diverse population, vulnerability to natural disasters, poverty and inequality among others. In a large developing country such as India, there are often gaps in the development process which may be due to design, limited funds and operational inefficiencies, among other things. Civil society organizations, private organizations, social and political movements, campaigns and individual volunteering efforts attempt to fill in these gaps and play an important role, working individually or collaboratively with the Government to achieve systemic change.

The NYP 2014 emphasizes that in addition to the Government, there are a range of stakeholders working on youth-related issues. These include civil society organizations, companies and industry associations. These stakeholders have two objectives; the first is to promote youth development through programmes on education, skill development, health care, sports etc. The second is to facilitate youth participation and engagement on issues such as community development, politics, governance etc (Gol, 2014).

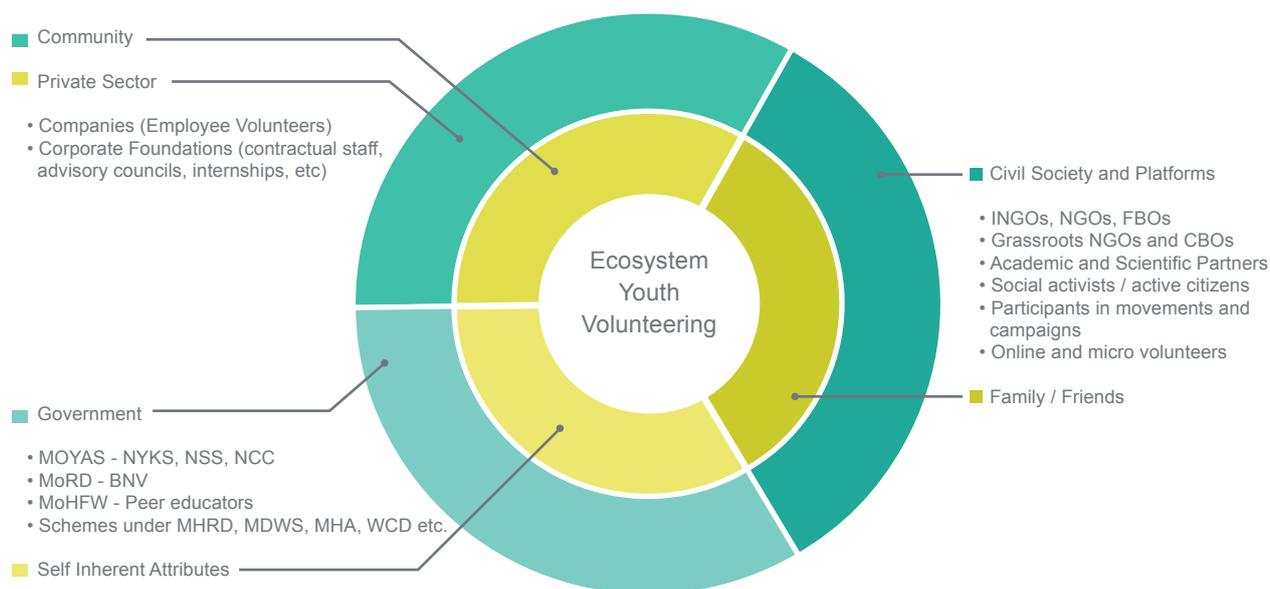
Individual engagement in volunteerism is influenced by many factors- family, school, workplace and associated relationships. It is within these institutions that the values of sharing, solidarity, compassion, empathy and respect for others are imbibed and often expressed through the giving of one's time and engaging in voluntary action for the benefit of others. In the context of youth, peers also play an important role in influencing voluntary action.



In India, the ecosystem that facilitates volunteerism is made up of a range of actors (both state and non-state) who have contributed to and supported volunteerism in general and youth volunteerism in particular. Each of these actors has created spaces and opportunities for people to engage in voluntary actions. Moreover, with acts such as the Right to Information Act, 2005, The National Food Security Act, 2013, Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009, coming into force in recent years, volunteering opportunities in different parts of the country have grown.

Figure 1 illustrates the ecosystem for volunteering in India. The ecosystem depicts three levels. At the first level is the youth volunteer himself / herself with inherent attributes, characteristics that motivate him or her to volunteer. The second level depicts immediate influencers which include family, friends and the community within which s/he operates. Apart from being influencers and motivators, actors within the second level of the ecosystem may also provide volunteering opportunities. These have been further explored in Chapter three which explains motivations for youth to volunteer and their influencers.

The third level broadly classifies actors into three major categories: Government, private sector and civil society / platforms; however, there are often overlaps between categories as the actors may not operate in silos. The emergence of online volunteering platforms in current times has also eliminated the need for volunteerism to be tied to specific times and locations, thus greatly increasing the freedom and flexibility of volunteer engagement. The role of the actors at the third level and the platforms they provide have been further explained below.

**Figure 1: Ecosystem - youth volunteering**

## GOVERNMENT

In recognition of the role of volunteerism in harnessing social capital, the Government of India has put in place various policies and programmes.

A study of policy planning in India reveals that the issues of volunteer engagement and the importance of youth in national development have received attention in successive 12 Five-Year-plans. These have also paved the way for formulating various schemes to promote youth engagement in voluntary action. Building on earlier analyses undertaken in the 'Volunteering in India' report in 2012, the following table highlights how the focus on specific issues related to youth has been addressed in 11 Five-Year plans.

PLAN PERIOD	PRIORITY AREAS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF VOLUNTEERISM
First Five Year Plan (1951-1956)	The plan document focused on public cooperation and public opinion as an essential component in planning. It also highlighted that "the spread of literacy among the rural people, can be undertaken by the literates in the community, volunteering their time and services".
Second Five Year Plan (1956-1961)	The plan highlighted the willingness and enthusiasm on the part of the people to contribute to community projects, through 'shramdaan'.
Third Five Year Plan (1961-1966)	This plan noted that the concept of public cooperation was related to the much larger sphere of voluntary action and that properly organized voluntary efforts would help in augmenting the facilities available to the community for helping the most vulnerable.
Fourth Five Year Plan (1969-1974)	This plan gave special emphasis to the needs of youth and for leadership training. Support was to be provided to voluntary organizations for youth development programmes. Community service was developed as an integral part of the educational curriculum. The NSS was launched during this period.

PLAN PERIOD	PRIORITY AREAS WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF VOLUNTEERISM
Fifth Five Year Plan (1974–1979)	The fifth plan laid emphasis on the expansion and strengthening of the NSS and NYKS. The National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS) was launched during this plan period
Seventh Five Year Plan (1980–1985)	This plan highlighted the role of voluntary agencies and advocated training of a cadre of grassroots workers and on “professionalizing volunteerism” by voluntary agencies. A proposal for formulating a National Youth Policy was initiated during this plan period.
Eighth Five Year Plan (1985–1990)	In the eighth plan document, emphasis was given to building people’s institutions. It was acknowledged that developmental activities undertaken with people’s active participation have greater chances of success and can be more cost-effective as compared to the development activities undertaken by the Government.
Ninth Five Year Plan (1992–1997)	The thrust in the ninth plan was on harnessing yuvashakti (youth power). The plan stressed on involving young persons in various community-based nation-building activities and a new scheme called National Reconstruction Corps (NRC) to involve youth volunteers in such activities.
Tenth Five Year Plan (1997–2002)	The major focus was on involving youth in the process of national planning and development and making them the focal point of development strategy. Provisions for proper educational and training opportunities, access to information on employment opportunities including entrepreneurial guidance and financial credit and promoting leadership were emphasized.
Eleventh Five Year Plan (2007-2012)	The eleventh plan also focused on strengthening NYKS and NSS. The plan emphasized expanding and energizing the youth club movement with a view to actively engage the rural youth in various social, economic and community activities through these clubs.
Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17)	The twelfth five-year plan (2012-17) recommends strengthening higher education’s linkages with society by involving students in local and regional development through a well-coordinated approach. A Youth Development Index to serve as a standardized reference guide for educators and policy-makers is proposed. Developing the qualities of good citizenship and community service in youth and imbuing in them the spirit of volunteerism is seen as essential. The plan also recommends revamping and strengthening youth volunteering schemes of the Government of India including the NSS. A National Youth Centre at Delhi and five regional centers including one for the North-Eastern Region are planned to be established during this period.

The table above shows how the focus on youth development and volunteerism has evolved within the policy planning discourse in India, right from seeking cooperation in community activities and harnessing yuvashakti for development, to empowering youth for active citizenry.

A study of the various plans shows that while the early plans focused more on seeking public cooperation in social welfare extension projects, from the fourth plan onwards, support to voluntary organizations and youth development programmes, came into focus. The plans formulated in the seventies and eighties stressed on expanding and strengthening existing schemes such as the NSS and the NYKS.

In 1988, the formulation of the National Youth Policy gave a definitive focus on youth programmes.

#### BOX 5: NYP 1988

In 1985, the International Year of the Youth, the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Government of India, initiated a proposal to formulate a National Youth Policy which materialized in 1988. While the policy did not make an explicit commitment to volunteerism in its objectives, the plan of action stated, “Programme will be undertaken to offer opportunities to youth for leadership training through personality development and character-building and to motivate them to volunteer for social and community service.”

Subsequently, by 1982, the concept of yuvashakti was introduced in the ninth plan and stressed on awareness building and involvement of the youth in social programmes relating to literacy, environment, health and family welfare and community development. The tenth plan further brought into discussion the issue of youth interests and empowerment through development-oriented programmes. The plans formulated in the new millennium clearly emphasized empowerment of youth by nurturing the spirit of youth volunteerism and strengthening the existing youth volunteer programme.

Two National Youth Policies (NYP) were formulated in 2003 and 2014. The NYP 2003 laid emphasis on youth empowerment, gender justice, inter-sectoral approaches, information and research networks. The policy was explicit in its commitment to volunteerism and was designed to mobilize youth to rise up to new challenges, keeping in view the global context, and aimed at motivating them to be active and committed participants in the task of national development. It recognized the contribution that youth can, and should, make to the growth and wellbeing of the community and endeavored to ensure effective coordination between the policies, programme and delivery systems of various ministries, departments and other agencies.



Of its seven objectives, three were directly related to volunteerism and community service. These were:

- To develop qualities of citizenship and dedication to community service amongst all sections of youth
- To sustain and reinforce the spirit of volunteerism amongst the youth in order to build individual character and generate a sense of commitment to the goals of the development programme
- To develop youth leadership in various socio-economic and cultural spheres and to encourage the involvement of non-Governmental organizations, cooperatives and non-formal groups of young people.

The NYP 2014 provides a holistic vision for youth in India taking into account all aspects of human development. Youth volunteerism has been given a central place in the policy as an important component of youth development. Its objectives and priority areas are as follows:

OBJECTIVES	PRIORITY AREAS
Create a productive workforce that can make a sustainable contribution to India's economic development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education</li> <li>• Employment, skills development and entrepreneurship</li> </ul>
Develop a strong and healthy generation equipped to take on future challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Health and a healthy lifestyle</li> <li>• Sports</li> </ul>
Instill social values and promote community service to build national ownership; facilitate participation and civic engagement at levels of governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promotion of social values</li> <li>• Community engagement</li> <li>• Participation in politics and governance</li> <li>• Youth engagement</li> </ul>
Support youth at risk and create equitable opportunities for all disadvantaged and marginalized youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion</li> <li>• Social justice</li> </ul>

The policy states that “youth must be encouraged to participate in community service and development activities, especially in the most backward regions. The youth of India must have a strong sense of moral responsibility towards their fellow citizens, especially those that are less fortunate than themselves. Youth of the country must be encouraged to fulfill their duties as citizens and thus create an environment in which all citizens enjoy the rights guaranteed in our Constitution. There is a need to institutionalize community engagement and to design and streamline schemes such that they cater to the non-homogenous youth population” (GoI, 2014). The shift from a welfare approach to empowering the youth is clearly visible in recent years.

A key influencer in the promotion of volunteerism at the national level has been the presence of Government schemes and programmes that encourage youth engagement in different spheres and ways for national development. These have enabled youth, whether through educational institutions or not, to pursue volunteerism, thereby contributing to the community as well as their own personal development. Some important schemes that have provided formal platforms for youth volunteerism have been detailed below.

### NATIONAL SERVICE SCHEME (NSS)

The NSS of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, was launched in September 1969 during Mahatma Gandhi's birth centenary year, in 37 universities involving 40,000 students. NSS is one of the largest student volunteer forces in the world and today, has more than 3.2 million student volunteers on its rolls, spread over 298 universities and 42 (+2) senior secondary councils and directorates of vocational education all over the country. From its inception, more than 3.75 million students from universities, colleges and institutions of higher learning have benefited from the NSS activities, as student volunteers.

NSS is a concrete attempt in making the college campus relevant to the needs of the community. The NSS thrives on the motto of “not me but you”, with the objective of “personality development through community service”.

### CASE STUDY 4: NSS - LITERACY CAMPAIGN

The literacy campaign in 1989 in Kerala owes its success largely to NSS volunteers. Kottayam was the first town in India, to become totally literate in 100 days. The NSS network was also used in launching the highly successful, ‘University Talk Aids Programme’ (UTA) in 1991-92. The UTA success story, crafted by the NSS is still acknowledged as a pioneering awareness campaign when many considered the subject itself taboo.



The central principle of the NSS is that it is organized by the students, and both students and teachers through their combined participation in social service, get a sense of involvement in the tasks of national development. Additionally, students obtain community experience which can help them find avenues of self-employment or employment in any organization at the end of their university career. The scheme now extends to all the states and universities in the country and also covers higher secondary schools in many states.

NSS volunteers generally work with villages, slums and voluntary agencies to complete 120 hours of regular activities during an academic year. As per the fundamental principles of the NSS, a volunteer is expected to live with the members of the community and learn from their experience. Hence, it is of vital importance that a particular village / slum is carefully selected.

Community service rendered by university and higher secondary school students has covered several aspects like adoption of villages for intensive development work, carrying out the medico-social surveys, setting up of medical centers, programme of mass immunization, sanitation drives, adult education programme for the weaker sections of the community, blood donation, helping patients in hospitals, helping inmates of orphanages, the physically handicapped etc. NSS volunteers have also contributed in relief work during natural calamities / emergencies such as cyclones, floods, famines, earthquakes, as well as in organizing campaigns for eradication of social evils, and popularization of nationalism, democracy, secularism, social harmony and development of a scientific temper.

## CASE STUDY 5: CONTRIBUTION BY NSS VOLUNTEERS DURING NATURAL DISASTERS

The role of NSS volunteers in the Super Cyclone in Odisha in 1999, the earthquake in Bhuj, Gujarat 2001, Jammu and Kashmir in 2005 and during the Tsunami in 2004 was central to rescue and relief operations and in disaster response. A large number of volunteers removed debris, rescued people, provided food, shelter and medical facilities, managed community kitchens and carried out rehabilitation work. The volunteers also assisted the affected communities in applying for compensation from district administration. NSS volunteers from Kerala and Andhra Pradesh also provided post-disaster counseling. Hundred volunteers from Madras University were sent to Car Nicobar where they worked with the district administration and were involved in trauma counseling for the survivors of the Tsunami. (UNV, 2012)



Every year, a theme is selected for the Special Camps organized by NSS. The current theme of Special Camp is 'Youth for Sustainable Development with a special focus on Watershed Management and Wasteland Development'.

State-level interactions with NSS coordinators revealed that most activities are carried out as per the calendar issued by the Department of College education. Motivational incentives for students are present in the form of certificates, extra marks, perception of weightage in admission to postgraduate courses, securing jobs and so on. Project coordinators opined that students were interested in the programme as they get a certification and some weightage during admissions. However, a lesser-known fact is that NSS volunteers also get a weightage of up to 5% within the Staff Selection Commission (SSC), a Government of India organization to recruit staff for posts in the various ministries and departments of the Government and in subordinate offices.

## BOX 6: FEEDBACK FROM NSS VOLUNTEERS

NSS volunteers stated that the scheme provided them with opportunities to interact with senior officials in colleges, which gave them a lot of exposure and information. Further, it provided them with the freedom to lead projects, take control and make choices.

On the other hand, it was observed that very often, professors in colleges and even families of students were not very supportive of the time commitments that NSS requires and preferred the volunteers to spend their time in academic pursuits.

Primary research also brought out that motivation of students to join NSS and their performance was highly dependent on institutions that supported the implementation of the scheme and had strong, committed leaders running the programme. This is in concurrence with an evaluation study conducted in 2008<sup>46</sup> which pointed out that the scheme has performed well in locations and institutions where individuals committed to contributing to public good are at the helm.

Volunteers spoken to during the action research revealed that the NSS was found to meet its prime objective of developing the personalities of the participating students. Volunteers also stated the need to communicate and position the NSS appropriately, as the perception of NSS among students, especially in urban areas, is closely linked to 'safai karo' (cleanliness drives) or 'muft ka kaam' (unpaid work) or to complete the mandated hours. However, once they began participating in the programme, volunteering through NSS had a deep impact on changing their personalities, particularly in terms of developing their social skills, allowing them to break stereotypes about certain communities, providing them with a deeper understanding about society and the world around them as well as developing their management and leadership skills. As one volunteer stated, "I thought it was a one way process – I didn't realize that there was something for me to learn."

However, sustainability of the NSS programme was found to be an issue because activities were of a short duration, and there was therefore a lack of linkage between different activities, lower commitment by the students and limited community participation. Delays in the flow of funds were also as adversely affected the planning of the activities.



### NEHRU YUVA KENDRA SANGATHAN (NYKS)

Nehru Yuva Kendras Sangathan (NYKS) was established in 1972 with the objective of providing rural youth avenues to take part in the process of nation-building while also giving them opportunities to develop their personalities and skills. In the year 1987-88, the NYKS was set up as an autonomous organization under the Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, to oversee working of the Kendras.

NYKS is one of the largest non-political grassroots-level youth organizations in the world with an enrolment of 8.43 million youth and a presence in 623 districts across the country<sup>47</sup>. It channelizes the power of youth on the principles of volunteerism, self-help and community participation.

<sup>46</sup>Evaluation study conducted by TISS in 2008 covering 12 universities and 72 colleges where NSS was implemented

<sup>47</sup>As per NYKS website; data is currently being updated

## CASE STUDY 6: CONTRIBUTION OF NYKS VOLUNTEERS – I

Gaurav Gaur was awarded the UNV Karamveer Chakra in 2011 for his contribution to spreading awareness on HIV / AIDS in the states of Haryana, Punjab and Himachal Pradesh. Starting as a volunteer with NYKS, Gaurav has been focusing on empowering people living with HIV by training them on various skills. He is well recognized as a volunteer and is part of several campaigns promoting awareness on HIV / AIDS.



Over four decades, NYKS has established a network of youth clubs in villages to render community support through developmental initiatives involving activities with a particular focus on youth empowerment. Youth clubs are village-level voluntary action groups of youth working towards community development and empowerment. The implementation of the programme and activities of youth clubs are based on local needs and requirements by mobilizing resources from various Government departments and other agencies, which include national, state level and multilateral institutions. The youth clubs and its member volunteers are the base of the NYKS' vast national rural network.

NYKS has been undertaking various youth programme of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS) and certain special programmes in coordination with and cooperation of other ministries. The main focus has been on developing values of good citizenship and leadership, thinking and behaving in secular ways, skill development and helping youth to adopt a productive and organized behavior. Such volunteering at the local levels can also increasingly be a vehicle for people in excluded and / or marginalized communities to be heard and to access services, resources and opportunities that are required to improve their lives.

## CASE STUDY 7: CONTRIBUTION OF NYKS VOLUNTEERS - II

The vast network of registered youth clubs in the country has a veritable army of volunteers who take up developmental or relief work through the length and breadth of the country. The NYKS contribution in the implementation of the Red Ribbon Express Project, in which it collaborated with National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) and the Indian Railways to create awareness about HIV / AIDS throughout the country, is well known. The NYKS has also done outstanding work in the Tsunami devastated states including the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. (UNV, 2012)



According to the NYKS progress report 2015-16, a total of 2,648,183 people (1,708,631 men and 939,552 women) have benefitted through the core programme of NYKS<sup>48</sup>. Some significant activities carried out by NYKS in the year 2016 in different parts of the country included the celebration of International Yoga Day, organizing 'Tiranga Yatra' - Yaad Karo Qurbani' which was the celebration of India's 70<sup>th</sup> year of freedom and Swachhta Fortnight wherein nationwide cleanliness and hygiene campaigns were organized by youth clubs.

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) also partnered with the NYKS to implement a programme for adolescents by creating spaces / processes where they can build their capacities and take leadership and responsibility. From 2011 onwards, it has been supporting 1,860 teen clubs in 10 districts across the states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha and Rajasthan under the Adolescent Health and Development Project being implemented through NYKS. The overall objective is to ensure a healthy and safe growing up process for adolescents primarily in out-of-school settings. The project covers 50,000 boys and girls.

An evaluation of NYKS carried out by IIM-A in 2007, noted that the members of the youth clubs acknowledged significant benefits in terms of personal development and increased awareness and participation in community activities. There was considerably more self-confidence, self-esteem, articulation and hope among the young people in villages which had NYKS operating.

#### CASE STUDY 8: NYKS CONTRIBUTION TO GENERATING AWARENESS ON THE DANGERS OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE IN MANIPUR AND PUNJAB<sup>49</sup>

The NYKS carried out an awareness generation initiative on drug abuse and alcoholism in targeted villages / in Manipur and Punjab in 2014. The baseline survey conducted by NYKS helped in identifying drug addicts and alcoholics who were taken for institutional treatment. Training programmes were organized in cascade mode for functionaries at different levels – state, district and block –and campaigns were conducted with activities such as public meetings, street plays, competitions, rallies, distribution of IEC materials, door-to-door campaigns, peer education programmes. In Manipur, wall writings with attractive slogans were used in most of the villages while in Punjab, plays (nukkad natak or street plays) were used as an important medium of awareness building. Many officers in charge of de-addiction centres appreciated the efforts of the NYKS which they believed helped in creating awareness among people about drug abuse and the need for institutional treatment, overcoming stigma and in increasing referral cases to de-addiction centres.

<sup>48</sup>Brief on NYKS Schemes Programmes and Activities as of 30/9/2016 Sourced at [www.nyks.org](http://www.nyks.org)

<sup>49</sup>Impact Study on Awareness and Education Campaigns for Prevention of Drug Abuse and Alcoholism Organized by Nehru Yuva Kendras in Manipur and Punjab by Indian Adult Education Association, New Delhi, 2014

However, while most programmes are well received / appreciated, young people expressed the need for vocational and job-oriented programmes in their districts so that they do not have to migrate to urban areas to seek work.

With the overarching aim of taking forward the NYP 2014, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MoYAS), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and United Nations Volunteers (UNV) partnered to strengthen existing youth volunteering institutions in the country. The project 'Strengthening Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) and National Service Scheme (NSS)' was launched in 2014 with the aim of supporting and strengthening youth volunteering infrastructure in the country through the foundational schemes of NYKS and NSS, which together reach over 11 million youth in the country.

Under this project, 29 UN Volunteers have been placed as United Nations Volunteers - District Youth Coordinators (UNV-DYC) in 29 districts – one in each state, in December 2015. These UNV-DYCs are expected to be instrumental in revitalizing the youth volunteering infrastructure in their respective districts by studying social issues on ground, meeting and organizing NYKS clubs and volunteering networks and developing a platform for interaction between the youth, Government institutions and development bodies and experts.

### NATIONAL YOUTH CORPS (NYC)

The NYC, a part of the NYKS, was launched in 2010-11 by amalgamating two earlier schemes, the National Service Volunteer Scheme (NSVS, 1977-78) and the Rashtriya Sadbhawana Yojana (RSY, 2005). The scheme enables young men and women in the age group of 18-25 to serve up to two years on a full-time basis for which they receive an honorarium of Rs 5000 per month.

The objective of the scheme is to identify a group of disciplined and dedicated youth who have the inclination and spirit to engage in the task of nation-building and can act as role models and peer group educators by disseminating information and knowledge in the communities and can promote probity and dignity of labour.

### BHARAT NIRMAN VOLUNTEERS (BNV)

The BNV programme was also launched by the Ministry of Rural Development wherein dedicated volunteers in rural areas generate awareness amongst people about their rights and entitlements. BNV volunteers are individuals who voluntarily come from rural households to act as an organic link between a group of families and various line departments. Their purpose is to ensure that unreached households get access to benefits under various Government-sponsored programmes. As per information available on the official rural development portal / website there are a total of 374,036 volunteers working in 300 districts of India.<sup>50</sup>

### DISASTER RISK MANAGEMENT (DRM) PROGRAMME

UNDP, in collaboration with the Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, has been implementing one of the largest community-based DRM programmes in the world. The Disaster Risk Management Programme was implemented from 2002-2009 in 176 hazard-prone districts across 17 states of India with an outlay of USD 41 million.<sup>51</sup>

One of the major objectives of the programme was to develop a cadre of trained human resources at the community level to carry out all disaster management and mitigation initiatives. An innovative method was used in this programme, wherein at least two persons were trained as disaster management volunteers who then supported the community in the development of village disaster management plans. Representatives of local self-Government block functionaries and communities select these volunteers. Most volunteers were members of local youth clubs, women SHGs or CBOs from the same community.



<sup>50</sup>Ruraldiksha.nic.in

<sup>51</sup>UNDP: Partnership with Home Affairs; sourced at [www.in.undp.org](http://www.in.undp.org), pp:2 May 11, 2017

Under this programme, disaster management plans were prepared from village to district. Village volunteers were trained in first-aid, search and rescue, evacuation and relief and shelter management. Disaster management teams were constituted at district and sub-district levels with mock drills being conducted at all levels.<sup>52</sup>

### SYSTEMATIC VOTERS EDUCATION AND ELECTORAL PARTICIPATION (SVEEP)

Voters' participation in the democratic and electoral processes is integral to the running of any successful democracy. The national programme, SVEEP, was launched in 2010 by the Election Commission of India. The main objectives of SVEEP are

- Increasing electoral participation through voter registration and turnout.
- Increasing qualitative participation in terms of ethical and informed voting.
- Continuous electoral and democracy education.

SVEEP carries out continuous discourse with the voting public, CSOs and media on voter education and behavior change among people. Working with partners is an important part of the strategy of SVEEP. The Election Commission has collaborated with educational institutions and youth organizations like NYKS, NSS and NCC to tap new voters in the age group of 18-19 years and to promote greater awareness among youth and students about electoral process and to seek their assistance in facilitating voter registration.<sup>53</sup>

### SWACHH BHARAT ABHIYAN (SBA)

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan Mission was launched on 2nd October, 2014, by the Prime Minister of India to accelerate efforts towards achieving universal sanitation coverage and to increase focus on sanitation. The SBA focuses on community-led and community saturation approaches focusing on collective behavioural change. Emphasis has been placed on awareness generation, triggering behaviour change and demand generation for sanitary facilities in houses, schools, anganwadis, places of community congregation, and for solid and liquid waste management activities. Across the country, SBA has become a massive movement led by people's participation.

A large number of youth have volunteered in cleanliness drives, building toilets and making their areas open-defecation free<sup>54</sup>.



<sup>52</sup>UNV(2012) Volunteerism in India: Contexts, Perspectives and Discourses, UNV, New Delhi

<sup>53</sup>Sourced at [eci.nic.in/ecimain1/SVEEP](http://eci.nic.in/ecimain1/SVEEP) on May 12, 2017

<sup>54</sup>Sourced at <http://swachbharaturban.in> on May 11, 2017

### CASE STUDY 9: MONDRITA CHATTERJEE - SANITATION CHAMPION (JHARKHAND)

A class VI student in Jharkhand, Mondrita Chatterjee, spent her pocket money to build toilets for poor people in Potka block of East Singhbhum district. Inspired by the Prime Minister's appeal to participate in making India a clean place to live in by 2019, the minor used her savings for constructing two toilets.

"I began saving my pocket money from the end of 2014 and in over 12 months, I saved Rs 24,000 out of which a part was used in constructing a toilet in a village close to Hudco dam in Potka block," said Mondrita who has earned a Sanitation Champion certificate from the state Government in recognition of her contribution towards sanitation.

### NAMAMI GANGE PROJECT

The Government of India launched an integrated Ganga conservation mission called 'Namami Gange' in 2014 to arrest the pollution of the River Ganga and revive the river. The Union Cabinet approved the action plan proposed by Centre to spend INR 20 crores till 2019-2020 on cleaning the river, increasing the budget by four-fold and with 100% central share – a central sector scheme. The Government is planning a 'Ganga Volunteer Force' with retired servicemen, including former IPS officers, army and paramilitary personnel, and police who will assist authorities in their Ganga rejuvenation programme and will work towards preventing pollution and desecration of the river<sup>55</sup>.

### PRIME MINISTER'S RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

The Prime Minister's Rural Development Fellows Scheme (PMRDFs) is an initiative of the Ministry of Rural Development (MoRD) and Government of India implemented in collaboration with State Governments. The focus of the programme is on reduction of poverty and improving the lives of people in the backward and isolated regions of India.

During the two years of the fellowship, PMRD Fellows work closely with the District Collector of Additional Central Assistance / Integrated Action Plan districts and strive to bridge the gap between people's needs and the system's provisions by reducing developmental and governance deficits. Immediately after the successful completion of the two-year fellowship, the PMRD Fellow is required to spend one year in public service in the State to which she / he is assigned.

There have been remarkable success stories of the Fellows' work: setting up ultra-small bank branches, rural Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) units and livelihoods colleges; improving participatory planning and social audits of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA); organizing farmers to improve their bargaining power vis-à-vis middle man etc.

### CASE STUDY 10: I-SAKSHAM - PMRDF INITIATIVE BEING IMPLEMENTED IN BIHAR

i-Saksham Education and Learning Foundation is a PMRDF initiative which provides in situ education, skill development and information services in remote areas through sustainable community learning centers. The innovation is now being implemented in two districts of Bihar affected by Leftwing extremism – Munger and Jamui. These centers are run by locally skilled youth with the aid of digital technology and content. A tablet powered with content on elementary education and IT skills is shared with each tutor on a lease basis. The tutor, in turn, runs a financially sustainable community learning centre to tutor kids and youth.

i-Saksham was selected as one of the top 5 innovations in education and skilling by the National Skill Development Agency in 2016, and has also been presented to ministers and officials from other states as a model for providing learning in remote and unreached areas.

The Fellows receive a generous stipend as compared with most other volunteering programmes in India which has led to the debate of whether the PMRDFs constitute volunteers. It is, however, interesting to note that despite other available opportunities for the Fellows, the attrition rate for the programme has been below ten per cent.

<sup>55</sup>Sourced at nmcg.nic.in on 12 May 2017

## DELIVERY OF PUBLIC SERVICES

In addition to the above, the Government of India utilizes various mechanisms for delivering services such as health, education, water and sanitation to its citizens. These mechanisms include Central Government schemes, state-specific schemes or special purpose vehicles such as integrated rural development programme (IRDP), integrated child development services (ICDS), national literacy mission and mid-day meal scheme amongst others.



Within the context of volunteerism, it is important to note the manner in which these services reach citizens. The Government leverages a number of ground-level workers such as Anganwadi workers under the ICDS, ASHAs under the NRHM and mid-day meal workers mandated by the MHRD; there are as many as 13.3 lakh Anganwadi centers in India<sup>56</sup> and more than 8 lakh ASHA workers across India<sup>57</sup>. These have become increasingly recognized as mechanisms that are critical to ensure inclusive growth and outreach of public services in India. The roles of these volunteers are diverse and often incorporate a lot of other activities beyond their mandate.

Through these volunteers, the country is trying to meet its development goals. However, on-ground interactions reveal that these volunteers and their unions are fighting to ensure that their work be recognized as 'real work' and that they be paid a minimum wage<sup>58</sup>, as the stipend most volunteers receive is their primary source of income.

### CASE STUDY 11: MEENA BAGTHARIYA - RAJKOT

Meena Bagthariya, an Anganwadi worker in Bhiliyala village, Rajkot, left her job as a teacher to begin working at the Anganwadi center. Alongside this, she also oversees 15 mahila mandals in her village and runs a beauty parlor. She does this, as her work as an Anganwadi worker, despite taking a good portion of her time, is insufficient to meet her financial needs. Meena was uncertain as to whether she is a volunteer or an employee of the Government and despite the satisfaction she felt with her role, believed that it would be helpful if she was paid a higher stipend so that she could continue her good work in the village.

<sup>56</sup>National Population Policy 2000 Archived February 7, 2012, National Commission on Population website. Accessed February 13, 2008

<sup>57</sup>Update on ASHA programme, MoHFW, July 2013 National Rural Health Mission 2005–2012: Mission Document (PDF), MoHFW, archived from the original (PDF) on 12 June 2009

<sup>58</sup><http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-newdelhi/recognise-anganwadi-volunteers-as-workers/article5651183.ece>

## VOLUNTEER PROTECTION

While the Government of India's policies have promoted volunteer action through several programmes, there is no framework that solves the legal issues that affect volunteers, including the definition of volunteers and their rights and responsibilities.

The link between volunteerism and social, economic, and political development is well established. Countries around the world have moved to create domestic legal and regulatory environments in which volunteerism can flourish. Policymakers have accordingly sought to promote laws and policies that support volunteerism for development goals. As with other laws and policies, there is no single solution that is appropriate for all countries and circumstances. Laws and policies must be carefully tailored to achieve specific goals and they must take into account local contexts, traditions, and needs.

Some countries have developed regulatory frameworks to protect voluntary engagement. For example the United Kingdom has in place the Compact Code of Good Practice on Volunteering. The Code of Practice, revised and republished in 2005, recognizes the value of volunteering and sets out undertakings to enable more people to become involved in voluntary activities as well as to influence behavior to tackle the various barriers to volunteering. In Croatia, a 2007 Law on Volunteering created a National Board of Development for Volunteering as an advisory body to the Government, comprising representatives of Government and civil society, responsible for developing activities to promote and improve the position of volunteers in society. In Macedonia, the 2007 Law on volunteering exempted expenses related to volunteering from taxation and specified explicitly that unemployed persons do not lose their entitlement benefits if they volunteer, removing obstacles to volunteerism by unemployed persons and creating incentives for volunteerism by all persons in a single bill.

In order to create a facilitative ecosystem for youth volunteering, it would be pertinent to create a regulatory framework that rewards and protects the rights of volunteers. Views of national and local Government officials, CSOs, volunteers, and external experts will need to be taken and participatory processes would require to be in place to benefit from the specific on-ground experiences of volunteers and volunteer involving organizations. This would increase the likelihood that volunteerism initiatives will be targeted, relevant and timely.

## CIVIL SOCIETY

The concept of civil society has been evolving in a dynamic way in response to the changes in the Indian socio-economic and political tableau.

### BOX 7: DEFINITION OF THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR AS PER THE STEERING COMMITTEE ON THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR FOR THE TWELFTH FIVE YEAR PLAN (2012-17)

The National Policy on Voluntary Action 2007 recognized all formal as well as informal groups such as community-based organizations, non-Government-development organizations, charitable organizations, networks or federations of such organizations and professional membership based associations as part of the voluntary sector.

As this understanding did not reflect upon the differences between the voluntary sector and larger civil society nor account for the inherent characteristics of social / people's movements, the Steering Committee on the Voluntary Sector for the twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-17) opted for the view that civil society should be understood as different from the voluntary sector. The former represents any individual / group that possesses the identity of a 'citizen' and the latter embodies entities that are legally recognized as trusts, societies or section 25 non-profit companies registered under either state or central legislation<sup>59</sup>.

Civil society is therefore recognized as encompassing far more than a mere sector dominated by the NGO community: it includes a diverse and wide ecosystem of individuals, communities and organizations<sup>60</sup> with a range of organized and unorganized groups, as new actors today experiment with new organizational forms, both online and offline.

<sup>59</sup>Report of the Steering Committee on the Voluntary Sector for the Twelfth Five Year Plan (2012-2017) – Planning Commission, Government of India

<sup>60</sup>World Economic Forum: the future role of civil society

Civil society today encompasses a large space with actors such as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), Faith Based Organizations (FBOs), religious leaders, Community Based Organizations (CBOs), social activists and other civil society representatives playing a critical and diverse set of roles in societal development. This section presents an analysis of the role that different civil society actors play within the purview of volunteerism and the avenues that they provide for youth to volunteer.

## NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

For the purpose of this report, the role of NGOs has been explored solely from the perspective of being important stakeholders within the volunteering ecosystem, irrespective of their legal status, stage of growth or sectoral focus.

Within the context of volunteerism, NGOs in India may be classified primarily into three categories:

- NGOs that do not work with volunteers as part of their operating model.  
It may be noted that as per primary research conducted, field workers often considered themselves to be volunteers in terms of the hours that they devoted to the cause they worked on, the compensation received and the opportunity cost; however, such field workers interviewed were usually bound to the NGO by an employment contract and have therefore not been considered as volunteers for the purpose of this report.
- NGOs that are led by volunteers or which use volunteers as a core part of their implementation model to deliver their mandate
- NGOs that may work with volunteers, but which do not use volunteers as a core part of their operational model.

The latter two categories have been discussed in detail below.

### BOX 8: FELLOWSHIPS FOR VOLUNTEERS

Standing out within the arena of volunteering, Fellowship Programmes were observed to be competitive with highly structured processes for recruitment, selection, placements, Fellow management and monitoring which often resulted in better outcomes and measurable impact of the Fellows' work.

Commitment of Fellows was also generally observed to be higher. As a former Teach for India Fellow (now a programme officer with the organization) put it, "The reality of a Fellow is the realization that you are now responsible for the growth and development of 40 other lives... as a volunteer you may think it's difficult but as a Fellow you can't just leave."

A number of NGOs in India, realizing the potential of youth and the importance of developing them into thoughtful, engaged citizens, have been working with youth volunteers to deliver impact on communities and the society at large.

The most structured programmes are Fellowships offered by organizations such as Teach for India (part of the 'Teach for All' global network) Fellowship, Young India Fellowship, Gandhi Fellowship, Azim Premji Foundation Fellowship, AIF Clinton Fellowship for service in India. These are rigorous programmes, ranging from ten months to two years which allow Fellows to develop themselves as leaders and simultaneously become active 'change-makers' in the communities they work with.

Other NGOs may not offer Fellowships but also work with volunteers in a structured / semi-structured manner as a core part of their mandate.

For example, Pravah has been working in the field of youth leadership and active youth citizenship. With a large network of partners across India, it works towards building youth leadership for social change through the design and delivery of innovative programmes with diverse groups of adolescents and youth across the country.

Similarly, Restless Development in India has been working with young people in the age group of 10-30 years since 1985 where youth-led development refers to an approach to development that is driven and guided by young people and youth, drawing upon their energy, creativity and skills to create positive change.

Youth Resource Centers (YRC), 'community network points' bringing information and services to the doorstep of youth in India, reach out to over 1,000 young people and 2,000 community members each year. The Youth Resource Centers focus on empowering young people to lead healthy lives, access employment and training opportunities, and become active citizens in Government policy and decision making processes.

Under the Youth Livelihood Programme, livelihood enhancement action plans for young people to get meaningful and gainful employment / business has also been facilitated.

Youth Citizen Service (YCS), one of the flagship programmes of VSO India Trust, is a full-time, six-week action learning programme for young Indians in the age group of 22-29 years which creates an opportunity for India's youth to actively work towards addressing development issues while they build a deeper understanding of the dynamics of poverty and development. YCS has completed six cycles covering 67 young people.

CRY, established in 1979, began as an endeavor of seven young volunteers and ever since, the spirit of volunteerism has been a central theme of the organization. Volunteers in CRY have formed around 51 Public Action Groups (PAGs) across 13 cities in India. Volunteers are encouraged to choose one of the Public Action Groups (PAGs) depending on either proximity to their residence / area of interest to be able to engage in collective action with other volunteers.

In recent years, several youth-led NGOs have also come into prominence. These organizations use volunteers as a core part of their model and work on a range of social, cultural, and development fields such as education, health, environment, disaster management, governance, skill development and leadership, etc.

One such independent, youth volunteer-based non-profit is Bhumi which provides youngsters a platform to serve society and bridge the gaps between the educated and uneducated. 'Ignite' is Bhumi's supplementary education programme for under-privileged children. Over 2,000 trained volunteers deliver the programme over the weekends with over 10,000 children benefiting from the programme across India. The programme consists of English, Mathematics, science, computers, robotics, mentoring, arts, sports and life skills support. Another Bhumi programme 'Catalyse' engages volunteers in causes such as animal welfare, community welfare, disability, environment, health etc. and engages over 10,000 volunteers each year in over 15 cities across India.<sup>61</sup>

'Dream-a-dream' volunteer engagement programme brings together community volunteers from corporates, colleges and larger society to engage and deepen impact on young people through their time, skills and role modelling. Volunteers can participate in one-off fun, experiential, life skills programmes; participate in regular life skills programmes; go for a 4-day outdoor experiential camp; become a mentor; run a fundraising campaign, make donations and offer pro-bono professional services. The organisation also works with corporates on strategic CSR initiatives involving employee engagement and pro-bono services with over 2500 volunteers engaged every year clocking 30,000 hours.<sup>62</sup>

Most NGOs however, bring in volunteers on either a part-time basis or on a project basis. Project-based models were observed to provide successful experiences for both NGO and volunteers, when the project offered clear targets, defined roles and responsibilities, provided timelines and set expectations.

It was interesting to note that NGO perceptions regarding the utility of volunteers, their commitment and impact differed based on:

- The type of volunteering structure that the NGO follows— for example, certain NGOs that had tie-ups with colleges who sent them student volunteers, or those which worked with volunteers on a part time basis, had mixed experiences with volunteers, based on the individual motivations (often a certification at the end of the volunteering experience) and varying commitments of volunteers. Other NGOs that accessed volunteers through a database or portal often complained that volunteers were unavailable or difficult to reach. However, organizations which used volunteers as a core part of their operational model usually had positive experiences with volunteers.
- The investment of the NGO in volunteers –it was observed that NGOs which invested in allocating resources and time to understand the competencies of volunteers, train and manage volunteers reported positive experiences with the commitment of volunteers and the impact they created.

<sup>61</sup>[www.bhumi.org.in](http://www.bhumi.org.in)

<sup>62</sup>Sourced at [dreamadream.org](http://dreamadream.org) May 12 2017



### CASE STUDY 12: BAREFOOT COLLEGE IN RAJASTHAN

Tilonia is a small town 25 kms from Kishangarh near Ajmer in Rajasthan. Barefoot College, established in 1972, inspires this town to believe that solutions to rural problems lie within the community. These solutions are broadly classified by Barefoot College into solar energy, healthcare, education, water, rural handicrafts, people's action, communication, women empowerment, income generation, wasteland development, electricity and power as well as social awareness and conservation of ecological systems in rural communities. Barefoot college works with several types of volunteers and believes that it is important to match the priorities of the volunteer and that of the organization. Volunteers are appointed two levels of mentors who provide them with orientation and guidance when needed. Discussions with key stakeholders of the college brought out that based on their experience in working with volunteers, the more professional the volunteers feel, the more motivated they tend to be.

## FAITH-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (FBO)

### CASE STUDY 13: NAVJEEVAN TRUST, GUJARAT

Navjeevan Trust in Gujarat, established and run by the Catholic diocese is spread across 12 districts and 5,000 villages in Saurashtra and Kutch. It works on rural development through 38 activities in areas such as health, education, community mobilization and rehabilitation of disaster victims with over 400 staff, supported by over a thousand active volunteers who are said to "come at any time and perform any activities asked of them".

Faith-based giving and organizations have early roots in India. Nearly all religions display examples of selfless service and volunteerism in their scriptures, philosophy and encourage followers to volunteer for those in need. These principles motivate many Indians to make contributions in terms of money, time and skills. Around 99 per cent of Indians choose to label themselves as belonging to a particular religion according to Census reports.

In a country like India, therefore, faith plays a big part in constructing cultural, sociological and personal behavior and FBOs have a large number of volunteers who may donate financial resources or their time which FBOs usually use on a project basis. While many FBOs did not 'invest' in its volunteers in terms of training, management and often did not reimburse expenses, they did not experience a dearth of volunteers.

## COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS (CBOS)

CBOs are non-profit groups that work at a local level to improve the quality of life for residents of those communities. CBOs are typically, and almost necessarily, staffed by local volunteers who experience first-hand, the needs within their neighborhoods or communities. They are therefore important institutions that are critical to the Government's agenda of inclusive growth.

CBOs take various forms; members come together for a specific purpose or cause and formation may be initiated by members of the community themselves or supported by NGOs and other development partners. The membership of CBOs varies from small groups with as few as five members to entities with hundreds, or even thousands, of members. They may be informal, registered as associations or cooperatives, or part of a larger village organization. The central characteristics of these entities, which drive their governance and management, are their financial and institutional independence, and mobilization and management of their own resources.

Anbodu Kochi in Kerala is an informal youth group with members who came together in order to contribute towards and support the victims of the Chennai floods. The group, encouraged by the responses of youth and local governance, continues to exist and works on several causes that are important for the community. Another significant type of CBO in Kerala is the Residents' Associations (RA) who are increasingly setting up models for other collectives to emulate in different spheres such as energy conservation, organic farming and waste management. For example, Niravu, a ten-year-old RA in Kerala has embarked on a comprehensive health project 'Arogyamitra Sampoorna', and envisages taking care of the health needs of its 110 households from birth to death with a holistic and need-based approach. The project was launched with the help of about 80 NSS volunteers from a neighbouring college. The project, started last December, has now entered its fourth stage, in which a complete anemia screening programme is planned for children and adolescents.

### CASE STUDY 14: VOLUNTEER-BASED INITIATIVE 1-THE ROBIN HOOD ARMY

The Robin Hood Army, a volunteer-based organization which began in New Delhi in 2014, works to get surplus food from restaurants to the less fortunate sections of society in cities across India and 11 other countries. The organization functions on and propagates the basic ideology of self-sustained communities across the city and distributes the food or donations in kind that it receives from its restaurant partners and donors. It consists of over 8,435 volunteers spread across 41 cities, and has served food to over 1,848,210 people so far.

### CASE STUDY 15: VOLUNTEER-BASED INITIATIVE 2-PEHCHAN STREET SCHOOL

Pehchan Street school is another volunteer initiative wherein young professionals and students, teach underprivileged and street children and organize various activities on weekends in the slum areas of Mumbai and Delhi-NCR. The objective is to help children learn and provide support on various issues impacting their lives. Pehchan is now active in various cities and the mission remains the same: Free education to all.<sup>63</sup>



<sup>63</sup>Sourced at [www.pehchanstreetschool.org](http://www.pehchanstreetschool.org) on 13 May 2017

Self Help Groups (SHGs) are a type of CBO that have become an important vehicle of change for the poor and marginalized in India and are usually formed with the assistance of a self-help promoting institution such as NGOs, Government, poverty reduction programmes, state, commercial banks and cooperative banks, SHG federations, micro-finance institutions, among others. This model has been very successful in India, particularly in terms of creating bank linkages, providing livelihoods and socio-economic upliftment. Some of the well-known SHGs are those promoted and supported by MYRADA, NABARD, PRADAN and Department of Women and Child Development.

### CASE STUDY 16: ROLE OF COMMUNITY-LED INSTITUTIONS IN TACKLING THE DRUG MENACE IN HIMACHAL PRADESH

The widespread illegal cultivation of cannabis and opium in several parts of Himachal Pradesh has attracted traffickers from all over the world, and an increasing number of addicts. The state Government launched a campaign to create awareness about the drug menace and uproot cannabis and opium plants between August 22 and September 5, 2016. It engaged over 5,000 Mahila Mandals, 4,285 self-help groups and 5,361 schools. As many as 1.5 lakh women and 1.2 lakh men volunteered collectively and uprooted 3.56 crore cannabis plants from more than 2,145-hectares of land. The Government attributes the success of the campaign to the voluntary spirit demonstrated by the grassroots-level workers led by the youth brigade especially women, supported from all quarters including youth organizations and student volunteers.

Certain chapter-based organizations / societies / trusts may also be considered CBOs due to their close links within the community that they are present in. For example, organizations such as the Indian Red Cross Society (IRCS) have long-standing experience of promoting humanitarian principles and values through a community-based volunteer management system including relief and emergency volunteers<sup>64</sup>. Similarly, organizations such as Rotaract clubs that are part of Rotary International, are involved in community and international service and aim to provide an opportunity for young men and women to enhance their personal development, address the physical and social needs of their communities, and to promote better relations between all people worldwide through a framework of friendship and service.<sup>65</sup>

### CITIZENS PARTICIPATING IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CAMPAIGNS

Campaigns and movements provide platforms for youth volunteerism and are able to bring together people from different sections of society to take up different causes. They may focus on a range of issues including environmental degradation, violence against women, right to information and employment.

With the advent of new technology and media and increasing recognition of the concept of active citizenship, these have taken up new forms. As depicted below, these movements and campaigns may be initiated by organizations, influential persons or a group of people.

One Billion Rising (OBR) is a global campaign that recognizes that violence against women cannot end without looking at the intersection of poverty, racism, war, the plunder of the environment, capitalism, imperialism, and patriarchy. Impunity lives at the heart of these interlocking forces. Over the last five years, the OBR campaign has brought together over half a million young people, rural and urban women, men and a cross-section of communities from as many as 25 states and 300 districts in India. OBR has emerged as a global platform that civil society, including youth groups and community collectives, are using to amplify their voices to challenge structural injustices and violence against women. The campaign has attracted a large number of young people who have volunteered across schools and colleges to make the campaign relevant to the youth by offering an alternative paradigm through which to engage with the world.

SWECHA initiated a youth driven campaign 'We for Yamuna' in Delhi in 2000. This campaign was a collective response towards growing apathy towards one of the most polluted rivers of the world.<sup>66</sup>

Certain campaigns are also pro-active; for example, the Rozgaar Evam Suchana ka Adhikar Abhiyan (SR Abhiyan) is administered by a network of NGOs in Rajasthan. They particularly focus on raising awareness about two acts: Right to Information Act and the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MNREGA) and have close to 100 student volunteers from the University of Rajasthan.

<sup>64</sup>[www.indianredcross.org](http://www.indianredcross.org)

<sup>65</sup>[www.rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org)

<sup>66</sup><http://swecha.in>

These movements and campaigns offer platforms to youth to volunteer for causes that they believe in and provide them with flexibility in terms of time commitment and levels of involvement.

## INTERNET / VIRTUAL VOLUNTEERING

Development of information and communication technology (ICT) has opened up new spaces and opportunities for volunteers to participate in. It has enabled many individuals to volunteer with organizations without being physically present at venues and has given organizations the flexibility to operate 24/7 due to the prospects of attracting volunteers from different time zones.<sup>67</sup>

Some organizations in India have begun relying on volunteers for tasks that can be undertaken over the internet such as translating, managing content, organizing campaigns, communicating with members, providing online services, conducting research and other activities.

### CASE STUDY 17: HELPER OF HANDICAPPED, KOLHAPUR, MAHARASHTRA

Helper of Handicapped (HoH), a Kolhapur-based organization, ensures that its 500 underprivileged students receive quality education by providing them with online access to teachers based in Kolkata; teachers are involved in creating and managing content, websites, designing material and fundraising.



Access to basic affordable technology has allowed youth flexibility in committing their time and efforts in various activities, from mass SMS communication to organizing social media campaigns. Websites such as 'iVolunteer', 'volunteeringindia.com' and others recruit online and provide a range of online volunteering opportunities for individual volunteers and organizations. NGOs such as 350.org, change.org, provide unique ways in which people can volunteer online and offer them opportunities to create pledges, sign petitions and raise viewership or funds for a particular cause.

<sup>67</sup>The state of world's volunteering report, 2011

### BOX 9: ONLINE VOLUNTEERING PLATFORM – CONNECTFOR.ORG

Connectfor.org is an online volunteering platform started in 2015 that aims to be an all-encompassing resource solution for non-profits; it seeks to develop the culture of volunteering across India, encouraging both individuals and organizations to realize how to best use volunteering opportunities to add the most value.

Crowd-funding platforms have also seen an increase, although no reliable numbers in terms of funds raised are currently available. 'Rang De' is one of India's top peer-to-peer lending platforms that facilitates micro or low-cost loans to rural entrepreneurs across India with the help of funders. This portal has attracted 9,699 social investors and helped disburse 50,008 loans for a section of the Indian population that is usually overlooked by banks and financial institutions; it is interesting to note that over 93% of borrowers have been women. 'Ketto', 'Fuel A Dream', 'Catapooolt', 'Milaap' and 'BitGiving' are also important crowd-funding platforms in India that support fund raising for community / social projects<sup>68</sup>.

### CASE STUDY 18: VIDEO VOLUNTEERS

Video Volunteers (VV) started off as a project to match volunteer filmmakers to NGOs needing training. Video Volunteers has been working on the concept of community media that is for and by communities. It empowers those who produce it and those who are in it. It helps build the social capital of a community to address critical local issues and gives people full control over their narratives. Their current model is 'India Unheard' that focuses on the intellectual creative and leadership of community media makers; community ownership of content creation process and solution oriented stories and community discussion and viewing of content. A number of young people have contributed to VV, their volunteer programme, wherein persons with various skills in filmmaking editing, social research can participate.

Cyber activism has grown and the efforts of virtual volunteers to mobilize hundreds and thousands of individuals in campaigns, signing petitions, sending letters of protest, mobilizing people have been immensely successful. The famous ice bucket challenge was a phenomenal attempt in raising awareness for ALS (Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis) across the globe.

Global Citizens India was another exciting platform for volunteers to sign petitions, create awareness about the UN SDGs. Alongside events, various campaigns related to gender have surfaced in India such as 'say NO to violence against women', Veet's 'shave your opinion campaign' amongst others.

### CASE STUDY 19: GLOBAL CITIZENS INDIA

Global Citizens India is a social action platform where one can learn about issues that matter, take actions and join communities committed to social change. The organization believes they can end extreme poverty by 2030, because of the collective actions of Global Citizens across the world. Recently, 2016 Global Citizens India organized an event with artists such as Coldplay, Demi Lavato, Shankar Mahadevan and other Bollywood stars where a maximum number of tickets was sold through an online lottery system, with a lot of youth participating in the global citizen pledge towards achieving the SDGs.

Virtual volunteering is an excellent platform to organize events and protests and this was seen during the anti-corruption movement and the 2012 Nirbhaya case in Delhi, where thousands of people were mobilized and were responsible for organizing protests, human chains and candlelight marches across India. Social media websites such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have a huge audience and are exceptional tools to undertake such practices.

<sup>68</sup>[www.crowdsourcingweek.com](http://www.crowdsourcingweek.com)



Volunteers also described virtual volunteering as fast, easy and effective. A number of volunteers from India have already joined global online volunteering platforms such as the UN Volunteers [www.onlinevolunteering.org](http://www.onlinevolunteering.org), which allows organizations and volunteers to team up to address sustainable development challenges anywhere in the world, from any device. One such individual is Kirthi Jayakumar, a trained lawyer and a passionate social activist. Since October 2010, Kirthi has been volunteering her skills, time and energy online and until now has supported 16 civil society organizations and UN agencies by writing, blogging, researching, translating, designing and editing documents and publications for the social causes that matter most to her: gender, conflict and poverty. As of today, global volunteering has 60% people from developing countries and 187 countries engaged in online volunteering. A similar India-specific online volunteering portal by the Government of India is also in the pipeline.

Although, virtual or internet volunteerism has immense potential to engage youth volunteers, there is still a number of observed limitations in India. For one, it will naturally attract segments of society who have access to technology. Secondly, certain volunteers may believe that this kind of micro-volunteering is impersonal in nature and less rewarding. More importantly, in certain cases, civil society organizations themselves may not be equipped to manage and organize online volunteering programmes.

### ‘VOLUN-TOURISM’

In recent times the concept of ‘Volun-tourism’ is also gaining popularity in India. It is the intersection of international volunteering and tourism, and may also be called ‘volunteer tourism’, ‘volunteer holidays’ and ‘volunteer travel’. ‘Volun-tourism’ is often promoted as a way to experience authenticity within the context of alternative tourism beneficial to destinations, leading to expectations of a responsible tourism ethos, creating “better places for people to live in, and better places to visit”<sup>69</sup>. Several organizations have been promoting volun-tourism; while some organizations such as 17000ft are not-for-profits, this model of facilitating volunteering has also seen a spate of social enterprises such as Spiti Ecosphere and Voygr Sustainable Travel.

For example, a voluntourist@17000ft is a programme of 17000ft foundation in Ladakh that connects committed travelers to remote villages where they can contribute even while on vacation. This programme aims at structuring volunteering attempts, equalizing support across more villages and orienting Volun-tourists with the appropriate knowledge and skills required to maximize impact.

### CASE STUDY 20: GLOBAL HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION - CREATING IMPACT THROUGH VOLUN-TOURISM

In Ladakh, Global Himalayan Expedition (GHE) seeks to provide clean energy, education and wireless connectivity access through solar power, to help improve the living standards of the rural population. GHE’s objective is to implement the solution in a sustainable, scalable and environmentally beneficial manner, leading to an overall development of the community and empowering the local village population. Through its volunteers, GHE has till date electrified 25 villages and has created 15 home-stays in the villages that have been electrified. There has been an increase in income of approximately USD 30,000 across the 20 villages electrified through engagement in tourism.

<sup>69</sup>Sourced at [volunteertourism.views.wordpress.com](http://volunteertourism.views.wordpress.com) Feb 2013, May 14 2017



The amount of time that is provided by the volun-tourist is usually flexible. Discussions with such organizations and their volunteers revealed that volunteers often create tangible positive outputs and outcomes within their host communities and that these experiences are 'cultural immersion experiences' for most of them. However, associated drawbacks include the fact that volunteers may not have the requisite skill sets to deliver services (for example, when working with differently-abled children) and in these cases may not create any positive impact. It was also observed that there may be a lack of continuity and there is, in many cases, greater impact created on the volunteers themselves than on host communities.

## PRIVATE SECTOR

The role of the private sector in voluntary action has been gradually increasing in present times in India through Companies and Corporate Foundations. Employee volunteering and employee giving are offshoots of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and employee engagement programmes.

Employee volunteering programmes take on various forms, initiatives may be one-off (for a particular cause or to celebrate a certain cause for example) or ongoing.

Companies believe that the direction of senior leadership plays an important role in motivating employees and encouraging their involvement and engagement. For example, the TATA sustainability group (TSG) states that its employee volunteering programme is based on the Founder's vision that 'the community is the reason for its existence'. Through points of contact in each company at different locations it provides opportunities for employees to volunteer with NGOs. In the last one year, it has seen 70,000 registered volunteers clocking in over 400,000 hours under the Tata Engage programme.

Interactions with TATA and a few other companies also revealed that as part of their company policy, it was required that middle management transitioning to senior management, engaged in community service as volunteering with communities assisted in their personal development by challenging their assumptions about the world and allowing them to make decisions from a more humane perspective. Vodafone Foundation, the philanthropic arm of the telecom service provider, launched a flagship CSR initiative called World of Difference (WoD) in 2011. As part of the initiative, more than 128 skilled employees have spent 56,910 hours volunteering since its inception with the company believing that 85% of those who volunteered were more visible in the eyes of their colleagues and 96% of them became more effective in their jobs.

Employee volunteers are perceived to be most interested in issues that are close to their value systems; they have also played an important role in providing relief to victims of natural disasters. For example, Cisco employees in Bangalore volunteered to assist during the catastrophic floods in Raichur, Karnataka in 2009. Cisco partnered with the Karnataka Government and local NGOs to rebuild the physical infrastructure with network technology to better access quality healthcare and education. As part of the Project Samuday, Cisco employees put in 2700 hours of voluntary service. 250 Cisco employees volunteered their time and shared their experience with families, friends, and co-workers to bring more attention to critical human needs in their community.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Sourced at [www.csr.cisco.com/csestudy/project-samuday](http://www.csr.cisco.com/csestudy/project-samuday)

## CASE STUDY 21: CORPORATE - NGO PARTNERSHIPS PROMOTING EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING

Yuva Parivartan commenced in 1998 to cater to school dropouts and make them economically independent through vocational training. With employees from companies such as Nomura, Accenture, Glaxo Smith Kline working with them, they believe that the biggest value employees bring is that they serve as an aspiration for the youth beneficiaries – ‘beneficiaries see how they dress, hear about their day and want to be like them. That is the biggest motivation’.



Companies also provide in-kind services to NGOs involved in charitable initiatives. Examples of these include Citibank India whose employee volunteers have developed a computerized microfinance package for its NGO partners and A.T. Kearney whose management consultants do pro bono work for Deepalaya, an NGO working in the slums of Delhi. Breakthrough Trust, which has taken the assistance of Vodafone and Google in setting up computers and providing filmmaking training, stated that this in-kind volunteering service also assisted them in building up the skills of their staff and other volunteers<sup>71</sup>. NGOs also believed that employee volunteers who interacted with beneficiaries, particularly children, adolescents and youth, served as role models to these youth.

On the other hand, interactions with stakeholders revealed that several companies find it difficult to run effective volunteering programmes. It is often difficult to mobilize employees to volunteer and sustain their interest. Similarly, companies that do not run planned volunteering initiatives often fail to see an interest from employees or impact on the beneficiaries that they work with. It was observed that success of programmes was dependent on the person running the programme, an effective collaboration between the CSR and Human Resources department and regularity in frequency of involvement or time.

<sup>71</sup>New Academy of Business, 2004, pp. 17, 20.

## CONCLUSION

This chapter confirms that there is an established ecosystem of actors that facilitates and encourages youth volunteerism. While personal inclinations and influencers such as family, friends and networks play an important role as motivators to volunteer, the criticality of the role of facilitators (such as the Government of India, civil society and the private sector) in providing platforms and opportunities for youth to volunteer cannot be underestimated.

Recent Government of India initiatives such as the Namami Gange Project or the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan have become massive movements in terms of people's participation. The largest benefits that Government of India programmes offer are the scale and reach of these programmes. However, as is likely with such large-scale initiatives, numerous challenges remain in terms of implementation, delivery and perceived impact.

It may be noted, however, that while Government of India policies have promoted volunteer action through several programmes, there are no specific laws that regulate volunteerism in India or work to protect the rights of volunteers in India. In 2007, the Government of India adopted the National Policy on the Voluntary Sector and thereby took the first step in the process of developing a new working relationship between the Government and NGOs. It also means that forms of volunteerism and contours of volunteering are usually dependent on the framework of the NGO that the volunteer is working with.

Civil society has attempted to fill the gaps in design and implementation by getting into partnerships with Government-run organisations like SHGs and providing new ways for youth to volunteer, both offline and online. NGO perceptions regarding the utility of volunteers, their commitment and impact generated differences based on the investment of NGOs in their volunteers; allocating roles based on skill sets, providing orientation and training, continuously engaging with volunteers resulted in better experiences for both the NGOs and the volunteers. Faith based / culture promoting organizations and CBOs also saw dedicated volunteers, both in terms of their efforts and their time commitments; this may be attributed to the fact that in a geographically large and culturally diverse country like India, faith, culture and ethnic roots play a big part in constructing cultural, sociological and personal behavior.

The private sector is also seeing a trend in encouraging volunteerism among its employees and several companies have reported promising trends in terms of number of employee volunteers, quality of efforts and impact. However, many companies find it difficult to build and sustain the interest of employees in volunteering, particularly when initiatives are planned on an ad-hoc basis or conducted solely from the perspective of employee engagement.

As described in this chapter, globalisation and the digital age are altering the face of volunteerism in India with the growth of active citizenship, virtual volunteering and concepts such as volun-tourism. It is evident that the volunteering ecosystem has been developing in India as newer platforms of engagement emerge, hopefully resulting in the involvement of more youth and increased commitment from those already participating.

While a number of initiatives to promote youth volunteerism are in place, there is a need for greater collaboration and coordination between both state and non-state actors, Governments, civil society, private institutions and individuals for youth volunteerism to gain currency and be promoted as an essential factor in national development.



IFE ON LAND



## Chapter -3

# YOUTH PERCEPTIONS ON VOLUNTEERING IN INDIA



Following the previous chapter which showcases the various platforms available for volunteering in India, this chapter represents the perspectives of youth on how they volunteer and their usage of these various available platforms. It further explores the motivations of youth to volunteer as well as their perception of the impact they have created, both on communities / society as well as on themselves. Finally, it captures perceived barriers to volunteering, actual challenges faced by volunteers on ground and recommendations from youth on how the ecosystem for volunteering can be further improved in India.

The term 'youth' is in most cases defined as a homogenous age group for ease of classification and comparison. Within the context of volunteerism however, it must be kept in mind that this group cannot be viewed as a collective. It comprises individuals at various life stages and transition points; the aspirations and priorities of a student for example, would differ greatly from those of a young adult who has been in the workforce for several years. Additionally, factors such as socio-economic backgrounds, political, religious or cultural affiliations and access to opportunities also contribute to the diversity within this group. Consequently, volunteering activities differ to reflect the society within which a young person operates according to his / her own context or worldview<sup>72</sup>.

This chapter seeks to bring out the perceptions of youth on volunteering in India based on a nationwide survey which was hosted both online and offline. The survey was further supported by individual interviews and group discussions with youth across India and comprised young people from the ages of 15-29, in urban and rural areas of 12 states across India from diverse socio-economic-cultural backgrounds.

## PROFILE OF RESPONDENTS

### Survey

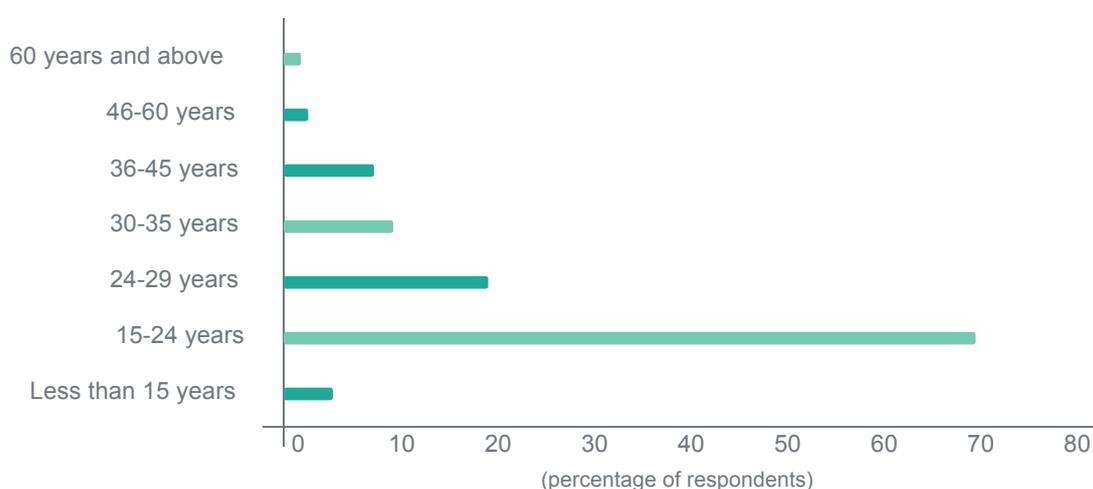
The profile of respondents in the survey aims to provide an understanding of whether the target audience of youth volunteers has actually been reached and how closely the sample replicates the population. It further offers a context in terms of who the respondents are with characteristics such as age, gender, nationality, family income levels, educational and employment profile and enables the segregation of the overall collective of 'youth volunteers' into meaningful groups of respondents.

Overall, the survey reached out to a total of 3,492 respondents.

From a geographical perspective, respondents from almost all states across India participated, with the highest number of responses from Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Sikkim, Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Tripura and West Bengal.

United Nations, for statistical purposes, defines persons between the ages of 15 and 24 as youth without prejudice to other definitions by Member States<sup>73</sup>. However, the 2014 National Youth Policy of India, in its definition of youth, allows for a range up to 29 years. The survey has therefore brought out the responses of youth falling with the age group of 15 years to 29 years.

**Figure 2: Age group**

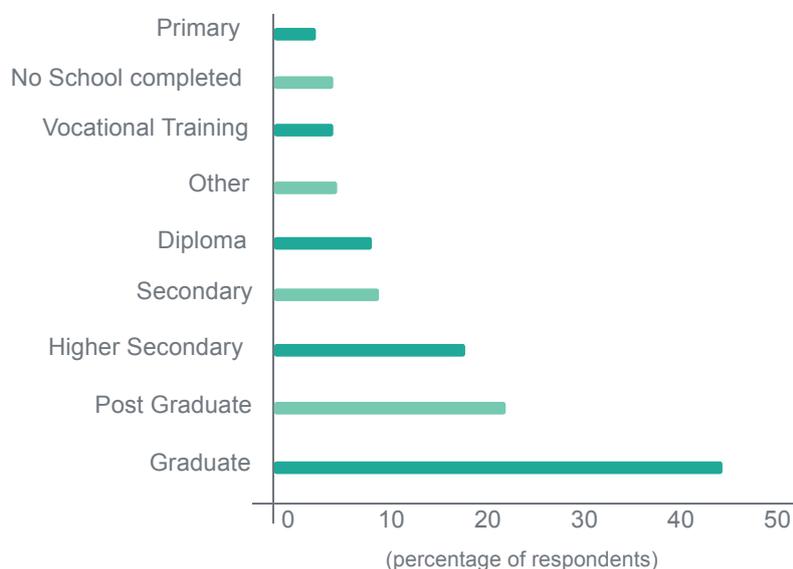


<sup>72</sup><http://www.thefreedictionary.com/worldview>

<sup>73</sup>Secretary-General's Report to the General Assembly, A/36/215, 1981

86 percent of respondents fell within the youth category (15 years-29 years). The participation trend in terms of gender was fairly representative; male respondents constituted 52 percent of respondents, followed by female respondents at 47.7 percent and other category participants at 0.3 percent.

**Figure 3: Educational qualification**



63 percent of the sample were graduates / post graduates or were in the process of completing their graduation / postgraduation, either full-time or part-time. Three percent of respondents had completed primary schooling or had not completed their schooling.

36 percent of respondents were either employed by others (private sector, civil society or Government) and 26 percent were full-time students. Seven percent of the sample constituted full-time volunteers; while this may not necessarily represent the larger Indian youth population, the survey provides insights into the motivations and challenges faced by this important sub-group.

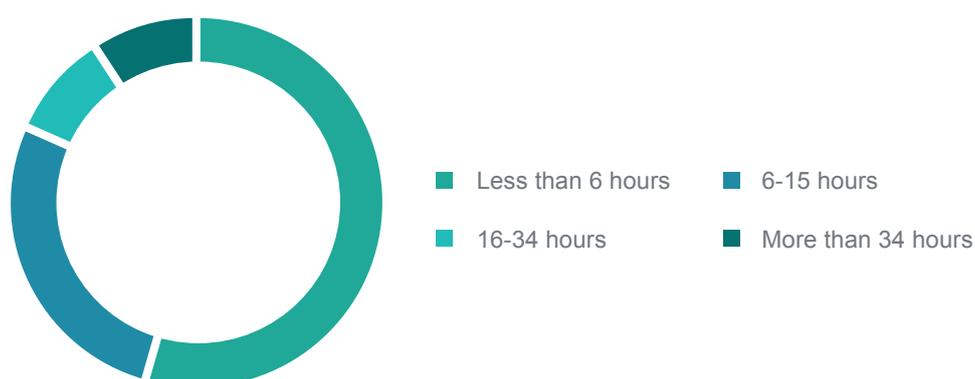
While 25 percent of respondents stated that they were unemployed, 15 percent of this subgroup was pursuing their postgraduate degree. This may also be read in light of the fact that almost half of the respondents who marked themselves as unemployed also stated that they were volunteering through their school / college / university programme and could therefore include part-time students.

Income groups ranged from 'less than INR 30,000' per household per month to 'above INR one lakh' and while respondents were represented across all income groups, approximately 39 percent of survey participants stated that their household income was less than INR 50,000 a month.

## PERSONAL INTERVIEWS AND GROUP DISCUSSIONS

Alongside the survey, personal interviews and group discussions were conducted with an array of youth volunteers on field to provide a greater understanding on the perceptions of youth. Interactions with youth volunteers were spread across 12 states in India and were helpful in building and strengthening the survey responses.

The primary research captures the perceptions of a wide range of volunteers from those engaged in formal organisations such as civil society organisations, Government programmes, companies, academic institutions to informal groups and independent volunteers. Apart from these, interviews were conducted with prominent personalities in the field of volunteering and community service.

**Figure 4: Hours devoted to volunteering**

### NATURE OF VOLUNTEERING

67 percent of survey respondents stated that they had undertaken a volunteering activity in the past with about 15 percent of this group stating that they dedicated between 16 and 34 hours in a week; this corresponds with the fact that approximately 7 percent of the sample group were full-time volunteers. About 51 percent of respondents however, claimed to dedicate less than 6 hours a week to volunteering activities, as depicted in Figure 4.

Aligning with responses from youth in interviews and focus group discussions, 79 percent of volunteers stated that they were not provided any financial incentives for their service as volunteers. Organizations interviewed had mixed responses to whether volunteers should be reimbursed or provided some form of stipend for their expenditure. For example, many faith-based organizations operated on the premise that with faith-driven volunteers, their work came 'from the heart' and volunteers therefore did not require or wish to be reimbursed. NGOs interviewed brought in varying perspectives on financial compensation, however many NGOs that worked primarily through youth volunteers did offer them a stipend covering 'cost-of-living' expenses or at the very least, compensation for expenditure incurred including travel costs.

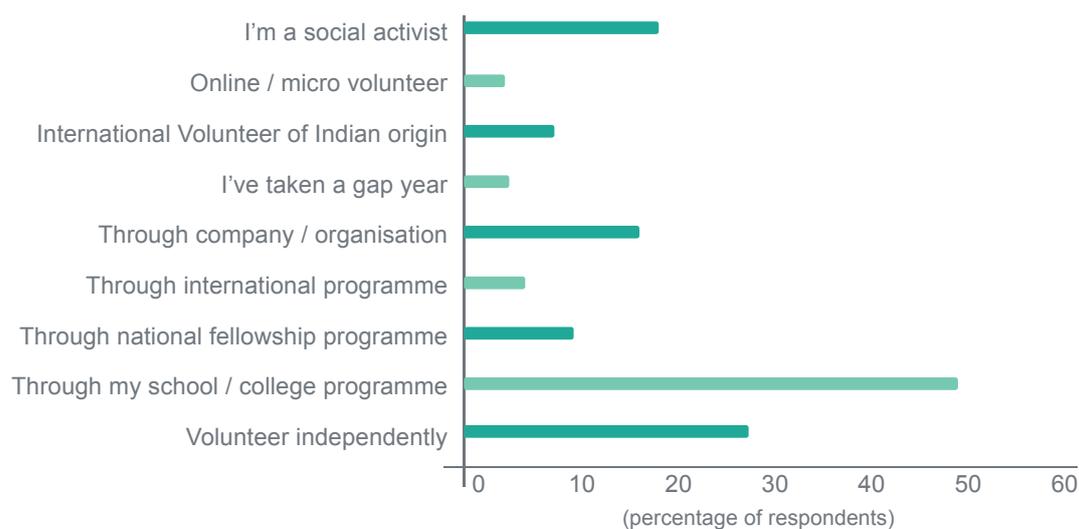
Among the volunteers who were provided stipends, the financial compensation ranged from INR 500 a month to over one lakh a month as per survey data. It was noted however, that the very few volunteers who were paid over a lakh a month were either full time volunteers or volunteered through their organization and all were either of a foreign nationality or Indian diaspora. While the average compensation received was approximately INR 17,631 per month, it may be noted that this number was driven significantly high by responses from international agencies and a few Fellows. The median remuneration received among those volunteers who were compensated was INR 5000 per month.

#### **BOX 10: NSS VOLUNTEERS PERCEPTION ON REMUNERATION FOR VOLUNTEERS**

In a discussion with NSS volunteers in Delhi, the group stated that if volunteers are paid, it wouldn't fall under the purview of volunteering. However, they agreed that although remuneration should not be the primary focus, a stipend or allowances would be useful, particularly travelling allowances to far-off areas.

In response to the question 'what kind of volunteer would you categorize yourself as', most volunteers checked multiple categories indicating that the same individual found several avenues of manifesting volunteerism. For example, a young person could volunteer independently and through a college programme while also considering himself or herself to be a social activist. Almost half of the survey respondents had volunteered through their school / college programme while 24 percent stated that they also volunteered independently, as depicted in Figure 5.

Figure 5: Type of volunteers



However, despite fast growing rates of internet penetration in urban and rural India, the percentage of youth who stated that they volunteered online or were micro volunteers was quite small, at 3 percent. A report by the Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI) - IMRB International in December 2015 has stated that with 309 million mobile internet users, the urban user base increased by 71 percent year-on-year while the rural user base increased by 93 percent. While urban users used mobile internet mainly for online communication and social networking, rural users used the internet mainly for entertainment and social networking. Although the survey indicates that online volunteering hasn't really caught on in India, it is unclear whether this is attributable to the inclinations of youth volunteers or the absence of adequate online avenues to volunteer.

In response to a question that asked survey participants which organization they volunteered with, 18 percent of respondents stated that they were not affiliated to any particular organization, while 65 percent of respondents stated that they had worked with NGOs, Governmental organizations, international agencies or with universities and think tanks. This indicates the importance of each of these institutions in providing avenues for youth to volunteer.

"I would like to volunteer after I finish college, but I'm not sure how to. There is no common platform. A space needs to be created which can be accessed by all people who want to volunteer"

- Alfuya Ansari, NSS volunteer from Jamia Millia University, Delhi

The survey also indicated that youth volunteers, in most cases, did not depict any particular thematic affiliations and worked across sectors based on the mandate of the organization that they worked with. While volunteers were involved in multiple thematic areas, the most popular thematic areas were those of education, environment, healthcare and wellbeing, employment (including livelihoods) followed by gender and emergency services. This finding could be linked to the fact that most philanthropic donors<sup>74</sup> in India as well as corporate funds are largely directed towards the causes of education, healthcare and livelihoods and volunteers therefore find a greater number of platforms to contribute within these themes. Seven percent of volunteers also contributed to other specific thematic causes such as animal rights and welfare, development of the displaced, youth leadership, refugee related work, child rights and drug abuse.

<sup>74</sup><http://voices.mckinseysociety.com/india-philanthropy-impact/>

**Figure 6: Activities undertaken by volunteers**

Within their areas of work, it was observed that approximately 48 percent of volunteers stated that they had 'generally helped out as required' which indicates that in some cases organizations may assign 'general help' tasks to volunteers which may be unplanned or without a larger goal for the personal development of the volunteer. Discussions with several NGOs who primarily relied on their own employees to deliver their mandate, revealed some agreement with this fact as volunteers who were perceived to be undependable, could not be assigned core tasks.

However, encouragingly, it was observed that in many instances, volunteers also provided technical assistance (24 percent) or expertise as per their skill sets, such as training, campaigning, providing direct services to beneficiaries, counselling, administration and documentation, etc.

## **VOLUNTEER MOTIVATIONS**

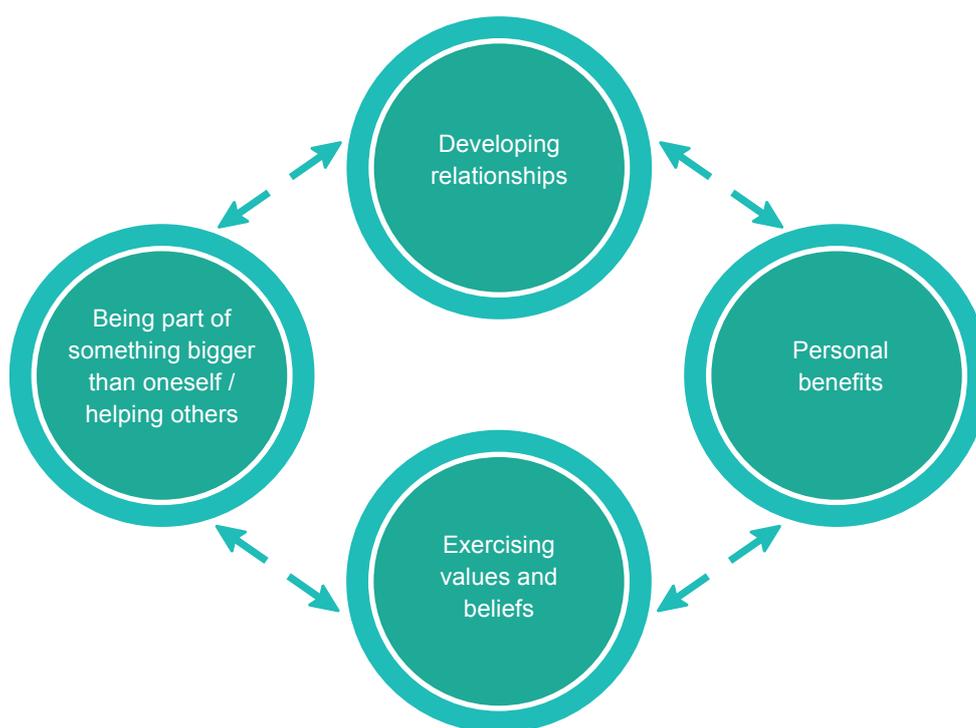
As discussed in previous chapters, youth volunteer for a variety of reasons ranging from wishing to be involved in their local community to being pro-active in supporting a cause or "giving something back" to society. Students and unemployed youth may take up volunteering to assist them in enhancing their skills and boosting their chances of getting a job within the sustainable development space or otherwise.

The motivation behind the desire to volunteer, the amount of time the individual has available and their personal circumstances all have a bearing on whether youth choose to volunteer at all, who they volunteer with, the type of activities they choose to undertake and their level of involvement with the organisation. As a person's circumstances change, their motivations to volunteer may change as well.

Based on the survey and youth interactions, this section provides a perspective on why youth volunteer, in order to assist policy makers and organizations that engage volunteers to understand the motivations and aspirations of youth with the objective of supporting the development of youth volunteerism in India.

These motivations have been broadly classified into the categories depicted in the figure below, however, motivations may not necessarily be exclusive and may overlap with one another. For example, a primary motivation for a young person may be helping others while the secondary motivation may include personal development or career enhancement.

Figure 7: Motivations to volunteer



### EXERCISING VALUES AND BELIEFS

Individuals are deeply driven by their sense of identity, of the values and beliefs that they align with. This sense of identity or self is an important motivation for youth to volunteer as it is a period of life where the idea of self is being defined and strong affiliations and associations are made. The sense-of-self associations may be based on spiritual beliefs, culture, gender, social relationships and avocations amongst others. Certain aspects of one's identity may stay with him or her throughout life, such as gender, religion or culture, while others such as one's occupation or socio-economic status may evolve or change, leading to changes in motivations and expressions of volunteering. Individuals may also have multiple factors that contribute to their identity.

17 percent of survey respondents indicated that they volunteered because it aligned with their personal values while 22 percent attributed their volunteering due to personal experiences and 6 percent volunteered due to religious or cultural reasons.

“You cannot oblige people to do something. The cause has to generate empathy. Whatever you empathize with, when you understand the pain, you will contribute to that cause.

A human being is cognitive – he proceeds according to his understanding and his values. Once he is motivated to act, it becomes his own commitment.”

- Swami Paramatmanda Saraswatiiji, Arsha Vidhya Mandir, Rajkot, Gujarat

“My family volunteers two hours, every Sunday in the Gurudwara. All the members of our community devote their time or money while others may clean the place. We believe in equality and that people from all religions and backgrounds should sit together as a community.”

- Harman Singh, volunteer from Punjab

However, discussions with stakeholders such as youth volunteers and NGOs suggested that youth were most passionate about volunteering work related to their communities, their culture and spiritual beliefs. As opposed to other categories of volunteers who worked best within a project-based structure, these volunteers were able to contribute their time and efforts over large periods of time.

For example, the Bhartiya Muslim Women's Andolan based in Maharashtra, is a platform which disseminates information to Muslim women about their rights and to discuss their concerns. The Andolan works in slum areas through its women volunteers who have been working with them for over four years. Noorjahan, who leads the Andolan said that the volunteers believe that they are doing something important which gives them a sense of ownership.



Another noteworthy factor that contributes to one's sense of self or identity is culture, which includes language, caste, norms and art forms. As discussed previously, India is a complex society with over 2,000 ethnic groups and a multitude of languages. Within this context, maintaining the culture of sub-groups and segments within Indian society tends to take on tremendous importance.

For example, youth across various states in India are working towards reviving the language and traditional art forms of the state and their own communities. DHAD, a volunteering organization in Uttarakhand is working on reviving the Garwali language and culture of Uttarakhand with a huge network of volunteers across the globe that promotes the usage of the Garwali language. They also work extensively on encouraging local handicrafts and agricultural produce. DHAD has been successful in declaring "Harela" (festival to mark the onset of rainy season) as a state holiday.

## CASE STUDY 22: VAYALI FOLKLORE GROUP, KERALA

Vayali Folklore<sup>75</sup> was set up in 2004 with a group of 10 people, to start learning the traditional knowledge systems practiced in and around the banks of River Nila and to share the same with the younger generation so that they would remain in touch with their culture. The group uses indigenous percussion instruments and colorful costumes to create foot-tapping music to preserve the dying Valluvanadan tradition and culture. It now runs an eco-bazaar for traditional artisans, is on the responsible tourism itinerary, has a much-sought after bamboo orchestra, is raising funds for ailing artisans / artists, and envisages an educational module to teach lessons of nature conversation through folklore. As Vinod Nambiar the executive director of Valayali, says, "Traditional art is being revived. The organization created a livelihood for many craftsmen and artists and it further motivates young people to stay in touch with their roots. For international and local youth and volunteers, it is a great opportunity to connect with each other, travel for different events and learn. It creates confidence and pushes youth to engage and battle for their rights."

Similarly, Vayali folklore in Kerala, depicted in the case study above, has an interesting volunteering model that revives local art forms and builds livelihood opportunities around it.

Another important aspect of cultural identity where youth volunteer their time and effort, is related to issues surrounding their own caste or tribe. One such example is that of Vidhayak Sansad, an organization in Maharashtra that works to uplift and protect the rights of tribal people.

<sup>75</sup><http://www.vayali.org/About%20US.php>

### CASE STUDY 23: VIDHAYAK SANSAD, MAHARASHTRA

Founded 37 years ago, Vidhayak Sansad was initially established, and was successful in securing the freedom of bonded labor. The NGO has now established a union called Shramjeevi Sanghatana or the people's union to work on other challenges faced by this community such as education and employment of tribal people. The union comprises over 50,000 volunteers and includes women's wings and youth wings; it operates under the ideology that "in unity we have strength". Recently, over 600 children from this district died in one year due to malnutrition, as parents were not able to afford food due to unemployment. The union waged a morcha (march) on the District Collector on 15th March 2017 for the proper implementation of the Employee Guarantee Scheme as they believed that the Government was not taking cognizance of these deaths. Almost 75,000 people marched for this cause despite most of their members being daily wage workers, as this is a cause they believed in and which was tied to their identities. "We also tell them to bring their children," says Balaram Bhoir, General Secretary of Shramjeevi Sanghatana, "we want them to know what their parents did so they could have a better life".

Therefore, it may be observed that the commitment of youth towards causes tied to their identity is long term. Moreover, unlike other platforms, youth do not usually expect monetary remuneration from these organizations and in certain cases may even be willing to forego their wages as seen in Case Study 23 above.

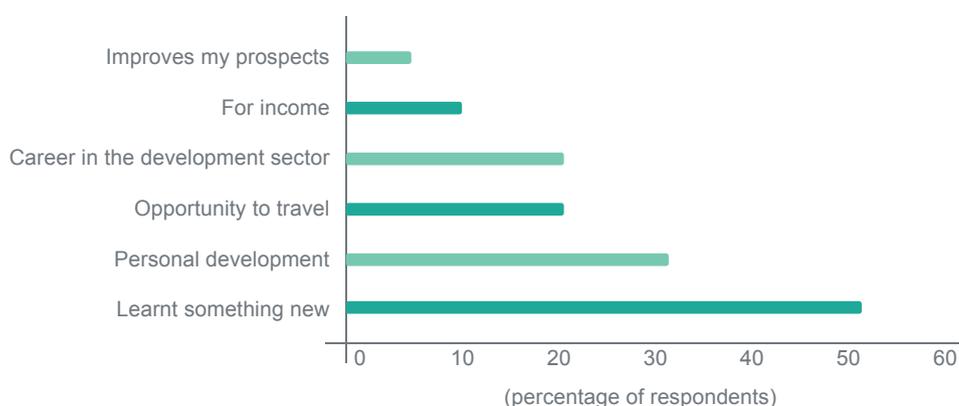
Another form of identity that people feel strongly about is towards their nation. Diaspora volunteering gives people living abroad the opportunity to contribute towards their country of origin. However, as of today, most of the aid from diaspora is in the form of financial contributions.

### PERSONAL BENEFITS

Forward thinking organizations are cognizant of the fact that a primary motivator for young people to volunteer is the opportunity to gain work-related experience, skills, and qualifications that can help them in their education and careers<sup>76</sup>.

As depicted in the figure below, 52 percent of survey respondents claimed that their reason behind volunteering was learning something new or gaining new experiences while 32 percent of respondents also linked their motivation to volunteer with their own need for personal development. It is believed that those who volunteer are more likely to have leadership abilities, self-confidence, critical thinking skills, and conflict resolution skills than non-volunteers<sup>77</sup>; primary research across states in India also brought out that youth studying in college were interested in gaining new skills, including leadership and life skills such as coping with emotions, critical thinking, self-awareness, decision making and problem solving, confidence building, public speaking etc.

Figure 8: Volunteer motivation, personal benefits



<sup>76</sup>Eley (2003)

<sup>77</sup>Astin et al. 1999 cited in Motivations to Volunteer Among College Students in India ToorjoGhose• MeenazKassam

In certain states such as Kerala, a number of youth, particularly NYKS volunteers, mentioned political ambitions as a motivation for volunteering as they believed that the NYKS allowed them to meet new people who would facilitate their entry into the political sphere.

Interactions with Mr. Prashant Nair, the district collector of Kozhikode and the man behind the success of the initiative 'Compassionate Kozhikode', brought out the importance of granting volunteers the space to take up leadership positions and to come up with innovative solutions as depicted in the case study below.

"I took a gap year to prepare for my MBA and thought that working with the "Walk for Water" campaign would be an opportunity to build my CV. Apart from looking good on my resume, it really helped me build up my presentation and communication skills"

*-Ayushe Seth, volunteer with MoYAS- "Walk for water" campaign, Delhi*

## CASE STUDY 24: COMPASSIONATE KOZHIKODE

Mr. Prashant Nair, District collector of Kozhikode and the man behind the initiative 'Compassionate Kozhikode' says that at any time, there are 100-200 volunteers on the field working on a variety of issues such as 'Operation Suleimani' (hunger) to mental health.

He believes that the responsibility of diagnosing the problem and finding solutions should come from youth where they are given leadership positions and are asked to exercise their creativity in problem solving and maintaining consistency in execution. "There are a lot of people with interesting ideas – however an idea is not enough, they also have to stay back and be responsible for the execution of that idea," he says.

He maintains that an important component of keeping volunteers engaged is trust. "If you can't believe in youth, how can you expect them to take the future ahead?" he asks. "What is important is that we have touched them deep inside their hearts and sown compassion. It doesn't matter where the initiative 'Compassionate Kozhikode' goes on after I move away from here, what should be sustainable is compassion, not 'Compassionate Kozhikode'. The actions should be sustainable, not the name of the organization." He adds that this is the most important component of keeping volunteers engaged.



Organizations that work with volunteers have taken this important aspect into account and are building programmes which factor in leadership for volunteers as an essential component. For example, the India Fellow Social Leadership Programme promises volunteers that they will find their leadership potential, shape their futures and make a difference. Elgiva Kharsati, Programme Manager at 'Teach for India', states that the organization focuses on recruiting high potential candidates, accordingly the Fellowship is positioned to deliver the following message, "Build your nation while building your future". Many organizations provide a volunteering certification to students and it is highlighted in the opportunity description.

Volunteering also serves as a signaling device, where, qualities such as social service and willingness to cooperate for collective good are appreciated by educational and corporate organizations. When employers see value in volunteering, potential applicants with such experience on their resumes may have a better chance at landing a job or at receiving a higher salary.

25 percent of survey participants expressed that 'improving educational or employment prospects / enhancing CV' was a motivation for volunteering while 25 percent of respondents believed that it allowed them an opportunity to explore potential careers in the sustainable development space. This belief was validated in interactions with educational institutions and companies who saw voluntary work as a means of providing youth with an inclusive lens, increased empathy and enhanced abilities to interact with people from all walks of life.

Volunteerism was also seen as a good way to explore new places and sometimes as a means of generating income. This was true for a number of volunteers in India and abroad who wanted the opportunity to travel and discover new cultures.

"Indian youth have the energy, the commitment, the will and the drive- what they can't see however, is what the outcomes of their volunteering efforts will be.

Out of the eight fellows that we had, six have joined us as staff, and as we keep growing there is place for many more.

We need to stop seeing social and human innovation work as less than commercial work. This is the only way we will attract bright, young, talented people into this sector."

*-Meagan Fallone, CEO, Barefoot College*

## HELPING OTHERS / BEING PART OF SOMETHING BIGGER THAN ONESELF

Altruism was an important motivating factor for youth with 24 percent of survey respondents stating that volunteering gave them an opportunity to give back to society.

Various studies indicate that volunteering for a worthy cause offers people an opportunity to express their humanitarian concerns and translate their deeply-held values into actions<sup>78</sup>. Burns et al. (2006), find that altruism is positively related to volunteerism among youth and adolescents. It indicates that, regardless of the primary factor that motivates a young adult to volunteer, altruism may play a role as well and that altruism seems to be pervasive throughout the various motivations to volunteer. On the face of it, helping others appears to be a simple motivation. Actions resulting from this motivation are, however, often difficult to categorize as they include altruistic actions, small and large, that are practiced every day and may not come into the limelight.

### CASE STUDY 25: ARUNACHALAM MURUGANANTHAM - TAMIL NADU

In Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu, a man's empathy for his wife has sparked a revolution. In 1998, Arunachalam Muruganatham asked his wife why she hoarded dirty rags and was told she needed them during menstruation. Buying sanitary napkins would cost too much. This led him to design a simple machine to produce sanitary pads. Instead of selling his idea to the highest bidder, he supplies his low-cost machines to rural communities. Now millions of poor Indian women can avoid painful urinary-tract infections and create their own pad-manufacturing businesses. This invention has also sparked interest around the world.

Source: Times Magazine, 2014

Volunteers may 'give back to society' by actively giving their time through an organization or by participating in informal volunteering where citizens voluntarily participate in community development activities or provide personal care as part of accepted cultural norms of giving and reciprocity. The research revealed that motivations were usually dependent on the availability of platforms and more importantly on the needs of the community.

As may be expected, in most cases, youth feel an affinity for causes that they have had personal experience with or with which they can identify.

For example, young men and women who have seen their community members struggle with a crisis or a social issue often take it upon themselves to solve this issue by initiating their own venture or by joining hands with civil society organizations to tackle problems at the grassroots level as has been depicted in the case study below.

<sup>78</sup>Paul, 2000

## CASE STUDY 26: ANIL KUMAR MISRA, CHHATTISGARH

National UN Volunteer and district youth coordinator Anil Kumar Mishra in Sarguja, Chhattisgarh, is responsible for reaching out to out-of-school, marginalized youth in the district. He states, “This was my home and I wanted to figure out a way to work with my community to address the multiple issues that we face like poverty, youth unemployment, etc. Sarguja is also home to a large population of marginalized communities like persons from tribal communities, persons with disability, and others.”

Anil started the English Learning Centre in June 2016 which is an innovative approach to connect volunteering to community building. Talking about the goals of this programme, Anil shares, “The Centre has a two-pronged objective. First, it will engage unemployed youth in a way that they can further develop their own soft skills and secondly, it will provide a learning platform for the most marginalized young children to prepare them for formal education.”

Source: UNV India: Volunteering for Change in Chhattisgarh



The motivation of helping others has also expressed itself through mutual aid or self-help groups where people who share common interests or problems come together to address them. In this process, the benefits reach all the members of the group. Some such groups in India are farmers' associations, women's' associations, natural resources user groups which have come together to help each other and participate in collective endeavors such as providing loans, financial literacy, skill sharing and training. The community members also help each other in organizing community-level events. Most of the volunteers come from within the community and help in carrying out initiatives linked to education and health, such as literacy camps, health camps and sanitation drives. For example, the Synjuk Seng Samla Shnong (SSSS) club in Shillong was incepted in 1992 with the objective of federating youth organizations to bring them under one umbrella. The club conducts numerous programmes in rural areas and urban areas; club members assist in creating awareness and implementing central Government schemes and assist in promoting livelihoods in remote rural areas.

Under the motivation of helping others, youth and youth groups also play an important role in times of emergency, with several youth clubs having been formed just to provide relief to disaster victims, with this type of assistance cutting across usual limitations such as state boundaries. One such example is of Anbodukochi in Kerala, a disaster group formed during the Chennai floods. Nine friends initiated group and the name “Anbodukochi (With love, Kochi)” was coined. Within a few days 200-300 volunteers were gathered through personal networks, collection centers were set up in different parts of the cities and 250 tons of supplies- material, clothes, medicines, baby food, were sent as relief.

“I was a part of volunteering programmes as a student, and environment and climate change became my areas of interest as my university was situated amidst the heart of the Western Ghats. I decided to take up these issues at an International level through blogging just before the Paris Summit. As youth we have a larger role to play. I hope my efforts will bring some positive change in society and in our policy-making framework.”

*Bhavana Singh Varun, Central university of Kerala*

31 percent of respondents cited their 'wanting to make a change' as an impetus to volunteer. Within this context, movements and campaigns gather a large number of voluntary participation. Similarly, social and cyber activism has grown and the efforts of virtual volunteers to mobilize hundreds and thousands of individuals in campaigns, signing petitions, sending letters of protest, mobilizing people have been immensely successful. New forms of campaigns such as walkathons (walk for water / earth pledge / wear pink for breast cancer) and forming human chains have also become increasingly popular. Alongside, civil society organizations have also initiated various issue-based campaigns.

It was interesting to note that while helping others or giving back to society was not a priority for some youth, enrollment in mandatory volunteering programmes created the first step in feeling connected with developmental issues surrounding society.

This is corroborated by Anand Banerjee who volunteered for a month at a tiger reserve and shares that "Volunteering ...is like a litmus test—if you pass, you are hooked for life." When he was asked by a nature lover how he or she could begin working for the cause of nature and wildlife conservation, his answer was, "Volunteer".<sup>79</sup>

### DEVELOPING RELATIONSHIPS

18 percent of survey respondents stated that meeting like-minded people was an incentive to volunteer. While developing relationships did not appear to be a primary motivation for youth volunteers per se, most young people suggested that meeting new people and experiencing new cultures was a powerful and unexpected benefit of volunteering that had enabled them to break stereotypes, provided them with a better understanding about various communities and improved their social skills.

Shahista, a NYKS volunteer in Uttarakhand, expresses that one of the reasons she enjoys her work is because she is able to build her networks. She stated that if she has any problem with regard to the community, she can go up to political leaders and Governmental officials and speak to them directly. She also adds that she enjoys out of station trips with other female NYKS volunteers.

New platforms such as study abroad programmes and rural study programmes have gained popularity among university students and graduates with these experiences allowing volunteers to forge new relationships and exposing them to people beyond their immediate communities. Students from India have traveled to different countries in order to understand their culture, present ideas at global forums and learn developmental models being practiced in other nations. The UN Volunteers programme for young professionals to take part in a long-term (two year plus) overseas programme and the Model United Nations programmes are two such examples of people coming together.

Various exchange programmes are being implemented by Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Government of India, for integrating youth in the mainstream and to create an international perspective among youth on various issues. For example, a Youth Exchange programme between India and China has been on-going since 2006; in 2011 China invited over 500 Indian youth to visit<sup>80</sup>, with reciprocal visits undertaken by the Chinese side each year. The Government of India also promotes youth exchange programmes between Indian states such as the Tribal Youth Exchange programme, National Integration Camps, National Youth Festival, Inter-State Youth Exchange programme, State Youth Festivals, NSS (National Service Scheme) mega camps, NSS Republic Day Parade Camp and North East NSS Festivals etc.



<sup>79</sup><http://www.livemint.com/Leisure/eLhdfccVuzXhFrokD3gOI/Volunteer-is-the-way-to-go-for-nature-and-wildlife-conservat.html>

<sup>80</sup>Cultural relationship between India and China

Source: <http://www.indianembassy.org.cn/DynamicContent.aspx?MenuId=4&SubMenuId=0>

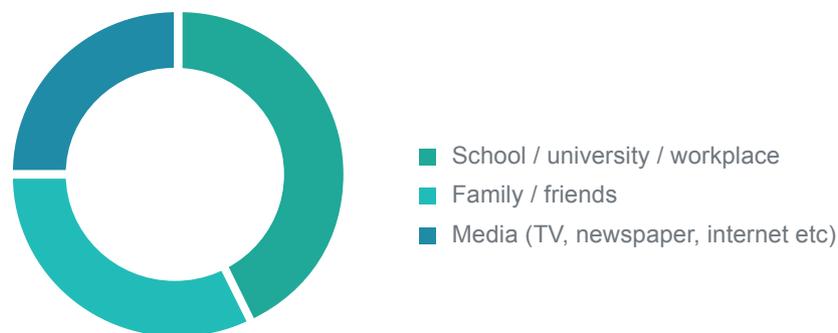
Alongside this, there have been various exchange programmes implemented by international agencies such as the 'International Youth Exchange through Peer Learning' programme to Sri Lanka as well as the issues-based exchange programmes in Ghana, Bangladesh, India and Nepal organized by International citizen services.

The objective of these programmes is to encourage learning about the diversity in cultures, help volunteers to have first-hand experiences and to create lasting linkages across the country and between groups, to empower youth to take on new challenges. It also aspires to develop solidarity and promote tolerance among young people, primarily to reinforce social cohesion<sup>81</sup>.

## MODES OF COMMUNICATION ABOUT VOLUNTEERING OPPORTUNITIES

Effective communication is essential to the success of any volunteering programme, whether in the recruitment of volunteers, orientation regarding roles and responsibilities or in volunteer engagement. This sub-section explores the perceptions of volunteers on communication with regard to volunteering opportunities and the effectiveness of various channels such as internet, radio, television, etc.

Figure 9: Modes of communication



## NATURE OF VOLUNTEERING

The survey asked respondents how they learnt about volunteering opportunities and allowed the respondents to select multiple sources of information. 43 percent of survey participants stated that they learnt about volunteering opportunities through their school, university or workplace. This possibly relates with the fact that most Government and Government-aided universities run NSS programmes along with a number of private educational institutions or universities. Further, a number of educational institutions such as Symbiosis College in Pune, Tata institute of social sciences in Mumbai, Rajagiri Institute of Social Sciences in Kerala, Rajiv Gandhi National Institute of Youth Development mandate volunteering as part of their course work or programme. Christ University in Bangalore for example, runs various volunteering programmes from activity centers for children to raising awareness on environmental issues. Certain NGOs also visit colleges to inspire and recruit youth by presenting their activities, circulating pamphlets or setting up enrolment camps. The channel is therefore quite effective in attracting the student population and in sourcing volunteers.

32 percent of volunteers learnt about volunteering opportunities from family and friends which also correspondingly implies that for 68 percent of the respondents, immediate social institutions such as household and peers did not discuss volunteering opportunities. Therefore, while word of mouth can be an important channel of communication, it is highly dependent on the inclination and priorities of various groups and social networks. Youth groups mentioned

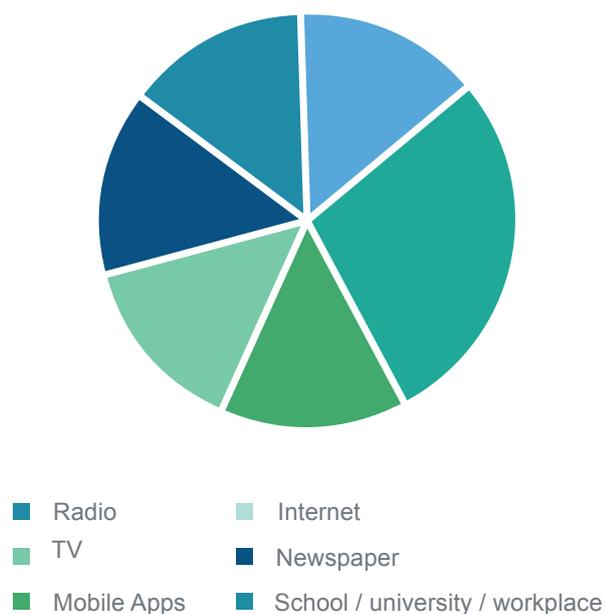
I believe that the spirit of volunteering gives me new learning and the give back to society factor. My experience is that youth are looking to give back but many a times are not aware of opportunities of where they can volunteer

*-Roselle Solomon, teacher and volunteer from Goa*

that faith-based organizations created awareness regarding volunteering opportunities by circulating pamphlets, making announcements, etc. For example, in Tamil Nadu, end of Sunday mass announcements in Catholic churches were a primary source of information on volunteering opportunities. Other organizations which had pro-active founders who visited colleges or participated in TED talks, also saw an influx of volunteers without engaging in an outreach programme.

<sup>81</sup>Report on International Youth Exchange through Peer Learning (IYEPL) – 2016

**Figure 10: Effectiveness of modes of communication**



Just 13 percent of survey participants had heard about volunteering opportunities from media such as television, newspaper, radio or the internet. However, when youth were asked what means of communication would be most effective in communicating information about volunteering activities, 59 percent of youth selected the internet and mobile applications as effective mediums. 24 percent felt that school / university workplace along with radio were effective mediums to disseminate information regarding volunteering, followed by the newspaper and TV which 19 percent of youth considered as effective sources of information on volunteering opportunities as depicted in Figure 10.

Television is considered a strong channel for communication as it offers continuous telecasting of opportunities, which resonates with people and tends to stay with them. Plan-SBMA volunteers in Uttarakhand, for example, believed that catchy radio and TV advertisements regarding volunteering opportunities would be an effective means to get youth to volunteer.

18 percent of respondents also selected mobile apps as an effective means of creating awareness about opportunities. With increased mobile internet penetration, urban and rural youth have begun to use smart phones and mobile applications such as WhatsApp and Facebook as informal sources of communication. For example, DHAD volunteers in Uttarakhand and Karunya Youth Club from rural Ernakulam pointed out that they used mobile phones and Facebook to network with people and encourage them to raise funds or gather support for their cause.

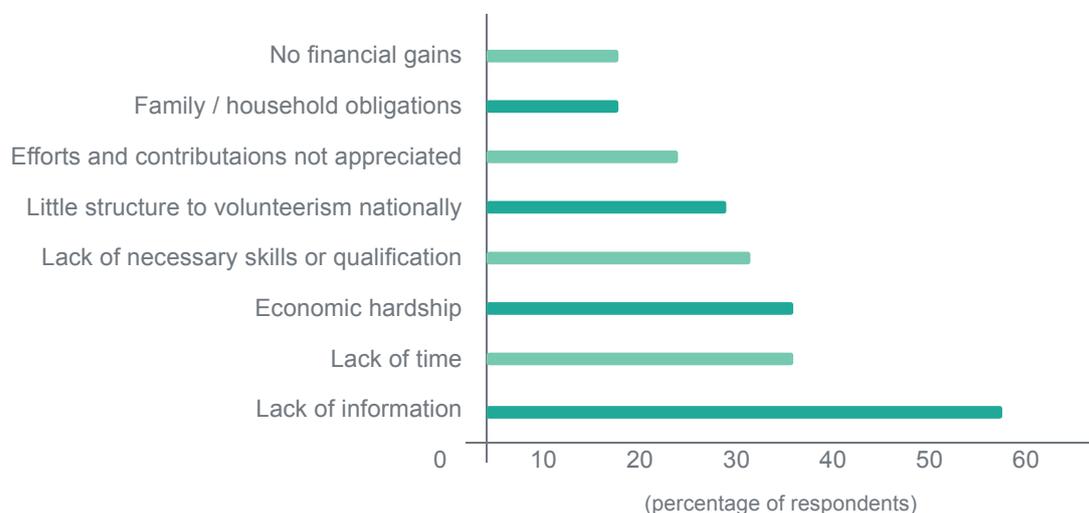
“Youth are on social media, so we need to be there. It’s as simple as that. Pasting notices on the notice boards of the village office is no longer the way to reach out to the public.”

*-Prashant Nair, IAS, District Collector, Kozhikode*

Some civil society organizations stressed that it was not the responsibility of society to create opportunities for volunteers as willing volunteers would find a way to give back to society. However, most youth believed that better communication about platforms and opportunities would encourage them to volunteer.

**PERCEIVED BARRIERS TO VOLUNTEERING AND CHALLENGES FACED**

**Figure 11: Perceived barriers**

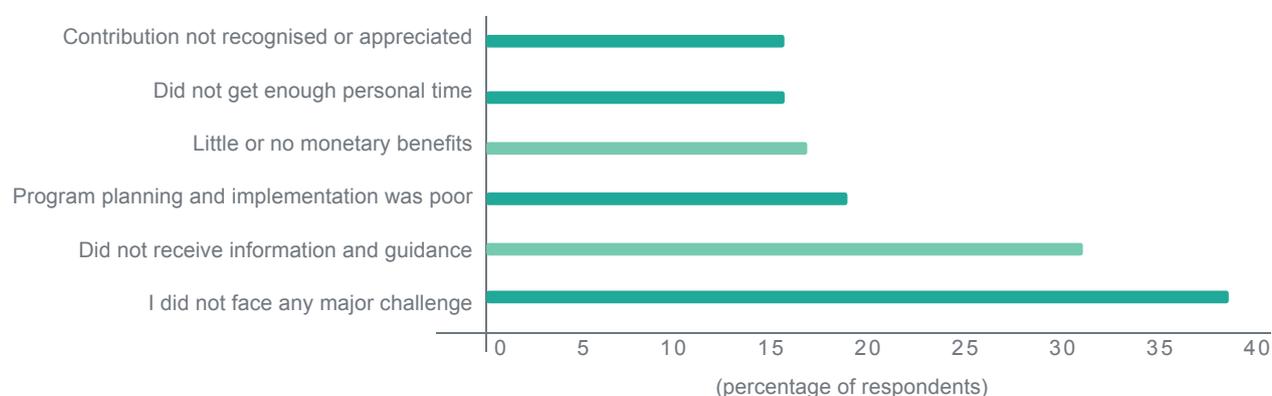


This sub-section explores the perceived barriers for youth to volunteer and also analyzes the on-ground challenges faced by volunteers that could serve as deterrents to volunteering. Reiterating the importance of effective communication of volunteering activities, 50 percent of volunteers stated that 'lack of information on volunteering activities' was a barrier to volunteering, while 29 percent of volunteers suggested that 'lack of time' and 'economic hardships' were also impediments, as depicted in Figure 11.

In terms of 'lack of time' being a deterrent to volunteering, primary research brought out varying opinions. While some youth believed that individuals could find time if they had the inclination and commitment, other youth stated that the need for personal time, work, family obligations, etc. often put volunteerism on the backburner and that they could only contribute to programmes which were designed to accommodate their other commitments.

Other major perceived barriers were that there is no structure to volunteerism at a national level (24 percent of respondents) which could indicate limited commitment to volunteerism and overlap in time and efforts.

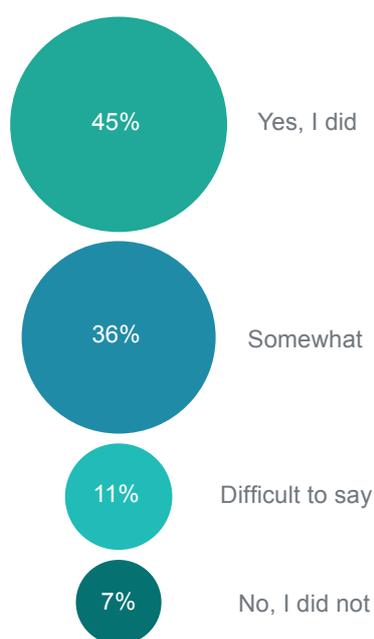
**Figure 12: Challenges faced by volunteers**



29 percent of respondents expressed that economic hardships were a deterrent to volunteering. This was validated during primary research when youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds across regions stated that they did not participate in volunteering activities because they wanted to engage themselves in activities that were economically productive. However, it is encouraging to note that once youth volunteered, many of them did not encounter any major hardships, with 37 percent of survey respondents stating that as volunteers, they did not face any major challenges. Primary research corroborates this finding with most youth volunteers interacted with, who claimed that on the face of it they did not experience significant hurdles. On further probing, some challenges that were expressed included lack of a supportive environment (including family and professors) and safety of women volunteers. The survey also brought out a few challenges in terms of lack of information and guidance (30 percent of respondents), poor programme planning / implementation (18 percent of respondents) and finding it hard to stay motivated with little or no monetary returns (16 percent of respondents).

## **PERCEPTIONS OF IMPACT CREATED ON COMMUNITY AND SELF**

While chapter four provides a detailed analysis of the impact created by volunteers across the SDGs, this section attempts to capture youth perceptions on whether they believe they have created an impact on society / community and themselves. The survey highlighted that 81 percent of respondents believed that their efforts had an impact on the communities they worked with. Interactions with volunteers on field also indicated that most believed that they had created an impact on the community and on themselves. Volunteers were better able to state how they had created this impact when the organization they worked with tracked outcomes; in other cases volunteers were not able to define their activities but were unable to determine how exactly this had led to significant impact on the community that they worked with. CSOs and other agencies interviewed also acknowledged that volunteers had assisted in creating significant outcomes for their beneficiary groups in most cases, however, the research did not find effective models that were used to capture the impact of volunteers.

**Figure 13: Volunteers' perception on having created impact**

Overall, volunteers appeared to believe that they had created impact in terms of awareness creation and providing services, particularly in the areas of sanitation, education, social inclusion and the environment.

Volunteers from Audacious Dreams Foundation in Tamil Nadu observed a behavior change in the children they were teaching. Divyalakshmi, a volunteer, stated, "We have seen a lot of impact in schools that we go to. Before, in Government schools, children's language and behavior were quite poor, however, since we started teaching them, they have become calmer and are attending more classes. They are interested in improving their life skills."

Water and sanitation was another issue where volunteers believed that they had created impact. Government-led initiatives such as the "Swachh Bharat" initiative has been able to mobilize thousands of volunteers to undertake sanitation and cleanliness activities. 'Bunch of fools', a youth-led volunteering organization in Chhattisgarh has taken it upon themselves to clean the streets of Raipur and have created an open platform, where youth can regularly post before and after pictures of areas that they have cleaned.

Another example is of Kuch Bihar district in West Bengal. Youth clubs were encouraged to work in areas like sanitation and such activities were backed by the Government and other actors. The Clubs received close to INR 2 lakhs from UNICEF to create sanitary marts and in some blocks 90 percent sanitation was achieved. Some of these clubs have now become NGOs and have set up self-help groups in different districts; at any given time they have an army of close to 2000-2500 volunteers.

Youth were also seen taking up initiatives for their communities. Environment-based movements such as 'Earth hour', 'Tree plantation', 'Save water' have been undertaken in various forms. Several villages have become greener owing to these plantations; in Chudimiyan, Rajasthan, the youth club has developed a green belt, in the graveyard. The land above the graveyard has been leveled by the youth club, gardens created and over 80 trees planted. Volunteers stated that their work also served as an inspiration for other community members to become socially conscious and receptive to change.

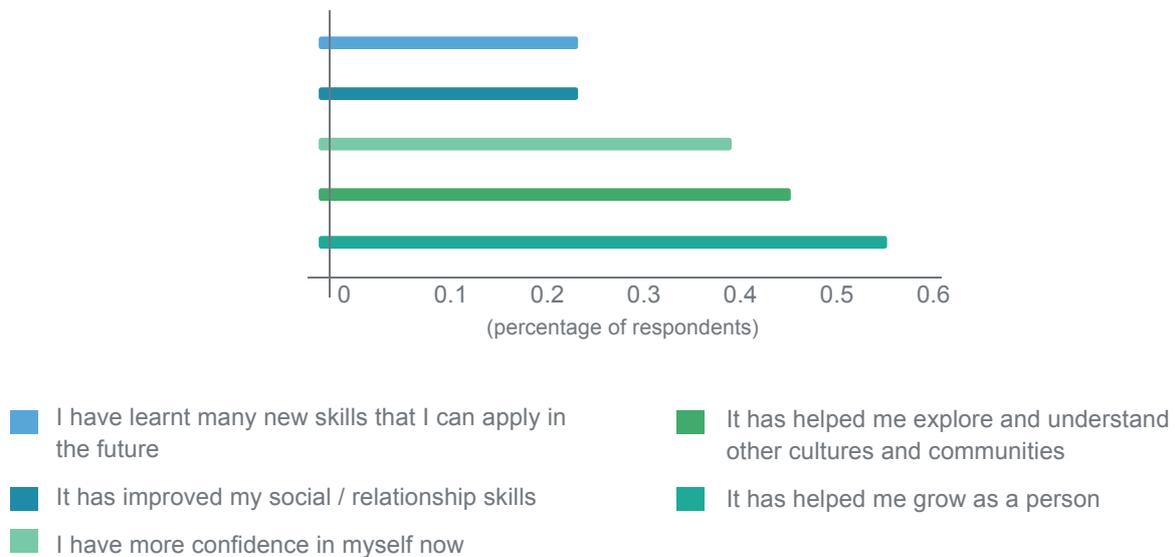
"I was working for poor tribal people at Keonjhar to provide them with a sustainable livelihood pattern. Many families benefited through kitchen garden, and backyard farming. I also helped some tribal youths with vocational training which helped to manage their family subsistence. I was associated in resettlement and rehabilitation work for Rengali Irrigation Project and developed self-resettlement clusters in association with displaced people."

*-Rashmi Ranjan Satpathy, volunteer, Keonjhar*

Secondary literature also brings out that volunteering has a positive impact on the personal development of youth themselves and assists them in achieving success in school / college while reducing several behavioral problems, such as substance abuse, violence and early pregnancy<sup>82</sup>. An Independent Sector (2001) survey also finds that when people volunteer as adolescents, there is twice the likelihood that they will volunteer as adults.

The survey therefore has also attempted to capture the various ways in which volunteering has impacted the volunteer himself / herself.

<sup>82</sup>[http://www.academia.edu/245468/Altruism\\_and\\_Volunteerism\\_The\\_perceptions\\_of\\_altruism\\_in\\_four\\_disciplines\\_and\\_their\\_impact\\_on\\_the\\_study\\_of\\_volunteerism](http://www.academia.edu/245468/Altruism_and_Volunteerism_The_perceptions_of_altruism_in_four_disciplines_and_their_impact_on_the_study_of_volunteerism)

**Figure 14: Impact on self**

51 percent of survey respondents expressed that volunteering has helped them in terms of their own personal development and growth. Vaidehi Kaul, a survey respondent presses upon the importance of knowledge building. She states, “I didn’t volunteer to just create an impact on the society but I really wanted to gain more knowledge in the fields in which I have volunteered. It has always helped me know my weak points and improve them and progress from the point I have started. My daily report writing whenever I went on the field enhanced my ability to reflect, observe and plan for future work accordingly. I am a student and I don’t think intensity of the impact matters rather I feel small efforts and achievements help you to achieve bigger things in life.”

53 percent of the respondents agreed that they had acquired skills such as social skills, leadership skills and communication skills. Moreover, 30 percent of the respondents in the survey believed that they had gained confidence through volunteering.

Volunteers felt that their personalities have improved in the process of helping others. They were more confident and could lead discussions with people. NYKS Volunteers in Tamil Nadu believed that they had attained greater social skills and stated that they have learnt how to talk to people, to be polite to them and to be more disciplined. These aspects, they believed, would also help their growth as professionals. Shobhit, a volunteer from Delhi, said “I didn’t speak English very well before and was not confident enough to meet new people. However, I speak quite well now and am able to interact with people in English.”

33 percent of the respondents believed that it has helped them explore and understand different cultures and communities. Volunteers felt that this opportunity made them more aware about the issues and the challenges that other people had. Volunteers in general expressed that they get the opportunity to meet more people, understand their problem and get to know them well. It also gives them the opportunity to network with people and come up with creative solutions to meet those challenges.

Bhawani from Delhi points out that volunteering has helped her break stereotypes. She states, “When I went to Bihar as a volunteer, I had so many opinions about Biharis which were based on what I heard. I made friends there and I was able to understand where certain traits come from and what it means. It made me question so many things that I thought I knew.”

## CONCLUSION

In any discussion regarding youth volunteering, youth themselves cannot be left out of the picture; they must be prioritized and their voice must be brought into the discourse. However, 'youth' cannot be viewed as a collective and any policy or programme for youth must include individuals at various life stages and transition points and must account for factors such as socio-economic backgrounds, political, religious or cultural affiliations and access to opportunities.

A key question that this chapter wished to answer was "why" youth volunteer. Is altruism the primary motivation, or do youth volunteer out of some form of self-interest? Are youth motivated to volunteer in general, or are they motivated to volunteer for particular types of activities? It was discovered however, that motivators were not mutually exclusive and no one motive, taken alone, appeared sufficient.

Youth were deeply driven by their sense of identity, their values and beliefs and personal experiences; these volunteers were able to contribute their time and efforts over large periods of time. Personal benefits were also an important driver; in today's competitive environment, youth wish to differentiate themselves whether in terms of learning new skills, being associated with reputed organizations or gaining exposure through new experiences. A number of youth also believed that it gave them an opportunity to help others. This was validated by the number of informal groups that emerged to assist others across state boundaries in times of disaster. Youth also believed that it allowed them to build relationships with others, enabled them to break stereotypes and provided them with a better understanding of themselves.

An important finding was that there were no particular avenues or thematic areas that volunteers worked on - most young people volunteered based on the avenues that were available and accessible to them. For example, many young people volunteered through their school or college because it was an accessible platform. Similarly, most of them worked in the areas of education, environment, healthcare and livelihoods; this may be linked to the fact that most philanthropic donors<sup>83</sup> in India as well as corporate funds are largely directed towards the causes of education, healthcare and livelihoods and volunteers therefore find a greater number of platforms to contribute within these themes.

The study also brings out that colleges and universities were by far, the most important means of communication although volunteers actually preferred the internet and mobile apps as the favored means of communication. Opportunities offered in educational institutions are therefore significant, as they provide youth with their first experiences in volunteering and an impetus to continue volunteering once the benefits are understood.

This chapter also highlights the poor role of the media and other stakeholders in providing information on volunteering and related opportunities, which is corroborated by the fact that half of the respondents stated that lack of information was a key barrier to volunteering.

It is encouraging to note, however, that most volunteers did not face any major challenges and believed that they had created a significant impact on the community and themselves.

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<sup>83</sup><http://voices.mckinseysociety.com/india-philanthropy-impact/>



## Chapter -4

# IMPACT OF YOUTH VOLUNTEERING INITIATIVES IN INDIA



Given the increasing recognition of the importance of youth volunteerism, the limited level of knowledge that we have on the impact of volunteerism is disconcerting. Most studies that inquire into it are either confined to investigating the change that the volunteers themselves undergo in the act, or limit their analysis to a single programme or event, with the latter often being undertaken sporadically. While these are valuable and it is undeniable that measuring impact poses a set of challenges including a long time frame of observation therefore requiring dedicated resources, the lack of a comprehensive understanding of the role that volunteerism has played, and continues to play towards the broader development of the nation, needs to be addressed.

It is the purpose of this chapter to examine the impact that youth volunteerism has had on the country's development. While it is outside the scope of the study to capture the entire contribution in question, a representative review of the different types of successful initiatives and their results is provided. The analysis focuses on the contribution of volunteerism towards the nine developmental goals that have been charted out as priority areas for youth in the National Youth Policy 2014. They are: Education, Health and Wellbeing, Gender Equality and Justice, Hunger, Water and Sanitation, Climate Change and Disaster Risk Reduction, Social Entrepreneurship, Social Inclusion and Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions.

Youth volunteers have played a major role in the progress that has been achieved in India in the recent decades. In all spheres, youth volunteers have been instrumental in delivering a wide range of the Government of India's schemes from those aimed at combating hunger and malnutrition to those improving female protection and gender equality. Complementarily, youth volunteers under the aegis of CSOs, youth clubs, informal groups, academic institutions, corporate and international development bodies as well as independently initiate their own targets and strategies to accomplish developmental goals. Attempting to lay out what has been achieved by youth volunteers in India, this chapter presents the actors, actions and their strategies.

## **VOLUNTEERISM AND EDUCATION**

With the passing of the historic 'Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act' (RTE) in 2009, India joined 135 other countries in the world that made education a fundamental right of every child<sup>84</sup>. Laying a legal ground for universalization of education in India, the declaration provided a momentum for the proliferation and strengthening of initiatives aimed at achieving the targets of SDG 4 which pertains to Quality Education for all.

The Government of India, through its flagship programme Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), supports the construction of new schools, additional classrooms, toilets and drinking water facilities, the provisioning for teachers and several other action steps. After a decade and a half of programme operation, notable improvements in staffing and enrollment rates have been made.

Markedly, the pupil to teacher ratio (PTR) in primary and upper primary schools in India fell to 28:1 and 30:1 respectively in 2013-2014 from 46:1 and 34:1 in 2005-2006, representing a sharp decline and achieving the recommended ratios of the RTE<sup>85</sup>. The broad picture, however, conceals large regional differences. In fact, one-third of primary schools across India still have PTRs higher than the stipulated norms (MHRD). Moreover, it is estimated that as many as 8 million children in the age-group 6-13 in the country are out of school with persisting shortages of teachers continuing to hinder further progress in this area<sup>86</sup>. Within this context, youth volunteers who are extensively involved in the cause have been and continue to be invaluable actors.



<sup>84</sup>"India joins list of 135 countries in making education a right" The Hindu News. 2 April 2010.

<sup>85</sup>Ministry of Human Resources and Development

<sup>86</sup>UNICEF (2011) The Situation of Children in India [Online] Available from: [https://www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAn\\_India\\_May\\_2011.pdf](https://www.unicef.org/sitan/files/SitAn_India_May_2011.pdf)

Harnessing the potential of youth at the community level, the concept of para teachers was introduced for the first time in 1986 in India. At present, officially a part of SSA, para teachers are full-time school employees who are not professionally qualified as teachers but are trained by the District Institute for Education and Trainings (DIETs) with a mission to provide support to teachers. Due to the severe shortages of professional teachers across India's rural areas, however, in many instances, para teachers constitute the primary teaching staff<sup>87</sup>. While the holistic impact of their work is undocumented, numerous studies highlight the ways in which para teachers help address the shortages in the current education system. In their studies, Goyal and Pandey (2009) and Kingdon and Sipahimalani Rao (2010) find that contract teachers tend to make significantly greater efforts than regular teachers, as measured by attendance rate and time on teaching tasks. Crucially, in schools where an extra para teacher was placed, students were found to perform better than those in other schools. Overall, evidence suggests that contract teachers are not only effective at improving student learning outcomes, but that they are no less effective at doing so than regular civil-service teachers (Muralidharan and Sundararaman, 2013).

### CASE STUDY 27: ALLOWING YOUTH VOLUNTEERS TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR EDUCATION INITIATIVES

Under the Teach for India Fellowship Programme, 1,100 young people serve each year as full-time teachers in low-income schools for two years in 7 largest urban areas across the country, impacting some 37,870 students till date. Make a Difference (MAD), which followed Teach for India's model is able to mobilize 30,000-40,000 candidates from whom about 2,000 are selected to devote 4 hours a day to teaching shelter children in all the different school subjects ranging from Maths to English. As revealed in this study, upon completion of the programme as many as 80% of MAD's programme's beneficiaries enter higher education. In a regular shelter, the proportion is 10% on average. According to Jithin Nedumala, the young founder of the organization, the model has been successful due to being entirely run by volunteers. While giving youth large responsibilities in return for team work and solution-oriented problem-solving skills, the organization also offers solid guidance, employing a workable mobile and web technology solution for member management.



The abundance of college students and young professionals is rendering the achievement of SDG 4 increasingly possible. Thousands of CSOs dedicate their services to working in the education domain completely, while others focus on education in parallel with other activities. Frequently in tandem with NSS, NYKS and international development agencies across the nation, CSOs attract students and young professionals across India to volunteer for programmes where they act as teachers or teaching support. Adopting robust and increasingly youth-oriented operational models, such organizations have been able to generate observable outcomes on ground such as improved employability and hence greater livelihood chances both for their beneficiaries as well as their volunteers.

<sup>87</sup>Snehi and Nath (2004) 'Para Teachers in Elementary Education' in Perspectives in Education 20 (3)

It appears that the power of peer-to-peer exchange and learning in enhancing the knowledge outcomes and long-term impact cannot be underestimated. Upon interaction with youth volunteers, young people from marginalized communities testify to have become inspired and motivated to attain education themselves. Stories of parents sending their working children to college after a visit of enthusiastic, ambitious volunteers to their locality abound.

Importantly, alongside traditional roles as educators, youth volunteers also provide co-scholastic support such as conducting reading and creative writing, role-plays and public speaking classes. Currently being rolled out across India, the Vidyanjali programme of the Department of School Education and Literacy of the Ministry of Human Resource Development aims to implement such a model at a national scale. Implemented as part of SSA, Vidyanjali aims to recruit young professionals to devote a chosen amount of hours weekly to provide teaching support to the teachers in their neighboring Government-run elementary schools. Although the impact of the programme remains to be seen, it is the first such Government programme that promises considerable advancements towards a better quality, more integrated and child-centric education model. It also is the first programme that uses a mobile application for interested candidates to apply, allowing for significant time gains in the application process and hence overcoming one of the barriers that deter some from volunteering.

Deliberations of the impact of youth volunteers towards the achievement of SDG 5- Achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls- in India, cannot omit the contribution of volunteers to the state of education. The largest survey of children's schooling status and basic learning levels for each state and rural district in India coordinated by the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Centre, an autonomous unit of the Pratham network, is itself entirely conducted by volunteers. Close to 30,000 young people volunteer every year from ASER Centre's partner institutions as diverse as colleges, universities, NGOs, youth groups, women's organizations, SHGs and others.

#### CASE STUDY 28: SKILL DEVELOPMENT AS A COMPONENT OF EDUCATION – DELHI AND MUMBAI

The Teach India Programme of Times of India and the British Council, implemented in tandem with NGOs, for instance, provides three-month long trainings in business English (in industry contexts such as retail, customer service, travel and hospitality, financial services and job interviews) to underprivileged young adults in Delhi and Mumbai. So far, over 3,000 volunteer teachers and 30,000 learners have been trained and at the end of the training connected with corporate employment opportunities through jobs fairs. The Times of India reports that 60% of graduates of the programme were able to get jobs upon the completion of the programme. Moreover, the programme employed a Train the Trainer model, allowing for the scaling up of the reach of the programme and significant efficiency gains.

Skill development is another critical element of education that received broad support from the youth volunteering population in India. In order for a young person to become employable or self-employed in a decent job, training in hard and soft skills is indispensable. Skilling programmes that are being increasingly introduced by NGOs, corporates and other actors provide for effective ways to harness the skills of the highly educated to improve those of marginalized young adults. School drop-outs and women especially have been seen to benefit from the programmes to a large extent. Some corporates have been able to leverage on their area of specialization in the delivery of employee volunteering programmes. Successful examples include Taj Gateway's employee volunteerism capacity building for women entrepreneurs and its hospitality training for disadvantaged youth.



Recognized as increasingly important in the current environmental scenario, education on sustainable lifestyles and sustainable development is also being taken up by volunteers. Tata Power's employees' training on power conservation and campaigns against the use of plastic are notable examples. Others include the provision of education on 'life skills', which include confidence-building, decision-making, effective communication, etc. For greater reach, youth-based CSOs have started employing the train-the-trainer model where youth volunteers receive training to deliver it to other members of the community subsequently. Under the right circumstances (where programmes have been designed carefully, in response to real needs and where appropriate training has been provided), the impact is the formation of educated and well-rounded citizens. It is these youth who will drive the economic and socio-cultural development of the nation in the coming decades.

## HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

Since the second half of the twentieth century, remarkable progress has been made in healthcare and wellbeing of populations around the world and in India, especially in terms of child and maternal health and the control of infectious diseases. The UN reports that the under-five mortality rate declined from 125 per 1,000 live births in 1990 to 49 per 1,000 live births in 2013, maternal mortality rate declined from 437 per 100,000 live births in 1990-91 to 167 in 2009 and HIV / AIDS adult prevalence reduced from 0.45% in 2002 to 0.27% in 2011<sup>88</sup>. The challenges with regard to uniform access to healthcare services however still persist as the country remains home to several curable communicable and non-communicable diseases. Increasing incidences of new lifestyle diseases such as obesity, diabetes, hypertension, substance abuse, as well as increasing prevalence of lung diseases due to air pollution have enhanced the healthcare concerns of the Government. Realizing that without a healthy nation other developmental achievements are unattainable, together with the world, through the National Health Mission, India has committed itself to universalizing health care by 2030 as under the SDG 3. Youth volunteers have a major role to play if this goal is to be achieved.



Crucially, youth community workers constitute the backbone of the entire primary healthcare system composed of sub-centers, primary health centers (PHC) and community health centers (CHC) in India. Their constitution in the 1970s allowed for the delivery of services to a population who previously had no or limited access to such services and relied on alternative health care practices. With an average of 0.7 doctors and 1.1 nurses per 1,000 population (WHO, 2013), in comparison to 3.2 and 8.8, respectively, in countries within the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2014), community health workers (CHWs) are major health care agents, especially across the rural areas. As they adopted a wide range of responsibilities, numerous categories ranging from ANMs and ASHAs to lady workers and male workers emerged. Together with the considerably smaller population of doctors and professional nurses in the centers, they are intended to serve nearly two-thirds of India's population (WHO, 2000).

<sup>88</sup><http://in.one.un.org/page/sdg-3-good-health-and-wellbeing/>

The contribution of these volunteers has been immense, especially in the field of maternal and child healthcare. This has been noticeable in some areas especially, such as in the cases of the Mitanins (literally meaning friend) in Chhattisgarh or the Mobile Orientation and Training Teams (MOTTs) in Odisha. As trained female CHWs, their main responsibilities are to provide basic preventive healthcare services and promote good practices and utilization of public health services. The Mitanins were placed in almost all of Chhattisgarh's 54,000 hamlets between 2001 and 2003, one worker in each hamlet. The years 2003 and 2004 witnessed the highest ever drop, of 27 points, in the infant mortality rate in the rural areas of the State where the Mitanins had been positioned<sup>89</sup>. Although not without challenges, the accomplishments have been attributed to the strong design of the programme governance and organizational support structures as well as large-scale, innovative awareness campaign.

Inquiries into the success factors also point to the CHWs' ability to ensure community acceptance and ownership as they are well-versed with the local societal and cultural norms and customs<sup>90</sup>. The different models allow for the effective leveraging on the motivations of the women in the communities. Indicative for the wider CHWs population, as many as 85% of Mitanins indicated 'social service' rather than Government jobs or monetary awards which tend to be at the bottom of the list of primary motivations for becoming a Mitanin. Case Study 29 explains the Mitanin model in brief.

### CASE STUDY 29: MITANIN PROGRAMME - CHHATTISGARH

Chhattisgarh's CHWs commit two to three hours per day for two to three days per week, in exchange for a small stipend. Programme evaluations found that the Mitanin programme has covered all areas of the state where Mitanins actively operate. This has been possible due to three factors. One has been the thoroughly implemented social mobilization drive which alongside the more traditional methods of information dissemination also included 'kala jathas' or cultural troupes which visited the villages to create awareness about the Mitanins. The second has been the establishment of robust supportive institutional mechanisms at the state level. The State Health Resource Centre (SHRC) advisory committee and Reproductive and Child Health Societies at district and block levels were credited with operationalizing and managing the programme while a wide network of NGOs supported all aspects of the Mitanins' work. The third success factor was the incorporation of the learning from previous such initiatives into the Mitanins' programme design.

The success of the Mitanin programme and lessons learnt from it are now reflected in the Accredited Social Health Activist (ASHA) component, which is the cornerstone of the National Rural Health Mission (NRHM), the flagship programme of the Government to improve healthcare services across the country.

With over 700,000 ASHAs deployed all over the country, they play an effective and critical role in broadening access and coverage of health services in remote areas and undertake actions that lead to improved health outcomes, especially, but not exclusively, in the field of child health. They have been predominantly involved in activities relating to home-visits, antenatal counseling, delivery services, breast-feeding advice and immunization advice. In Nimavat et al.'s (2016) evaluation of 'The ASHA Incentive Scheme of 2013' in Gujarat, the workers succeeded in significantly improving the acceptance of the permanent sterilization method by couples in the community who have two or less children<sup>91</sup>. However, to carry out their tasks successfully, ASHAs need regular training, supervision and reliable logistical support<sup>92</sup>. Interactions with several ASHA workers brought out the fact that they were uncertain of the voluntary aspect of their role, as in many cases, their stipend was their primary or only means of income.

Alongside their omnipresence in the primary healthcare system, the role of youth volunteers in delivering mass disease control programmes in India deserves acknowledgement. Perhaps most famously, youth volunteers contributed and keep contributing to the achievements of the Pulse Polio campaign which effectively eliminated the highly contagious poliomyelitis from India. Part of the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, spearheaded by the World Health Organization, UNICEF and Rotary foundation, Pulse Polio in India was launched in 1994.

<sup>89</sup>European Union State Partnership Programme with Chhattisgarh (2011) Evaluation of the Community Health Volunteer (Mitanin) Programmeme [Online] Available from: <http://cghealth.nic.in/ehealth/MitaninFinalReport11thMarch2011.pdf>

<sup>90</sup>Kaithathara S (1990). Experiences with community health and village health workers in rural India. In: Streefland PJC, Chabot J, eds. Implementing Primary Health Care. Amsterdam, Royal Tropical Institute:121–128.

<sup>91</sup>Nimavat et al. (2016) 'Effectiveness of "ASHA INCENTIVE SCHEME of 2013" on enhancing the functioning of ASHA in motivating couples having two or less children to undergo permanent sterilization in Surendranagar district'. International Journal of Medical Science and Public Health.

<sup>92</sup>Improving the performance of ASHAs in India: Working Paper series, Columbia Global Centers

It was accomplished by vaccinating all children under the age of five during national and multiple sub-national campaigns, supported by extensive involvement of NGOs, NSS, NYKS and individual volunteers who immunize children on the move (trains) or at transit vaccinators positioned at bus stands, train stations, market places and important road intersections. UNICEF reports that nearly 10 million children are being immunized by the transit teams in each polio campaign<sup>93</sup>.

Other noteworthy mass campaigns in which youth volunteers have been indispensable include the National Malaria Eradication Programme which is the oldest of the Communicable disease control programme in the country as well as the Revised National Tuberculosis Control Programme (RNTCP) against tuberculosis, of which the most cases in the world are found in India. Together with health workers and other actors, youth volunteers have been able to obtain countrywide coverage of tuberculosis detection and the internationally accepted DOTS (Directly Observed Treatment, Short course) treatment strategy in a reliable and cost-effective way<sup>94</sup>.

### CASE STUDY 30: THE BANYAN - CHENNAI

The Banyan was set up in 1993 in Chennai and has since provided assistance to over 5,000 people through prevention, rescue and care, rehabilitation and reintegration into the community of the mentally ill and support to their families. Largely enabled by youth volunteers, a 'Breadwinners' cafe in the Lady Andal school has been established, providing employment to men and women who have overcome their mental illness. Together with The Banyan's personnel, the volunteers conducted sessions on spoken English, cleanliness, accounts, stock taking, public relations, etiquettes etc. to the home residents who were going to run the cafe. After giving them a basic foundation, internships at an already established cafe in Loyola college were organized to fully prepare the participants to start work in the Lady Andal school.

A sizeable amount of interventions are carried out by CSOs and youth clubs which organize and guide youth volunteers to support national healthcare objectives through awareness raising, service delivery and health monitoring. Across the nation, they provide curative general, gynecological, pediatric, ophthalmology and surgical services, often by holding mobile health camps. While some operate independently, others develop tie-ups with medical institutions where more serious cases are referred for further care. Importantly, these groups and organizations across the nation promote health seeking behaviors in the long term by building awareness on common ailments, family planning methods, infectious diseases such as HIV / AIDS and nutrition and hygiene and sanitation. Air, land and water pollution issues have been also taken up at youth rallies. Health camps where community members are invited to have their health monitored are also increasingly held where volunteers perform health tests and administer results. Almost trademarks of the NSS programme, mass scale blood donation events across India are organized.



<sup>93</sup>UNICEF (2006) <http://unicef.in/Video/46/India-Is-Now-Polio-Free-#sthash.RUiHJnEx.dpuf>

<sup>94</sup>WHO (2003) Community contribution to TB care: practice and policy. Geneva, WHO

Another area in which the contribution of youth volunteers is increasingly indispensable is mental health. While until recently voluntary care for patients affected with mental health issues were largely confined to the private domain, the burden falling largely on the families of the affected, the situation has been changing with more shelter homes, hospitals and schools for children with special needs springing up in the past two decades<sup>95</sup>. Depending on the skills and interest of volunteers, organizations such as The Banyan, Volunteering Journeys and the Minds Foundation invite youth to spend time with home residents, take part in the therapeutic sessions and undertake research and advocacy work. Successful and socially responsible models ensure that the right skillsets are used for particular assistance. Fewer organizations are able to provide training on their own, although where this has been possible, they tended to attract greater numbers of youth volunteers eager to ameliorate their competencies. In certain cases, youth volunteers have employed their ideas to implement innovative programmes. The Banyan's Tamil Nadu volunteers set up a cafe with the aim of providing both a livelihood opportunity as well as a means of therapy for a mental home's residents.

Exemplary of the broader impact in the healthcare sector, the versatile interests and capabilities of youth volunteers continue to support the health and wellbeing state of the nation, the act of volunteering itself also being largely beneficial to the wellbeing of the youth themselves.

## GENDER EQUALITY AND JUSTICE

India's struggle to achieve gender equality and justice has been a long and difficult one. While progress has been undoubtedly made, especially in maternal health, gender parity in primary education and the labour market, women may remain the largest social group that has not been able to fully benefit from India's economic development. Although this is true for the whole South Asian region, India remains far behind other Asian countries in the advancement towards the SDG 5 and ranks 136th in the UNDP Gender Development Index<sup>96</sup>.

Despite several regulatory provisions and revisions, patriarchal rules and norms continue to influence social relations resulting in gender biased sex selection, domestic violence, early and forced marriages, sexual harassment, inequality and discrimination in labour and finance markets and property law. Moreover, third gender individuals continue to experience prejudice and are largely excluded from the Indian society.

Youth volunteerism has been a driver of change towards gender equality and justice. The enthusiasm, energy, skills and knowledge of the youth have been instrumental in the design and implementation of initiatives aimed at eradication of women's poverty, improving access to opportunities, tackling gender-based violence and changing the socio-cultural mindsets. In the self-help movement, manifested in the formation of thousands of SHGs and other women associations across the country, for instance, it is the volunteers who are enabling themselves into a better life. In addition, the mindsets and attitudes towards gender roles and responsibilities of the youth volunteers themselves are transformed through the act of volunteering to create a more equal society in which girls, women, boys, men and transgender individuals have equal rights and opportunities.

Among the initiatives in the field, education of the girl child is a common focus. Both larger and smaller CSOs have been able to mobilize youth volunteers to devote their time to deliver extra classes and skill development and one-on-one career mentorship sessions. While through teaching, youth volunteers are able to gain a variety of soft skills from public speaking to management, programme beneficiaries are provided with the capabilities to complete their education and develop a career, often in the corporate sector or in self-employment. Some programmes reported significant success rates, where young women from socio-economically humble backgrounds have been able to complete higher education and subsequently secure well-paid jobs upon graduation. Notably, youth volunteers across India also contribute to the improvement of school infrastructure including potable water and toilet facilities in the absence of which female students are deterred from attending classes and completing education.



<sup>95</sup>UNV (2011) State of the World Volunteering Report

<sup>96</sup>Dr. Tanzeem Fatima, Gender Justice: a conceptual analysis; Excellence International Journal of Education and Research

In the rural areas, alongside skill development trainings, the formation and functioning of SHGs and other women associations has provided for powerful means for women economic empowerment, through the development of cooperatives who in some cases extend their positive influence onto the larger community. In states such as Kerala or West Bengal where participatory politics are deeply rooted, some SHGs have also come to be active decision-making partners of the local Governments.

A notable example has been the Kudumbashree programme of the Government of Kerala that encourages the formation of 'Neighborhood Groups' among the less fortunate women in the state. Formed all across the state, the groups form cooperatives, develop micro-finance facilities, promote a self-help approach to community development and serve community wings of local Governments (see case study below).

### CASE STUDY 31: KUDUMBASHREE INITIATIVE, KERALA

Launched in 1998 by the Government of Kerala and NABARD and implemented through Community Development Societies (CDS) of Poor Women, the Kudumbashree initiative is an offshoot of the Swarna Jayanti Shahari Rozgar Yojana, a nation-wide programme providing gainful employment for the urban and rural population living below the poverty line. The programme encourages the formation of Neighborhood Groups (NHGs), consisting of 20-40 women among whom 5 are appointed as functional volunteers. They form women collectives or community-based organizations (CBOs) and provide micro-credit services. Thrift and Credit Societies have been set up at NHG level to encourage the poor to save and to avail easy credits. Gradually, these facilities have grown into informal banking. Importantly, NHGs meet weekly to discuss all the matters that concern the community. On that basis, 'micro-plans' are drawn up and are scrutinized and prioritized to form a 'mini-plan' at the ward level of Area Development Societies (ADS). Effectively, they act as 'anti-poverty sub-plans' outlining their contributions to the governance of matters ranging from social infrastructure and welfare programmes to rights-based interventions and those promoting micro-enterprise development. The state IAS and their mission monitor the overall implementation of this plan.

A tested mode for women empowerment in the rural areas in India, SHGs are being widely supported by youth groups, CSOs, development banks and academic, alongside Governments.

Across the country, young women from the communities also play the role of advocates for women rights. They do so both through awareness raising as well as direct involvement in cases of gender-based violence and discrimination. The issue of sex selection at birth, for instance, has been at the centre of attention of such groups promoted under the flagship programme of the Government of India, 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'.

Introduced in January 2015 jointly by the Ministries of Women and Child Development, Health and Family Welfare and Human Resource Development, the programme involves recruiting and training of women volunteers across 11 of Indian states and Union Territories, especially in the districts which have been classified as gender-critical<sup>97</sup>. They handle the responsibility for spreading awareness about girls and women's rights, child marriage, access to education and violence against women and existing welfare schemes for women and girls. It has been reported that across some of the worst performing districts, sex ratios improved from 850 to 900 in the first year of the programme operation<sup>98</sup>. Encouraged by the success, a new component of Special Mahila Police Volunteers (SMPVs) was added to the scheme in December 2016. Women recruited for this role will operate directly with the police on these issues and facilitate police outreach on gender concerns. Similar programmes, such as the Shaurya Dals in Madhya Pradesh, supported by UN Women exist at the level of individual states, continuing to change attitudes and practices towards a more equal and just society.

Enabled by the growing mobility and connectivity of the Indian youth, volunteers have also been able to fulfill this goal in innovative ways. Frequently under the leadership of CSOs, youth volunteers use vans, online platforms, murals and paintings and theatrical shows to direct the attention of communities on issues such as child marriage or gender-based violence. Sometimes satirical and at other times simply informative, such media not only makes the information more accessible and interesting to the public but also renders volunteering more attractive to the youth.

<sup>97</sup>Press Information Bureau (2016) Orientation Workshop under Beti Bachao Beti Padhao scheme held in New Delhi today [Online] Available from: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=147688>

<sup>98</sup>Press Information Bureau (2016b) Mahila Police Volunteer Initiative launched in Haryana [Online] Available from: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=155377>

Active involvement of boys and men in the process of changing the long standing patriarchal gender relations in India has been vital towards the achievement of gender equality and justice. Initiated by the Government of India together with the Manas Foundation, for instance, auto rickshaw drivers in Delhi pasted posters propagating respect for women on the back of their vehicles. Likewise, trainings on masculinity that untangle stereotypical views of 'real men' have also been seen to render more nuanced the attitudes of youth towards gender roles. Some campaigns directly appeal to males to become active protesters against practices such as child marriage or gender-based violence. Breakthrough's award winning Bell Bajao or 'Ring The Bell' campaign calls on boys and men around the world to actively battle gender-based violence through ringing the bell and interrupting incidents when witnessed.

### CASE STUDY 32: BREAKTHROUGH, DELHI

Breakthrough is a youth-focused organization based in Delhi working towards the elimination of violence and discrimination against women and girls. It works with a network of organizations ranging from local CSOs to hospitals and shelter homes, taking on the role of the advocacy actor in the space. Breakthrough launched the Say Their Name campaign aimed at changing public attitudes towards the transgender community from one in which they are nameless to one when they are recognized as equal with women and men. Through the Delhi-based Mitra trust, the youth volunteers visited the transgender communities and filmed short videos in which the members of the communities promptly introduced themselves. Breakthrough trained its volunteers in filming and visual representations in which the youth had considerable interest. The campaign has been widely shared on social media.



Alongside males and females, equality and justice for the transgender community has also increasingly been in the spotlight of youth volunteers' efforts in India. Encouraged by recent moves towards greater legal and socio-economic support to the third gender community of certain state Governments, youth volunteers are advocating for even greater improvements.

The Tamil Nadu Government's establishment of the transgender welfare board in 2008 which issued ration and identity cards as well as guaranteed reserved seats in the states' colleges and universities to transgender youth, for instance, has been widely welcomed. In Odisha, decision-makers have granted social welfare benefits to third gender individuals. Such measures pave the ground for more open-minded and tolerant societies in which the voices of youth campaigners for further action multiply and are heard. Social and creative media are being used for delivering the messages to the wider society with the example of Breakthrough's "Say Their Name" campaign (Case study 32) illustrating how impact can be achieved by leveraging on these interests of the youth. Groups across the country provide skill development training as well as legal and emotional support to transgender communities. The impact is of a more equal and just society where being of a certain gender does not determine people's chances for a decent life.

## HUNGER

Due to rapid economic development and significant improvements in agriculture, the prevalence of malnutrition in India has reduced by half over the past two decades. The country no longer experiences episodes of famine. However, with persistent inequalities, where around 22% of the population still lives in absolute poverty<sup>99</sup>, hunger has by no means been eradicated.

According to latest Food and Agriculture Organization estimates, some 194.6 million people equivalent to a quarter of the world's malnourished population is found in India. A staggering proportion of 44% of children under 5 being underweight and 51% of women between 15 and 59 years of age are anemic. Given that a vast majority of those affected live in rural areas, the efforts aimed at eradicating hunger and malnutrition in India therefore must focus not only on providing relief but also through further improvements in agriculture and livelihoods, more generally, in order to increase communities' resilience for food security and nutrition. Indeed, youth volunteers have been doing both for a while now.

Feeding the hungry is one of the oldest causes and it must be acknowledged that the delivery of Government schemes aimed at combating hunger and malnutrition through food delivery would not have been possible without youth volunteers. Nowadays, they are the main agents behind the delivery of the Midday Meal Scheme which is a nationwide initiative that provides for free of cost lunches on working days for children in primary and upper primary classes in Government, Government-aided and Government-affiliated schools. Introduced in 1995 and mandated into law under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) in 2013, the meals under the programme are prepared and given out by volunteer cooks and helpers who receive a nominal amount of over Rs 1,000 per month. The impact in terms of improved nutrition seen has been stupendous, with the Ministry of Human Resource and Development reporting that each year, some 100-120 million children benefit from the scheme<sup>100</sup>.



The role of youth volunteers in the implementation of the Public Distribution System of 1997, the largest food distribution in the world has also been sizeable. Introduced by the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution and managed jointly by the states, the programme arranges for subsidized food and non-food items for India's poor using a system of ration shops and cards. Albeit suffering from shortcomings such as urban bias and malpractice / mismanagement on the part of the middlemen employed for the initiative, it is estimated that only since the coming into force of NFSA, around 530 million families, many of whom live below the poverty line have benefitted<sup>101</sup>.

<sup>99</sup>Reserve Bank of India (2012) **Number and Percentage of Population Below Poverty Line**

<sup>100</sup>Ministry of Human Resource Development (2015) Annual Report 2014-15 [Online] Available from: [http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/Part1.pdf](http://mhrd.gov.in/sites/upload_files/mhrd/files/document-reports/Part1.pdf)

<sup>101</sup>Press Information Bureau (2015) Over 53 crore beneficiaries being allocated wheat at Rs. 2 /kg and rice at Rs 3 /kg under National Food Security Act [Online] Available from: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133960>

The role of volunteers has been one of spreading awareness about the scheme; this has been of huge importance especially in remote rural areas where coverage remains limited.

Multiple food distribution systems supported by NGOs working with youth volunteers also came to existence, many utilizing the otherwise wasted food for the cause. Among these, India Food Banking Network and Feeding India attract large numbers of youth in cities to run food banks where fine quality but stocked as unfit for sealing food is collected from individuals, companies, supermarkets or restaurants and distributed to those in need. In rural areas, youth clubs alongside NGOs with strong support from NSS volunteers have been majorly active in combating hunger through food distribution. It has often been in the form of day-long campaigns where volunteers collect food packages from better-off households and donate them to hospitals, shelters and households for those in need.

### CASE STUDY 33: GOING ORGANIC IN KATEKALYAN VILLAGE, CHHATTISGARH

In the village of Katekalyan, Chhattisgarh's Dantewada district, a Maoist heartland, a reported 90% of farmers have turned to organic farming after high yielding seeds and fertilizers have largely degraded the local ecosystem. Enabled through the informal ties between the community members and with the support of the district administration, the village is returning to the utilization of farmers' traditional knowledge farming techniques. Spectacularly, farmers report to their yields increasing by three to four folds.

First tested by the farmers themselves, small groups of community members have been formed to go around the households and inform others of the benefits of organic indigenous farming. In August 2016, with the help of the district authorities the Bhumgandhi Organic Farmers Company Limited was set up to package and sell the produce across the country. Currently, it has 370 members where each farmer contributes Rs 1,000 which ensures him a share in the company. Funds are used for buying organic produce and state-owned technology is used to improve the seeds. Moreover, the district authorities recently informed of their decision to buy a processing unit and storage warehouse for the collective.

Suitable to the microclimate, environmentally sensitive and providing improved livelihoods, organic farming in the village has been also seen to deter the youth from joining the Maoist movement. Encouraged by the success, the farmers and the district administration are now preparing to make the whole of Dantewada completely organic.



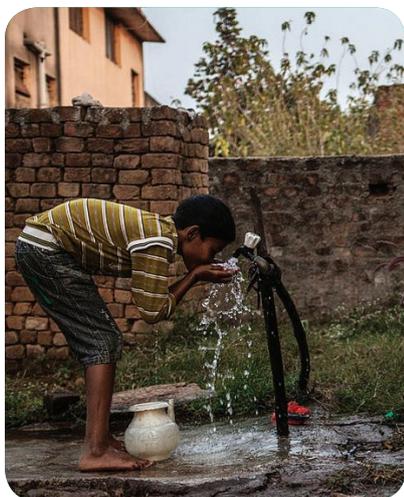
In India, religious institutions of all faiths extend their practice to serve the marginalized and many do so through food distribution. Sikh gurudwaras, for instance regularly organize free meal distribution. In every village of Punjab, they are given out every day in historical gurudwaras and each sunday in regular ones. The langar seva, or 'volunteering for service', is entirely carried out by the community members who donate food products, cook, serve the meal and clean the dining hall after the event.

With the objective of not only responding to hunger but also preventing it, youth volunteers across the country have been seen to support interventions aimed at increasing productivity, reliability and sustainability of agricultural practices. Under programmes of diverse scientific bodies, Governmental agencies and CSOs, youth volunteers provide seeds and fertilizers, promote food grain storage facilities and organic farming practices which provide a more affordable and environmentally sensitive option. Farmers across India turn to following the example of Sikkim which became India's first state where farming is 100% organic and success stories of farmers coming together to improve their resilience for food security abound. An example of Chhattisgarh's Katekalyan village in the Dantewada district is presented in Case study 33 where a mass turn to organic farming began with community mobilization, and was subsequently supported by the district administration.

Whether to farmers themselves or through organizations, youth volunteers encourage, train and provide resources to those interested in taking up organic agriculture practices such as composting, mulching, and natural pest control. Organizations across India provide platforms for young people to assist in the promotion of sustainable agriculture in India. As evident from the example of the Katekalyan village, the promotion of farmers' associations, cooperatives and SHGs is a hugely effective measure to combat hunger and malnutrition in India. Improved access to loans, skill training and increasing the capacity of the target populations in general have also been effective strategies where youth volunteers contribute.

## WATER AND SANITATION

Used for agricultural and industrial development and at the same time required to support a population of 1.3 billion people, India's sources of the most vital resource for life, water, are depleting. Pervasive shortages in the availability and access to water are further exacerbated by the changing climatic conditions with more frequent droughts and less reliable rainfalls observable. At the same time, huge inadequacies in sanitation and hygiene remain with 40% and 11% in rural and urban areas respectively having no access to a toilet<sup>102</sup>. A prerequisite for the improvement of the state of the health and wellbeing of the population, adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene as well as effective management of water and its conservative use require continued efforts. Youth volunteers have been seen to engage in all these aspects quite significantly.



In the most water scarce states in India, for instance, a longstanding tradition of volunteer involvement in the development and management of water systems can be found. Dating back to the pre-colonial era, community participation in the construction and maintenance of water systems has become a prominent feature of the rural landscape of colonial and post-colonial India. In Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, entire tank irrigation systems have been built by community volunteers on which ground later, formal structures, the Water Users Associations (WUAs), were formed. WUAs have been given the responsibility of construction and maintenance of local irrigation works and regulation of water use at the local level by the different state Governments. Forming the backbone of water management structures in India, however, WUAs are increasingly a subject of policy attention due to organizational challenges that persist.

<sup>102</sup>Swachh Bharat Mission website: <http://www.sbm.gov.in> (accessed on March 21, 2017)

The maintenance of water reservoirs is also greatly enabled today though youth clubs and informal youth groups as pond cleaning has become a popular activity. Water reservoir rejuvenation endeavors contribute to improved water percolation and greater availability of water supplies which are both indispensable for agricultural activity. Behind the efforts and successes of the groups is a variety of factors that enable this impact. Among them, mobilization of volunteers and other support over social media and personal networks as well as recognition and involvement on the part of the Government are crucial. This has been illustrated with an example of a dedicated group of youngsters from Kerala in the case study below.

#### CASE STUDY 34: ANBODU KOCHI, KERALA

An informal youth group from Ernakulam, Anbodu Kochi's members' first debut took place in 2014 when the group came together, mobilizing hundreds of volunteers to deliver relief to those affected by the Chennai floods. Subsequently, they embarked on mobilizing youth on a regular basis to clean ponds across the state as a measure to improve water percolation to ground with the end objective to improving the conditions for agriculture. Spectacularly, the group cleaned 53 ponds, setting off a ripple effect in the state where other youth groups and clubs have taken up the activity as well. Sanitation drives are now among the many activities that Anbodu Kochi undertakes.

Among the factors that enabled the impact achieved is the fact that the group devoted considerable resources to mobilize volunteers via visits to colleges as well as leveraging on personal networks to raise awareness and procure cleaning equipment at a low cost. The recognition and encouragement that the group received from the District Collector was also instrumental in maintaining the initial momentum that occurred immediately after the floods.



Another way in which volunteers are creating impact in the area of water is awareness raising and campaigning. Large as well as smaller CSOs, platforms and informal groups campaign for the conservation and efficient use of water in industry. They do so through initiating discussions on water issues among the public, informing the public through collection of data, publications and many more.

Projects such as India Water Portal in addition, capitalize on the increasing level of education and skills of youth to further broaden the knowledge base on the state of water in India. Events such as walkathons, conferences, seminars, guided walks through water bodies, painting competitions, debates and the like are organized each year around the World Water Day to raise awareness about fresh water resources and the need to conserve it. As they are interactive and different, they are able to attract wide groups of participants and hence broaden and deepen the impact they create.

The mobilization of large numbers of volunteers for campaigning has also been seen in the area of sanitation, alongside water in India. Among them, the famous Swachh Bharat Abhiyan or Clean India Movement, launched in 2014 with the objective of making India open defecation free (ODF) by 2019 is undoubtedly the largest of such campaigns. Under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, or Swachh Bharat as it is commonly known, every village and every person in India is to be provided toilet and sanitation facilities, including solid and liquid waste disposal systems, safe and adequate drinking water supply. General cleanliness of villages, towns and cities is also one of the objectives.

Till date, around 3 million people who are in a large part, volunteers, have taken part in Swachh Bharat and 23.5 million out of 120 million target toilets have been built<sup>103</sup>. Entire states with Sikkim, Himachal Pradesh and Kerala at the forefront have gone Open Defecation Free, although others such as Bihar and UP are still lagging behind. The NYKS and NSS volunteers have played a key role in promoting construction of sanitary latrines and by promoting their use through behavioral change among people. A large portion of NYKS volunteers themselves are beneficiaries of the sanitation programme.

Kicked off with an awareness run at the President's palace, the campaign saw nationwide events with the involvement of some of the most recognized musicians, athletes or politicians including the cricket icon Sachin Tendulkar, industrialist Anil Ambani, actors Salman Khan and Priyanka Chopra, and many others. Social media and online platforms have also been used, including the MyGov website, a platform for the Government's communication with the youth. The Swachh Bharat app was created to allow different development agents to post information about cleaning or monitoring events.



Youth volunteers are also playing a key role in other large-scale sanitation-focused schemes of the Indian Government for rejuvenation of the Ganga to protect the river from overuse and pollution. Under the project funded by the Ministry of Water Resource, areas adjacent to the river and the Ghats, or steps especially are being cleaned and awareness in the community around the need for maintaining this is being maintained. With financial and operational support from corporates and the international agencies, the UNDP notably, NGOs have taken up the role of creating community structures and organizing and supervising the work on ground. In some areas, where the assistance of the UNDP has been extended to improving the enabling environment as well, volunteers helped to strengthen community-led local institutions which maintain and manage sanitation facilities in the villages<sup>104</sup>. Such an integrated approach to the issues of sanitation is expected to yield considerable impact.

Overall, greater connectivity and environmental awareness of youth have allowed for an increase in initiatives in the area of water and sanitation. Among them, regular advocacy efforts as well as one-off mobilization events are prominent and continue to create impact towards the achievement of basic sanitation and adequate water supplies for all.

## CLIMATE CHANGE AND DISASTER RELIEF

Humanity is entering a new era where climate change has outdistanced armed conflict as the major threat to global security. 2016 was the hottest year ever recorded and the record-breaking, high global temperatures that are continuing into 2017, the direct effects of this warming in terms of loss of agricultural land accompanied by decreasing access to drinking water have already been observed.

In India where more than half of the population relies on agriculture for their primary income, more frequent drought events and less reliable rainfall hit the poorest most severely. With South Asia already being one of the most disaster-prone regions on Earth<sup>105</sup>, further social and physical loss due to extreme weather events and consequent migration is expected. An important stakeholder in the global partnership to tackle the challenge, India committed to ambitious mitigation targets at COP 21 in Paris. Realizing that today's youth will be the ones held accountable by future generations, youth volunteers are taking diverse actions to address the unbalanced relationship between mankind and nature.

<sup>103</sup>Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation Swachh Bharat Mission – Gramin [Online] Available from: [http://sbm.gov.in/tsc/Report\\_NBA/Physical/Rpt\\_TargetVsAch\\_SelectionBased.aspx?id=Home](http://sbm.gov.in/tsc/Report_NBA/Physical/Rpt_TargetVsAch_SelectionBased.aspx?id=Home)

<sup>104</sup>UNDP (2016) Implementation of Rural Sanitation Initiatives for Ganga Rejuvenation in Jharkhand [Online] Available from: [http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/environment\\_and\\_energy/ganga.html](http://www.in.undp.org/content/india/en/home/operations/projects/environment_and_energy/ganga.html)

<sup>105</sup>UN ESCAP (2015) Disasters in Asia and the Pacific: 2015 Year in Review [Online] Available from: [http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2015\\_Year%20in%20Review\\_final\\_PDF\\_1.pdf](http://www.unescap.org/sites/default/files/2015_Year%20in%20Review_final_PDF_1.pdf)

Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, volunteerism against the destruction of the environment that accompanied India's rapid development was initially manifested in social movements. Exercising their democratic right and following Gandhi's tradition of peaceful protest, young people of all socio-economic strata from tribal groups to farmers, environmentalists and rights activists gathered in great numbers to express their dissatisfaction with deforestation, industrial contamination of land, water and air or dam construction. Among them, perhaps the most impactful ones have been the Chipko movement of the 1970s in Uttarakhand against deforestation and Appiko movement in Karnataka in early 1980s for the same cause. In the 1990s, it was the Narmada Bachao Andolan protests that brought people together against a number of large dams being built across the Narmada River flowing through Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

Some movements actually inspired the creation of youth-driven clubs, groups and organizations that would make the protection and conservation of the environment their regular volunteering endeavor. Simultaneously, with the dawn of the century, new concerns related to climate change shook many young people across the world, attracting many more youth volunteers to devote their time to help combat this global phenomenon.



### CASE STUDY 35: NATURE AND ADVENTURE CLUB, GUJARAT

Bharatbhai Sureja from Gujarat runs a nature and adventure club. The club initially started to get people together to go trekking and have 'adventures', but the core group soon realized that for future generations to continue to have adventures, the current generation has to do something to preserve nature. The 250 members of the club mainly focus on planting trees and creating awareness around the necessity of this activity. The group has also created a seed bank which they distribute to people for free so they can plant them. The Club has now been trying to increase its impact by generating awareness with influencers and conducting camps in schools. "If there are 500 families in a society, we target 5 families who can spread the word in their societies" Bharatbhai says. "This way we can spread the message to the whole of Rajkot."

One of the common ways in which youth volunteers contribute to the cause is by raising awareness and educating people on the issue. NYKS volunteers, for instance famously organize events such as 'Green Pledge Signature Campaign', drawing competitions, quizzes and other cultural programmes around the UN-constituted World Environment Day on the 5th of June. In partnership with other organizations, NYKS and NSS volunteers have also been instrumental to the achievements of massive tree planting events that are gaining popularity, especially since the making of India's commitment in Paris to reforest 12% of its land. Spectacularly, on the 11th of July 2016 volunteers in the state of Uttar Pradesh established the new World Record of planting 50 million trees in one day. More than 800,000 volunteers across the state worked for 24 hours, planting 80 different species of trees along roads, railways, and on public land<sup>106</sup>. On a regular basis, tree plantations by youth volunteers take place in both cities as well as the rural areas by youth clubs as well as CSOs.

Utilising their knowledge on the issue, organizations in India many of which are under the Climate Action Network South Asia (CANSA), conduct interactive sessions, workshops and excursions for youth to raise awareness on conservation issues. CANSA has over one hundred member organisations in India and continues to encourage them to scale up their efforts towards a more sustainable development.

<sup>106</sup>National Geographic (2016) India Plants 50 Million Trees in One Day, Smashing World Record [Online] Available from: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2016/07/india-plants-50-million-trees-uttar-pradesh-reforestation/>

The contribution that youth volunteers continue to make towards an issue that is directly affected by climate change, namely, disaster relief cannot be overemphasized. Across India's most disaster prone areas, they are involved throughout the phases of the disaster management cycle from meteorological observations that help to adequately prepare for the disaster to community rehabilitation in the aftermath of an event. During many disasters, volunteers constitute the major force of relief as large numbers of youth, adults and elderly alike are mobilized to help their community in need. In many instances, information is by passed on via social media and chain text messaging resulting in quick and effective organization. Both in cooperation with Government and other relief agencies as well as individually, volunteers distribute food, medicine and other basic supplies and provide medical care and shelter. During the Chennai floods in 2014, youth have been seen to navigate the flooded city streets carrying power banks that were offered to stranded people to call their families and dears to confirm that they were safe.



UN Volunteers (UNVs) are widely active in this field in India, providing support pre, during and post disasters across the country. UNVs have been at the center of relief during disaster such as the Odisha cyclone in 1999, Odisha floods in 2001, Gujarat earthquake in 2001 and drought in the two states in 2001. Their impact of these efforts in terms of emergency response and recovery and subsequent reduced vulnerability, greater preparedness has been well documented<sup>107</sup>. UNVs also lent their support to the 2015 Nepal earthquake which killed at least 8,790 people and incurred approximately US \$7 billion in damages and losses<sup>108</sup>. A UNV report found that this assistance resulted in the strengthening of local institutions in the disaster-affected sites, mobilization and development of the capacities of distraught communities, and increased coordination efforts among key players that responded to the earthquake<sup>109</sup>. The impact of UNVs in disaster relief can be attributed to their focus on ownership and inclusive community preparedness through capacity building and advocacy<sup>110</sup>. In addition, UNVs are skilled and trained and thus able to provide assistance of all kinds effectively as depicted in the case study below.

### CASE STUDY 36: UNV - DISASTER RELIEF

UNVs' involvement in disaster relief adopts a holistic approach where volunteer involvement in disaster prone and affected areas entails a continuum of activities from reducing people's vulnerabilities to transitioning from relief to recovery. Always working alongside state and district administration, in the first phase, UNVs assist the communities to construct early warning systems using IT. In the second phase, UNVs provide emergency response through the provision of health care, shelters and other necessities as well as implementation of structures such as water efficient farming techniques in the case of drought. The approach is made possible as UN volunteers are skilled professionals and include social workers, doctors, architects, water specialists and IT engineers. Community participation and inclusion of marginalized groups are always at the core of the strategy.

<sup>107</sup>UNV (2003) Helping People Cope: UNVs Support Disaster Mitigation in India

<sup>108</sup>World Bank (2015) Nepal Earthquake Post Disaster Needs Assessment

<sup>109</sup>UNV (2017) Rebuilding with the community after a disaster: Volunteer engagement in the 2015 Nepal earthquake

<sup>110</sup>UNV (2013) UNV in Action: Disaster Risk Reduction

In the words of Valerie Julliard, UN Resident Coordinator and UNDP Resident Representative Nepal, ‘volunteer action in response to disasters is one of the strongest expressions of the human desire to attend to the needs of others’<sup>111</sup>. The impact of such volunteerism has been seen across India during all of its most serious disasters and has been greatest where structured, community-focused approach is employed. Moreover, both social movements for the environmental cause as well as spontaneous involvement during disaster emergency response have been seen to plant the seeds for greater community awareness and formation of organizations and groups that address climate change and natural disaster on a regular basis.



### SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP

For the purpose of this report, social entrepreneurs have been considered to be volunteers, as they are individuals who devote their careers to looking beyond financial gain to create social or environmental impact. The value of social enterprises has been amply described in an Asian Development Bank report which highlights that they are ‘reaching hitherto underserved markets and are doing so with innovative business models that ensure affordability for the end consumer without eroding sustainability for the enterprise’<sup>112</sup>.

In India, the number of such enterprises which are overwhelmingly led by young people is on the rise. A research study by the British Council revealed that 27% of social enterprises are managed by individuals younger than 35 years old, while 57% of the social enterprises are initiated by those in the 25-44 year old category<sup>113</sup>.

A sectorial investigation of the study showed that as many as 53% of all social entrepreneurs in India are engaged in skill development activities, followed by education, where 35% of social entrepreneurs are engaged in education. The most prominent sector in which 28% of social entrepreneurs are engaged is agriculture, fisheries, and dairy, with the Gujarat-based dairy cooperative Amul, being a major player. Other prominent areas include financial services, energy and clean technology, healthcare, non-farm livelihood, food and nutrition and water and sanitation.

Successful examples include but are not limited to TARA’s Waste Ventures which incubates solid waste management companies owned and operated by waste pickers as well as microfinance institutions, such as SKS and Spandana which provide finance to underprivileged people across the country, giving them sometimes the only chance to get out of poverty. The above examples are just some of the many cases that have grown to become leading social enterprises in India, resulting in considerable social and environmental benefits in various spheres.



Extraordinarily, social enterprises have also been seen to fuel the constitution of formal institutions that support the poor. Case Study 37 describes the prominent case of the Honey Bee Network initiative initiated by social entrepreneur Anil Kumar Gupta which provided the first platform that encourages grassroots innovations in India.

<sup>111</sup>UNV (2017) Rebuilding with the community after a disaster: Volunteer engagement in the 2015 Nepal earthquake

<sup>112</sup>Asian Development Bank (2012) India Social Enterprise Landscape Reports

<sup>113</sup>British Council (2016) Social Value Economy: A Survey of the Social Enterprise Landscape in India

## CASE STUDY 37: HONEY BEE NETWORK

Set up in 1988-89, the Honey Bee Network is a platform aimed at supporting grassroots innovations by connecting them with each other as well as investors and giving them technical support to come to fruition. In the 1990s, the Honey Bee Network formed a partnership with the Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technologies and Institutions (SRISTI) and Indian Institute of Management in Ahmedabad (IIM-A). Tens of thousands of innovations have been registered till date on the portal, many of them coming to fruition and having a sizeable impact on those that most need it. Spectacularly, inspired by the results, Gujarat Grassroots Innovation Augmentation Network (GIAN) and National Innovation Foundation (NIF) have been formed by the Government. The institutes aim to identify innovative solutions for grassroots green technologies developed by farmers, mechanics, artisans and others and provide expert verification of technical feasibility, assistance in filing patents, verification of commercial viability and provision of seed funding from a fund from SIDBI.

In addition to providing affordable solutions for the poor, the employment that is generated through entrepreneurship itself has also been as an impact of such activity. It is estimated that the average number of employees in a social enterprise in India is 19 individuals<sup>114</sup>. At 25%, the proportion of female full-time employees in social enterprises is higher than the 14% in mainstream businesses in India<sup>115</sup>.

Moreover, due to the low barriers to entry for entrepreneurship, the avenue also provides a viable employment opportunity for the traditionally disadvantaged societal strata including women and STs / SCs. However, access to financing and business guidance remains a challenge for these groups. Multiple organizations attempt to assist entrepreneurs from socio-economically disadvantaged groups by assisting them with access to finance, access to markets, training and counseling.

Realizing the contribution that social entrepreneurship makes towards sustainable development of the country, different actors including the Government, international agencies, CSOs and informal groups, academic institutions, financial institutions, chambers of commerce etc. have come to create an environment in which social entrepreneurship is promoted. Among the most common ones are mentorship, training, co-working spaces and the opportunities to connect entrepreneurs with each other, industry leaders as well as the sources of possible funding. While some are focused on specific segments of the society such as members of the low-income bracket or women, others focus on youth specifically.

For example, the British Council in India has tied up with a private sector company to build up the capacities of 29 organizations including NGOs, social enterprises and educational institutions to promote social entrepreneurs through its 'Young Women's Social Entrepreneurship Development Programme' or YWSEDP (see Case Study 38).

## CASE STUDY 38: YWSEDP WITH UDYOGINI, JHARKHAND

Among other organizations, the YWSEDP supports Udyogini, a provider of micro enterprise management services. Its special focus is training the poor, mainly illiterate women, in backward states of India, who are constrained by their lack of knowledge, skills and exposure. Through the initiative of Village Level Service Centers (VLSC), a two-way supply chain model, locally produced goods / produce are aggregated at the producers' door step and sold in the market, while making goods / services available to the community; the VLSCs therefore reduce time travel, remove interactions with the middlemen and potential losses in women's wages. The content of the YWSEDP complemented Udyogini's original programme as it focused on social entrepreneurship and gave the beneficiaries a deeper knowledge of business verticals. Prabhadevi, an entrepreneur completed the training Programme through Udyogini and has now started her own business. She gets the women in her village to spend one day a week in the forest collecting leaves, drying them and making leaf bowls to sell at the market. This model helps other women to develop a business sense which Prabhadevi believes will encourage them to start their own businesses someday.

The availability of impact financing has been found to be one of the main challenges that social entrepreneurs face. Congruent with the demand, a sharp rise in the supply of seed financing led by financial institutions has been observed<sup>116</sup>.

<sup>114</sup>British Council (2016) Social Value Economy: A Survey of the Social Enterprise Landscape in India

<sup>115</sup>World Bank (2014) Enterprise Surveys: India 2014.

<sup>116</sup>Asian Development Bank (2012) India Social Enterprise Landscape Reports

While the developmental effects of social entrepreneurship are increasingly being recognized in India, a generally low awareness on the value and benefits from being a social entrepreneur exists and together with the above discussed structural challenges may prevent youth from engaging in it. The traditional preference given to career in the public or private sectors rather than to self-employment is especially prevalent among the older generations and continues to discourage youth from setting up their own businesses. Moreover, awareness about the support environment which exists is similarly low, especially in the rural parts of the country where social entrepreneurship is most needed.



## SOCIAL INCLUSION

Despite the formidable developmental progress that India has managed to achieve, not all social groups have been able to enjoy its benefits. In fact, while globalization has given the chance to many to improve their prosperity, it created new forms of exclusion experienced by others. The result has been that inequality today in India is as pronounced as ever before, with young people being one of the social groups that have tended to often get left behind in the process.

Under the right conditions, volunteerism has been seen to address this in two major ways. Firstly, as demonstrated throughout this report, engagement in voluntary activities provides an opportunity for professional, personal and psychological development of volunteers, also enabling for the forming of bonds between those who often come from different backgrounds. Secondly, volunteer action can result in significant improvements to the lives of the socially marginalised.

Explicit in the concept of the 5th space championed by ComMutiny, a collective of about 30 youth-focused organizations across India, volunteering provides a special space for young people to discover and develop themselves in the way they want. Initiated by Pravah and the Ratan Tata Trust, the collective promotes volunteering as an 'exciting, adventurous, safe space that equips young people to understand themselves, address conflicts, build cross-border relationships, clarify their values / stances and stand up for their rights as well as those of the larger community'. ComMunity's activities are centred on inclusion by battling discrimination, intolerance and ignorance about the problems in the Indian society, striving to actively engage diverse stakeholders including Government members and international organizations into the dialogue as well. It has been largely influential on its members and associated organizations which increasingly focus on the development of their youth volunteers as much as that of the beneficiaries in the communities within which they work.

In this movement, many organizations create physical spaces, which are like youth centres where youth volunteers can simply spend time, engage themselves creatively or discuss issues that challenge them.

Several others in addition provide professional and psychological guidance to the youth who struggle to find solutions to what troubles them. Unfortunately, a large part of disadvantaged young people are often unaware of the volunteering organizations or do not think that volunteerism is 'for them' due to their status which is connected with the general limited awareness about volunteering in the broader society. Despite this, with innovative, youth-focused strategies, many organizations, institutions and groups have been effective in attracting this cohort of the population.

Among the most effective strategies to attract marginalized youth, has been their engagement in cultural activities and sports. Often organized by youth clubs, CSOs and recently, corporates as well, these mediums are being used to draw the attention of vulnerable youth away from activities such as crime and substance abuse towards those that help in child and adolescent development. Once that is realized, the potential that lies within an individual young person can be harnessed to create yet more impact through the touching of more lives. In fact, an astounding number of leaders of youth movements and groups come from marginalized backgrounds themselves. The story of Ashok Rathod, a young man who grew up in the slums of Mumbai to become the founder of the OSCAR Foundation at the age of 22 is an example (see Case Study 39). Now, through his foundation he uses sports as a channel for slum children to engage in positive endeavors, inspiring them to dream and encouraging them to undertake education as a way to fulfill those dreams along the way.

### CASE STUDY 39: OSCAR FOUNDATION, MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

Son of an impoverished fisherman from a Mumbai slum, Ashok Rathod started volunteering with Magic Bus at the age of 16. Influenced by the effect of football on children that he worked with, he quickly found himself driven to change the fates of young slum residents who were sliding into substance abuse. Capitalizing on the fact that the children were passionate about football, Ashok, first informally and subsequently under the foundation, organized sporting activities, building a personal connection with the children throughout. After some time, Ashok was able to convince many of them to join school and seek a better life for themselves on the condition that they could only continue playing football if they went to school.

Ashok's foundation called OSCAR foundation now supports 3,500 children in 4 states - Karnataka, Jharkhand, Delhi and Mumbai and three young boys trained under him play with the under 15 age group I-League, India's premier football league.



The beneficiaries of volunteerism for social inclusion are diverse and include the uncared for elderly and children, the sick and the disabled, those belonging to STs / SCs and other backward castes, refugees, bonded laborers, those of the third gender and sex and numerous others to whom the benefits of development and belonging to the mainstream society have been denied. Traditionally either led by religious organizations or confined to individual homes in the case of the elderly and the sick, volunteerism for the betterment of these groups is on the rise in India; this is evident by the creation of homes and shelters, provision of care and assistance at homes as well as the provision of educational and employment opportunities in multiple forms. Social inclusion has also become a prominent area for volunteers from CSOs as well as corporates such as Glaxo Smith Kline, IBM and Tata Power.

Stakeholders often partner to meaningfully engage in activities such as playing with children and giving career advice to youth in orphanages, spending time with elderly and training the differently-abled in a variety of skills as depicted in Case Studies 40 and 41.

#### CASE STUDY 40: ADDRESSING SOCIAL EXCLUSION THROUGH VOLUNTEERS-I : ARUSHI, BHOPAL

Started by a group of friends in 1992, Arushi is a non-Governmental organization committed to working with persons with disabilities, especially from the weaker sections of the society. Since its inception in 1992, Arushi has been making concerted efforts towards providing care and rehabilitation and social mainstreaming of persons with disabilities. Co-founded by, among others, Mr Anil Mudgal and Dr Rohit Trivedi, who is himself visually impaired, Arushi has received support from prominent personalities and youth to now be situated in a fully disabled persons-friendly complex with state-of-the-art facilities. Hundreds of children, youth and adults have been assisted by Arushi for physical and mental rehabilitation and many more have benefited from the books that Arushi volunteers read out in schools and record on second-hand cassettes collected from the community. As a result of exposure visits to the world of art, culture and sports that Arushi organizes for its beneficiaries, the assisted beneficiaries have also become much more confident and feel more included in mainstream society. In the words of Dr Trivedi, 'Volunteerism is the tool with which to break the wall of segregation'.

#### CASE STUDY 41: ADDRESSING SOCIAL EXCLUSION THROUGH VOLUNTEERS-II : GRIHINI, RAIPUR-CHHATTISGARH

In 2009, Grihini, a voluntary organization based of Raipur in Chhattisgarh, made a commitment to work with and empower disabled volunteers. The organization recruited disabled volunteers and trained them on advocacy and awareness about Government schemes. Through master trainers, volunteers were formed into federations at the block level who now have a presence in all the blocks of Raipur, Hirni, and Baroda bazaar. The volunteers have full-time jobs and work on a part-time basis with no monetary benefits. Their motivation comes from knowing the problems of the disabled community and providing them with information and opportunities to excel in life. Being able to help people like them, is what drives them. Moreover, volunteers are motivated as they are given an opportunity to fight for their rights by being given access to meetings with higher authorities such as Panchayat and district officials. This has also developed the confidence of volunteers. Volunteers however, expressed the need for more organisations that motivate the disabled to do community work and a cadre for the disabled at the Government level.

The tangible impact of these programmes often includes getting into education, finding a well-paid job or starting a new business. Intangibly, cases across organizations and locations reveal the attitudinal transformations that take place when the socially excluded interact with youth volunteers. For example, Yuva Parivartan is an NGO that works with some of the biggest corporates in remote rural interiors and tribal belts across Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Bihar and Jammu and Kashmir where no learning centers have been set up. Uma Sundadaraman who heads the counseling team of the Yuva Parivartan observes that "there is a significant change in the attitude of the trainees after the training. These employees can become role models for the young people they work with. I tell the trainers that 'there are enough people giving them advice; tell them about your daily life'. These kids will then want to aspire for a job like theirs".



Similarly, Rupani Trust in Rajkot has adopted seven slums in the area and provides the children with education and teaches them etiquette. The 'Gyan Prabhodhini' project was initiated with a view to provide educational support to bright children from the lower strata of society. They also promote initiatives such as kite flying festivals for disabled children with the help of over 100 volunteers.

Overall, youth volunteerism for the cause of social inclusion provides for a unique way to equalize the chances of the disadvantaged and improve the wellbeing of those who have been left out of developmental progress. It is through exposure, confidence-building and widening of perspectives that the lives of beneficiaries as well as those helping out are boosted.

## **PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS**

In a developing country that is the second largest by population and seventh largest by territory in the world and where heterogeneous linguistic and religious groups are governed under one democratic regime, the achievement of SDG 16 for peace, justice and strong institutions is essential. Despite major progress, human rights of many continue to be defied daily through multiple forms of violence. Crime, assault, sexual and gender-based violence are still notorious and forced labour and human trafficking to and from the country affect millions of people. Armed conflict, which persists in the major regions of Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, Jammu and Kashmir, and the northeastern states of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland and Tripura, continues to claim lives and security of civilians. Moreover, despite the Indian justice system being known for its independence, it is overburdened and fails to deliver to many the justice that they deserve. Legal and administration systems of limited accountability and abundant corruption continue to place institutional restrictions to justice on India's people and therefore are effectively a form of violence alike.

Once again, youth volunteers are offering a helping hand to the Government of India and society to address these challenges and promote peaceful and just societies. They are also increasingly intervening to make institutions more effective, inclusive and accountable. Much of the progress occurs through volunteerism itself which transforms youth into socially aware and responsible citizens and future leaders of the nation.

In India's conflict-affected areas, youth volunteers are involved in all cycles of conflict management from armed confrontation prevention to direct assistance in conflict resolution and mitigation of the impact when tensions transform into violence. Prevention takes on multiple forms and is most commonly associated with raising awareness on the consequences of armed conflict and the role that youth can adopt for themselves in the process of peace-building. For this purpose, volunteer-based organizations across India hold seminars and workshops where young people meet with personalities involved in peace-building and discuss human rights, peace and security and conflict resolution. Spiritual leaders such as Dalai Lama or Sri Sri Ravi Shankar of the Art of Living movement visit communities and preach peace emphasizing the need for reinforcing human values and fostering interfaith harmony.

In places where tensions between groups have transformed to violence, youth volunteers formally and informally provide immediate support to those in need by providing shelter and basic necessities. Existing women, youth or student groups originally focused on community development have been seen to transform into units working towards relief and reconciliation when the need arises. Not only do they spread awareness about the need for peace but many are also directly involved in conflict mediation. Several local associations in Nagaland and Manipur have been engaged in the peace-building process bringing the opposing sides to the negotiating table and contributing to the ceasefire (see Case Study 42).

### **CASE STUDY 42: NAGA MOTHERS' ASSOCIATION CAMPAIGN**

When inter-factional violence grew out of control in the 1990s, Naga Mothers' Association, a local social welfare group turned to peace-building. Starting with giving traditional funerals for unclaimed bodies, NMAs quickly progressed to an organization preaching peace under its campaign 'Shed No More Blood'. In 1995, the group organized a public peace rally and called for members of each tribe, the Chief Minister and army commandant to participate, pressing for reconciliation and greater accountability and eventual withdrawal of the Armed Forces. NMA helped to bring out a reduction in the levels of violence, a broader desire for peace and advanced communication between the conflicted sides and it participated in formal ceasefire processes. They continue to work on maintaining and broadening of the ceasefire in the region till date.



Similarly, grassroots civil society is also an important actor for furthering the peace-building process in Jammu and Kashmir and Naxalite-Maoist affected areas.

Over the years, a comprehensive legal framework has been developed in India for the protection and rehabilitation of those whose freedom or security have been compromised. It functions through a multi-tier system of courts at the different levels of India's administration. Amid pending cases, the Development of Infrastructure Facilities for the Judiciary including Gram Nyayalays scheme recently mandated for an entire system of courts at the village level and youth volunteers have been mobilized to provide support. In Lok Adalats (or people's courts), disputes are settled by boards composed of lawyers as well as volunteers. In addition, para-legal volunteers have been raising awareness on justice-related issues in the community, educating the community on their rights, keeping watch on any transgressions of law or acts of injustice and providing legal assistance and assistance to victims of crime.

Alongside direct engagement in safeguarding peace and justice for India's citizens, diverse actors such as CSOs, international organizations and academic institutions regularly support the implementation of policies that mandate justice for all. Frequently with the help of youth volunteers, they conduct research, baseline studies and evaluations, awareness campaigns and capacity building programmes for district officers on landmark legislation such as Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act in 2005 and Integrated Child Protection Scheme and Trafficking of Persons (Prevention, Protection and Rehabilitation) Bill of 2016 to enhance protection for the socially vulnerable and rehabilitation of victims.

The civil society at large also has been seen to take action for justice in India, often with spectacular results. The adoption of the international 'Charter on Industrial Hazards and Human Rights' in 1996 in response to local, national and international mass activism for justice of the victims of the Bhopal catastrophe of 1984 is a prominent example. Another case in point has been the 2011 national anti-corruption movement which resulted in the passing of the anti-corruption Jan Lokpal Bill, although it was later withdrawn. In 2012, the Nirbhaya movement in a reaction to the 2012 Delhi gang rape case was spectacular in scale and its effects culminated in the passing of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill 2015 (see Case Study). Enabled by the increase in connectivity and usage of social media, especially among the youth, instant mobilization of young people to take to the streets for justice has been possible.

#### CASE STUDY 43: NIRBHAYA CASE, 2012

The 2012 Delhi gang rape case of a female college student that resulted in the death of the victim occurred on 16<sup>th</sup> December 2012 in New Delhi, in a bus. Shocked and saddened by the incident that represents the overall situation of safety for women in India, thousands of people took to the streets across the whole of India. Answering the call, the Government passed the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Amendment Bill in 2015 while individual states introduced additional preventive and reactive measures such as dedicated help-lines for sexual assault victims in Karnataka and a 13-point action plan in Tamil Nadu to ensure safety for women. In addition, impact has been created through a resulting increase in public debates on gender-based violence and media attention on the incident and issue itself, which have been seen to educate and influence society. In addition, the Nirbhaya Trust was formed to assist women who have experienced violence to find shelter and legal assistance.



Crucially, whether it is campaigning for justice, providing English classes or assistance in response to disaster, youth volunteerism also contributes towards the achievement of the SDG 16 through the impact on the individual volunteers themselves. Volunteering endeavors can transform youth by bolstering their awareness of societal problems, improving their competence to target these challenges and last but not least, enhancing their sense of empathy as they are brought close to the challenges of others. In the act of volunteering, interactions among young people themselves are a powerful tool for transformation towards becoming more sensitive, aware and responsible citizens. By working together for a common cause, despite often coming from different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds, youth volunteers have been observed and have expressed that they have become more tolerant.

Certain programmes targeted at youth volunteers explicitly aim for a cultural exchange. Among them is the Youth Tribal Exchange Programme organized by the NYKS under which tribal youth from Left Wing Extremism-affected areas take part in visits to selected developed parts of the country. The objective is to offer exposure to industry as well as skill development opportunities, inspiring the participants to aspire for a better life and deterring them from engaging in conflict or criminal activities. The International Youth Exchange through Peer Learning (IYEPL), a programme of the MoYAS in collaboration with UNDP and UNV is another example. Offered to selected youth volunteers in the country, the IYEPL involves a cultural exchange focused on models in youth volunteering action of well performing young people from India and Sri Lanka. It gives them a platform to exchange ideas, learn about volunteering models from each other, a process in which youth become more open-minded and develop qualities that allow them to be the future leaders of the nations. The result intended is greater social cohesion that is ultimately the most effective factor preventing conflict.

It deserves underlining that direct involvement of youth in day-to-day governance also creates impact in terms of strengthening the country's institutions. Some programmes have been able to offer their volunteers the chance to work together with executive bodies both at the local as well as the national levels. Diverse organizations have been able to achieve this with the result of youth becoming expected members at the Gram Sabhas. NYKS 'National Young Leaders' Programme (NYLP) similarly aims to prepare youth volunteers for such involvement in governance. During 2014-15, almost five thousand Block 'Youth Parliament Programmes' were organized in which 3.71 lakh members of youth clubs participated<sup>117</sup>. In the programme, youth debated on important contemporary issues of significance to the community in general and youth in particular.

<sup>117</sup>Press Information Bureau (2015) Introduction of National Young Leaders Programme [Online] Available from: <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=122009>

Overall, by way of campaigning for justice, involvement in peace building processes, transformation of youth's attitudes, perspectives and capabilities, youth's involvement in decision-making processes or assistance in delivering the policies and schemes of the Government in education, health etc. youth volunteerism has had a tremendous impact towards the achievement of SDG 16 in India. By becoming part of delivering the new agenda and holding Governments accountable, youth themselves promote peaceful and inclusive societies and transparent, effective and inclusive institutions.



## CONCLUSION

This chapter validates that volunteer action is found across India, manifested through various actions; the range of case studies described showcases the diversity of issues covered by a variety of stakeholders. Apart from these, there are many examples of youth inspired initiatives like this, large and small which are about young people making a difference in their community or the larger society.

There is little doubt about the positive impact that volunteering has created, on communities as well as on the volunteers themselves. Volunteers act as a link between the Government and the communities and serve to strengthen our institutions. With notable work being done across the SDGs, youth volunteers have, by themselves or working with institutions, created significant impact both in terms of awareness creation and in service delivery.



When talking about impact, one cannot fail to acknowledge the contributions of youth volunteers in the delivery of public service schemes, whether in the fields of education, hunger, health or justice, even if just in terms of its massive scale, outreach and inclusiveness. It was also observed that promotion of schemes by the Government of India e.g. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, generated an impetus in the number of volunteering initiatives around those thematic areas.

As may be expected, most voluntary work is undertaken across the sectors of education, health and livelihoods. This may be attributed to several facts: prolonged focus by the Government of India, the need for consistent investment in these sectors which are the backbone of any developing economy and the large number of institutions investing in and / or working in these areas which naturally provide platforms or opportunities for volunteers.

Another area where the impact of volunteers cannot be over-stated is the contribution towards disaster relief which crosses all boundaries of state, class, caste, religion or culture.

A field that is rapidly growing and is being covered within the ambit of volunteerism is that of social entrepreneurship. While traditional preferences of careers in the public or private sectors still prevail, entrepreneurship is becoming the buzzword among India's educated youth. This, combined with an ever-increasing social awareness has given rise to a number of social enterprises; there is however a need to support this growing segment with incubation, mentorship services and financing.

While one cannot state that impactful initiatives all followed a common approach, the action research observed a few key common factors or trends that often resulted in success:

- **Awareness and exposure:** It was observed that being aware of or working on social and development issues often resulted in new initiatives springing up within those thematic areas. For example, volunteers that worked in education, in several cases, set up volunteering initiatives of their own in the same thematic area. Further, social movements and prominent NGOs or institutions inspired youth to begin working in particular areas; the role of media in highlighting these initiatives was stated to be important. It was also observed that many youth, once having volunteered, enjoyed the experience and continued to volunteer; the level of commitment and time however, varied based on the stage of life that they were at.
- **Influencers / mentors:** Across all sectors, it was observed that leaders who were like-minded and relatable had more impact in influencing youth to volunteer and often led to initiatives that were more sustainable.
- **Focus on youth:** When greater responsibilities were handed to volunteers, they saw greater personal benefits in terms of leadership and management skills; a stronger sense of ownership also led to better outcomes.
- **Investment in volunteers:** Greater clarity in roles and responsibilities, orientation and training provided to volunteers, greater engagement with youth, translated into youth volunteers becoming better versed with the norms of the communities they worked within and understanding what was expected of them.
- **Scaling up initiatives:** The train-the-trainer model worked well in terms of outreach and scale for certain thematic areas. While several models of volunteering have been replicated and scaled up, there is still a lot of potential for successful models to be contextualized and replicated across states.

Almost all youth interviewed stated that there had been significant self-impact, whether in terms of greater awareness, empathy, improved skills or greater exposure. In several instances it was also observed that this exposure influenced young people to start new initiatives themselves or to take positions in fields they were passionate about, with several institutions stressing on the fact that youth who had volunteered with them were now influencers and leaders in their communities or otherwise. This phenomenon was also witnessed on-ground at different levels – from community health workers who were considered key influencers within their communities to volunteers who has gone on to take up positions in local governing bodies to employees transitioning from middle to senior management. Further, interactions among young people themselves were seen to be a powerful tool for creating more sensitive, aware, tolerant and responsible citizens, thereby naturally contributing to greater social inclusion.

It is however, a difficult task to present a composite picture of the impact that volunteerism has had. While the concept of volunteering is still evolving, there is still a reluctance to treat the contribution of volunteers as something that needs to be measured. This is due to various reasons: flexible timelines, lack of concrete planning or task allocation, treating volunteers with the 'youth for development' approach, an approach that views young people solely as 'contributors' without factoring in their own needs and requirements.

However, what is certain is that to maximize impact, initiatives must be visible, scalable and sustainable. A number of smaller organizations or informal groups, for example, are dependent on external funding. Collaborations – between Government, civil society, CBOs, private sector, activists and citizens – can assist in developing networks, sharing and replicating models, developing the requisite capacity and infrastructure and cross sector coordination. This is happening slowly but surely, and all stakeholders will require to work together to develop a facilitative ecosystem to realize the potential for collective impact through volunteerism.

Highlighting the success stories of impact and exploring the factors behind them, this chapter has aimed to improve knowledge and understanding of how the sheer numbers of energetic, talented and increasingly skilled volunteers contribute to the wellbeing of India and all Indians.



Job Applau

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**4** QUALITY  
EDUCATION



**10** REDUCED  
INEQUALITIES



## Chapter -5

# CONCLUSION: WAY FORWARD



The role of the volunteer in India is taking on greater importance in today's times, primarily because of the confluence of four trends.

First is the understanding that despite the significant progress India has made towards the SDGs, it continues to face challenges in meeting its development goals. The Government of India is strongly committed to the 2030 Agenda. India's national development goals and its "sab ka saath, sab ka vikas" (development with all and for all) policy initiatives for inclusive development converge well with the SDGs and India is expected to play a leading role in determining the success of the SDGs globally. State Governments are also anticipated to be a crucial driving force for SDG progress as 15 of the 17 SDGs directly relate to activities undertaken by local Governments in the country<sup>118</sup>. The most significant challenges for a country like India however, include the financing of initiatives towards meeting the SDGs and implementation of the SDGs across the country. For the latter, volunteering offers opportunities of scale in achieving the SDGs by effectively engaging existing volunteers and mobilizing new volunteers in concerted action, to engage with communities that are often difficult to reach and to ensure that local volunteers are at the heart of SDG implementation.

The second is the growth in the population and India's expected demographic dividend that has led to discourses on how to leverage this youth bulge in addressing India's developmental challenges. A primary challenge will be the generation of jobs and creating a job-ready workforce. While India's demographic dividend presents an opportunity to leverage its youth bulge to address its persistent and inter-generational developmental challenges, the concept of volunteerism also offers youth prospects to learn, experience and develop their skills in an increasingly competitive environment. The promise of solving developmental challenges while also enhancing individual skills, social participation and inclusion, have, unsurprisingly, made volunteering a very attractive tool for Governments, civil society actors and corporations.

"Just as our vision behind Agenda 2030 is lofty, our goals are comprehensive. It gives priority to the problems that have endured through the past decades... These goals reflect our evolving understanding of the social, economic and environmental linkages that define our lives"

- Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

Thirdly, whether through 'shramdaan', 'seva', philanthropy, or giving of time, effort and skills, there is agreement that India has had a rich history of volunteerism, which needs to be built upon, taking advantage of trends in technology, greater accessibility and mobility, changing perspectives and the greater social consciousness of youth today.

Finally, the success that the Government of India has had in encouraging civil society, volunteers and other stakeholders to supplement its role in the provision of social services cannot be underestimated and has been depicted in examples and case studies through this report. This report describes the significant contributions that volunteers, through various mediums, have made towards India's developmental goals. It also highlights, in the context of India's predominantly rural economy, how local volunteers have played critically important roles in settings where stakeholders such as Government or civil society may be unable to directly reach. Further, it depicts the readiness of India's youth to volunteer and be part of the country's social and economic transformation.



<sup>118</sup><http://in.one.un.org/page/sustainable-development-goals1/>

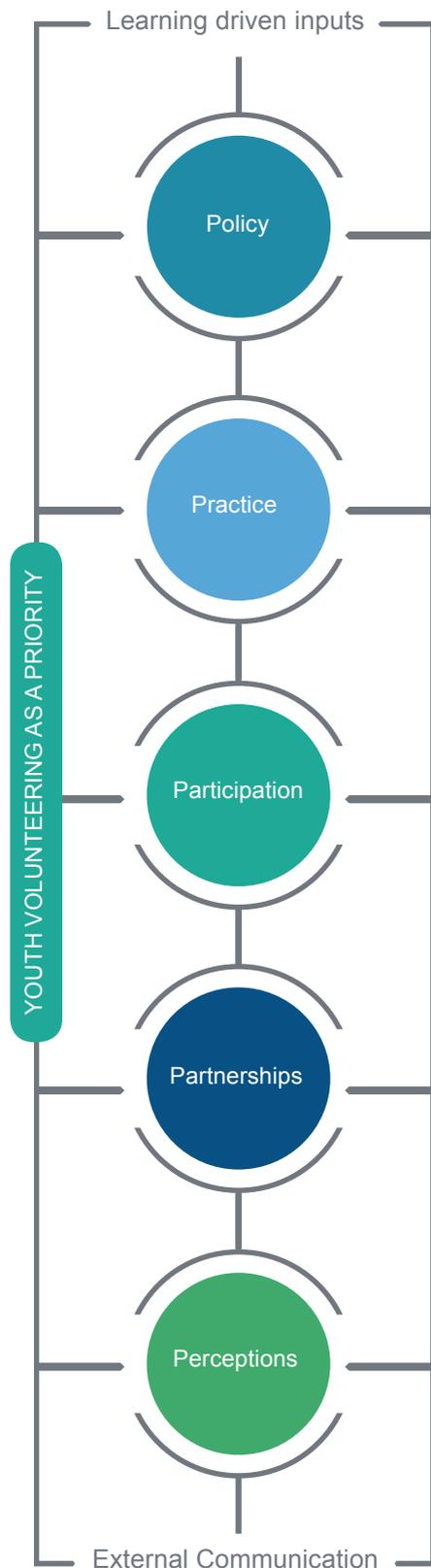
It also establishes that India, through its policies and programme, civil society, private sector and individual actions, has created a strong foundation for the voluntary ecosystem to flourish.

However, despite the interest in understanding and encouraging volunteerism in India, there are several factors that need to be deliberated upon and resolved, towards ensuring that volunteerism is facilitated to benefit volunteers themselves and the larger society, in ways that are sustainable and equitable. These factors have been further explained below:

- The term ‘volunteer’ itself cannot be taken for granted and in some instances, may even have negative connotations. Interviews with youth brought out that important influencers such as their parents or teachers often considered voluntary work as unimportant or secondary, carrying with it implications that influencers believe that volunteerism has limited utility - where the volunteer has obligations but may not necessarily receive anything in return in terms of learning or practical skills.
- There is lack of a common understanding about what constitutes volunteerism and limited documented knowledge about the activity. Without understanding the various facets and manifestations of volunteerism and its contributions, as well as changing realities of today’s youth in India, there is a risk that the volunteerism ecosystem as described in chapter two may fail to facilitate innovation or have clarity on how volunteering can be a means to adequately meet the SDGs within the local and national contexts.
- In India, there are multiple stakeholders working on solving developmental and social problems; interviews with stakeholders in Government, civil society, academia and the private sector revealed concerns that there is often an overlap of financial resources and efforts, due to lack of information, documentation and coordination. This takes on importance within the perspective of volunteerism as well, with a need for more discussion, increased information and coordination to ensure that more approaches to volunteering are developed and that the efforts of volunteers are appropriately channeled towards defined outcomes.
- Investment in volunteerism and volunteers remains low
  - In a number of cases, organizations continue to see volunteers as “free resources” or a cheaper method of delivering aid / development services; their primary motivation is expected to be altruism. Investment in volunteers therefore, whether in terms of orientation, community acceptance, priority-matching, financial reimbursement or skill development may often be regarded as less important, often resulting in less than positive experiences for both the volunteer and the organization.
  - Volunteers face unique challenges, particularly in conflict or crisis settings, however there is limited discussion about how they can be better supported or towards volunteer safety and wellbeing. Primary research also brings out that in many cases, they have a limited role in decision-making.
  - Interviews and group discussions indicated that volunteers, particularly in rural or local settings, occasionally felt under-valued. They believed that the general public remained unaware of the important nature of their work due to low media attention or focus and that this also served as a barrier in attracting new volunteers.

Going forward, this chapter provides insights and recommendations on themes that were perceived as the most challenging by stakeholders in terms of facilitating volunteerism in India. These cut across the information and data gathered during the research and were further deliberated on in a stakeholder consultation held in New Delhi. With representatives from international agencies, civil society, the private sector and youth volunteers themselves, the consultation assisted in shaping the recommendations of the research around the areas identified in Figure 15 and further detailed below.

**Figure 15: Areas of prioritization for promoting youth volunteerism**



## 1. POLICY

India's NYP 2014 brings focus on volunteering within a larger framework of goals for youth - creating a productive workforce, developing a strong and healthy generation, instilling social values and promoting community service, facilitating participation and civic engagement. For example, the NYP suggests that a framework for accreditation and certification of NGOs or CBOs should be developed to enable youth volunteers to select the most appropriate organisations based on their needs; it also identifies the need for a volunteer exchange programme to be set up.

However, India currently does not have a policy specifically promoting volunteerism. There is no clear framework in the NYP 2014 that provides for how young people are to be encouraged to volunteer and how efforts between central and state Governments are to be coordinated.

Across the world, Governments have varied to some extent in their approaches towards volunteering policies. While some Governments have supported volunteering for its inherent value (it being a good thing in and of itself, for the benefits that individuals derive from participating), others have supported it for its instrumental value (because it contributes to some specific policy need). Secondly, Governments vary between whether their support for volunteering is holistic; aimed at all types of volunteering, by all sorts of people, or targeted; aimed at particular groups of people or activities<sup>119</sup>; an example has been provided below.

### BOX 11: VOLUNTEER COMPACT CODE OF GOOD PRACTICE, UK

The Volunteer Compact Code of Good Practice, UK, in 2001, set out an agreement between Government, the voluntary sector and the community to support and promote volunteering in 2001, with clarity about the intended contribution of volunteering to citizenship and building communities.

The UNV report 'Laws and Policies Affecting Volunteerism Since 2001', states that 'Volunteerism laws and policies are driven by domestic needs and concerns. There is therefore no single solution or set of issues that defines a well-drafted policy. In countries where volunteerism traditions are not well established, for example, policies may focus on promoting public awareness on the need for volunteerism.

<sup>119</sup>Zimmeck – Volunteering and society in the 21st century (2010)

In countries with strong social safety nets, volunteerism laws may focus on clarifying the distinction between paid employees and unpaid volunteers, thereby removing obstacles that may arise when volunteerism is treated as a form of standard employment. Industrializing countries may focus on promoting volunteerism to achieve specific development goals.

In India, there is some debate on whether a volunteering policy is required, as the impact of policies on the levels of volunteering are extremely difficult to measure.

However there is no doubt that such a policy would assist in:

- Establishing that volunteering is a priority to the Government of India and influencing activity around the same, directly and indirectly. For example, while civil society may not intentionally set out to follow or reflect Government policies on volunteering, they may unconsciously be influenced by the rhetoric surrounding volunteering<sup>120</sup>.
- Promoting public awareness of the need for volunteerism, its value and defining a clear rationale or purpose.
- Promoting volunteerism to achieve specific developmental goals, particularly in light of the SDGs.
- Assisting in creating an ecosystem that facilitates and enables volunteering. Interviews with volunteers in college, such as NSS volunteers, brought out the fact that many colleges and professors do not see volunteering as a productive activity, thereby creating a deterrent to volunteering.
- Providing an inclusive and flexible definition of volunteering that may be referred to all stakeholders within this arena.
- Providing a framework for volunteer protection, particularly in the areas of volunteer safety and well being. For example, South Korea's Law on Promoting Volunteer Services of 2006 requires national and local Governments to ensure that voluntary service is performed in a safe environment, and an associated Enforcement Decree permits national and local Governments to purchase insurance to protect volunteers engaged in risky volunteer activities<sup>121</sup>.

Consultations and interviews with key stakeholders highlighted the need for a policy promoting youth volunteerism in India with recommendations that such a policy framework could be incorporated into the National Youth Policy. It was also recommended that such a policy should:

- Allow for contextualisation as per individual State requirements.
- Ensure that it does not impede spontaneous and informal initiatives, nor serve as a burden to smaller NGOs and other such organizations.
- Be inclusive – people from diverse backgrounds should be included and recognised, also encompassing youth from lower socio-economic backgrounds, school dropouts, etc.
- Support the rights of volunteers and aim to provide them with access to security and basic facilities.
- Aim to reward / recognise volunteers in such a manner as to encourage youth around them to volunteer.
- Provide guidelines to NGOs to allow them to professionalize the concept of volunteering.
- Integrate or interlink volunteering to avoid replication and duplication of efforts.

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<sup>120</sup>The role of voluntary organisations in implementing Government volunteering policy – Paper presented at the Social Policy Association conference, 4-6th July 2011

<sup>121</sup>Drafting and Implementing Volunteerism Laws and Policies - A Guidance Note, UNV

Finally, Government-led strategies to complement the policy and promote volunteerism were also recommended. For example, the South Sudan Development Plan (2011-13) offers a promising example of a national development plan embracing comprehensive theories of change for youth and peace building. These include the creation of a youth volunteer corps; youth participation in public affairs; building a national identity among youth that respects ethnic and cultural diversity; a national youth voluntary corps reaching every “payam”<sup>122</sup>.

However, towards ensuring that policy and actual practice reflect the changing realities of India, its sustainable development priorities and its youth, it is first important to comprehend the manner in which the contributions of youth volunteers are already reflected in the humanitarian and development spheres. This process of learning and knowledge development should consider the diversity of volunteering expressions and manifestations to ensure a balance between the larger global agenda and local ownership and effectiveness.

## 2. PRACTICE

Implementation of a youth policy is as important as the content of the policy, particularly in the case of India’s geographical context; it requires the involvement and coordination of all stakeholders in the system including the Government, CSOs, companies and volunteers.

Globally, there have been several instances where failed implementation rendered a volunteering policy or legislation ineffective. From these experiences, key takeaways for successful implementation are as follows<sup>123</sup>:

- **Operational plans:** Successful laws and policies are those that are accompanied by operational plans which detail specific activities, goals, responsibilities, and deadlines and provide for continuous monitoring.
- **Ownership:** Now, several Government bodies (Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, Ministry of Women and Child Development, etc.) are responsible for the execution of varied schemes and programmes within the context of volunteering. Therefore while a number of bodies, schemes and policies touch upon volunteerism and its importance, there is limited ‘structure’ to promote volunteering and a consequent lack of ownership in terms of research and documentation around volunteerism, volunteer engagement, linkage to outcomes, monitoring or capturing the impact of volunteers’ contributions.

For concerted action, an autonomous body responsible for promoting cross-sectoral volunteering initiatives may be considered, that would serve as:

- A research hub on good practices and knowledge sharing.
- A database of platforms, across regions, that offer opportunities for volunteering.
- A coordinating body for policy interpretation and successful implementation that will also fully inform and engage responsible and relevant Government officials, through awareness, education and engagement, for effective enforcement.
- An advisory body that would facilitate volunteers and organizations in their functioning by providing guidelines and recommendations and provide assistance to various volunteer platforms in resource mobilization.
- Consultation and interviews with stakeholders reiterated the need for a central body that would act as a facilitator and coordinator at the national level, supported by regional / state bodies that would be able to guide volunteering initiatives in their region / state based on their own local contexts and requirements.

A common mechanism to promote sustainable and effective initiatives is the establishment of national coordination bodies or implementing agencies responsible for carrying out a given volunteerism law or policy. These bodies can help with coordination of activities in the field and provide a permanent line of communication with stakeholders. Such bodies are generally organized by the Government, but are sometimes independent or quasi-Governmental organizations. Almost all such bodies, regardless of their status vis-à-vis Government, include independent representatives of civil society as well as Government officials.

<sup>122</sup><http://www.grss-mof.org/key-topics/south-sudan-development-plan>

<sup>123</sup>Ibid, 123 (adapted to the Indian context)

- **Political will and consistency is critical to the development of a sound youth volunteerism agenda:** Providing financial resources as well as operational support to the body responsible for promoting volunteerism in India will be a major determinant of its effective functioning and credibility and towards the larger agenda of promoting volunteerism.
- **Consultation with CSOs and youth across states and union territories:** This will enable them to contribute to policy development, involve themselves as intermediaries in implementation and take advantage of relevant provisions applicable to them. It is important that policy-makers bring youth organizations to the table and involve them at all stages of policy-making.
- **Conduct and disseminate research around volunteering and its benefits on volunteers themselves as well as the larger community:** In today's times, while the concept of volunteering retains our affection, it doesn't always inspire respect. Knowledge brings both understanding and respect and that is why it is important to develop research around volunteering in an effort to put the vitality of volunteering into a context that today's youth can relate to, understand and protect. It provides a common denominator to compare activities across organizations and brings focus onto numerous initiatives, big and small, to recalibrate our understanding of our economy and ourselves.

### 3. PARTICIPATION

Going forward, volunteers will need to be genuine partners in any volunteerism efforts, who being an equal voice and can act as drivers of change for vulnerable people rather than just delivers of services.

Stakeholders consulted agreed that youth could be better encouraged to volunteer if volunteering platforms could be better accessed and if the aspirations of youth were better understood and tapped.

Primary research brought out several challenges that youth and other stakeholders faced within the purview of youth volunteering:

- A number of organizations did not provide reimbursement for expenses of volunteers or living costs incurred while volunteering as the primary motivation of volunteers was expected to be altruism. However, a number of youth interviewed believed that this acted as a deterrent to volunteers and excluded a large segment of potential volunteers.
- Volunteers expressed concerns with regard to provisions made for their health, safety and wellbeing.
- In many cases, NGOs and youth organizations were unable to attract and retain volunteers while youth stated that they were not aware of many credible platforms that provided them with suitable volunteering opportunities.
- Young people often believed that they were not using their skills to their full potential and that they were not offered leadership roles, while some NGOs believed that they could not use volunteers for core activities as they were unreliable at times.

These challenges clearly indicate a mismatch of expectations between NGOs and volunteers. It is therefore imperative that organizations develop a process whereby expectations are set, priorities are matched and the organization, the volunteer and the communities they work with can benefit out of volunteerism.

It was observed that the presence of one or more of the following factors often increased youth participation and involvement:

- **The presence of a strong and relatable mentor / leader inspired youth.**
- **A targeted approach to recruitment and retention of volunteers.**

A marketing-oriented approach to volunteer recruitment and retention worked well, where volunteers were treated as an important customer group. Participation means different things to different organizations; while several NGOs believed that the presence of the volunteer himself / herself was sufficient to indicate attachment with that NGO, others acknowledged that it takes time to build relationships.

NGOs that were most successful in attracting and retaining volunteers made efforts to take each volunteer through the phases depicted below to develop into an 'invested' volunteer.

## VOLUNTEER 'PHASE'

## WHAT SUCCESSFUL NGOS DID TO MOVE VOLUNTEERS TO THE NEXT PHASE

**The Outside Observer:** This prospective volunteer knows nothing about volunteering and its importance

Provided them with increased visibility and knowledge about volunteerism, opportunities etc via media, blogs, advertisements, knowledge papers

**Inquirer:** This volunteer wants to do something for the community but needs more information in order to commit

Helped them via focused awareness creation through seminars, campus outreach programmes and camps

**Joiner:** This volunteer has completed the organization's application and is set to begin work

This volunteer is already on board, and was taken to the next level through an Orientation process

**Learner:** This volunteer wants to go deeper and understand more about the organization, what they do and how they make an impact on the community

Helped them through focused training on the issue involved, on working with beneficiaries, skill development etc

**Worker:** This volunteer is convinced about the organization and wants to work there but needs to know more about how he / she can make an deeper impact

Solved by ensuring skill sets matched with work to be done, clear roles and responsibilities were provided, there was consistent volunteer engagement, they were assisted while dealing with challenges, provided with positions of responsibility and ensured volunteer protection

**Invested volunteer / Leader / Patron:** This volunteer is looking to do more than what's required of him / her and support the cause in a larger way

- **Youth were given positions of responsibility**

Global research on volunteering shows that volunteers tend to be more satisfied with their volunteering experience when they receive training, support, and recognition from the organization, when they have more freedom of choice in their work and face less bureaucracy or at least when the expectations of the organization are clear. Primary research among youth in India validated these findings, with youth in positions of responsibility and working in areas of their interest often performing better.

- **Volunteering platforms were easily accessible**

Young persons who wished to offer volunteering services often found that it was difficult to identify relevant platforms or organizations that offered these opportunities and required a lot of research. Further, research did not always provide information on the credibility of the organization or the value that the volunteer would receive through his volunteering experience. Organizations that attracted volunteers easily were visible and accessible. For example, some NGOs engaged students as 'campus leaders' who would recruit volunteers while answering any questions that a prospective volunteer had. Other organizations had founders who often gave TED talks or were present at various forums which had a lot of student participation; this along with an informative website allowed youth to easily access these volunteering opportunities.

- **Created conditions for inclusiveness**

Inclusiveness is an important component of volunteering; all young people should have the opportunity to volunteer irrespective of their economic status, abilities and disabilities. There are several aspects connected with this – providing stipends or living costs, taking measures to ensure that differently abled youth are able to volunteer, providing avenues to volunteers who may not be able to be physically present, provisions for safety and protection of volunteers.

Under Created conditions for inclusiveness, full stop after this para: For example, providing remuneration to volunteers or reimbursing them for expenses is an issue that is complex and needs to be explored in its specific context. There is overlap between the languages used to convey forms of 'payment' and recompense, and this may sometimes act as a smokescreen for exploiting volunteers as 'cheap resources'.

To unleash the potential of volunteering, NGOs that have had success in managing and getting the best out of their volunteers while contributing to volunteers' development, may lead the way, individually or through a coalition, in developing guidelines to engage youth volunteers based on good practices and educate other NGOs / the private sector that work with or wish to work with volunteers.

#### 4. PARTNERSHIPS

As has been observed throughout this report, the Government of India and other stakeholders from civil society, the private sector and international development agencies all have vital roles to play in promoting and nurturing an environment in which volunteerism can flourish. If appropriately supported, youth volunteerism can ensure that the development agenda is owned at the local level and that initiatives reach those who are living in the hardest-to-reach areas.

However, the role of other stakeholders is equally important – in terms of research and knowledge development, supportive policy frameworks, providing platforms and opportunities to volunteer, funding and coordination, recognition of volunteers, etc. Each stakeholder brings different perspectives, expertise and networks, and collaborations serve to create awareness, share knowledge, pool resources, replicate good practices, scale up reach and impact.

This report has brought out many strong examples of partnerships between stakeholders that have worked to effectively address community needs through volunteerism. Consultations with various stakeholders brought out the need for stronger collaboration in terms of:

- **Policy drafting:** Participation of key stakeholders from Government, civil society and youth groups (formal and informal) across states.
- **Implementation of volunteering initiatives:** Developing task forces on youth volunteerism which promote partnerships among Government, civil society and the private sector to support implementation of volunteerism initiatives.
- **In-capacity building:** Sharing of good practices, contextualizing replication of successful models of volunteering across states, awareness creation and training
- **Coordination and facilitation:** The role of international agencies was observed to be particularly important in terms of bringing different categories of stakeholders together for discussions over important issues and in facilitating knowledge-sharing and alliances.
- **Creating visibility:** Media partnerships and outreach programmes which spread across India's urban and rural communities.

Going forward, achieving the SDGs is a critical task for India and voluntary action will be critical. Partnerships and alliances are expected to provide a collaborative advantage, in terms of outreach, scaling up impact and innovation.

Tri-sectorial partnerships were perceived to be particularly useful, with international organizations and agencies performing the role of catalysts and facilitators; with the private sector as the financial / technical expertise provider and volunteer-engaging organizations providing the necessary operational support and platforms and bridging the gap between the two.

## 5. PERCEPTIONS - DEVELOPING A 'CULTURE' OF VOLUNTEERISM

Where a culture of volunteerism exists, policy initiatives and regulatory frameworks around volunteering usually find success. By contrast, where volunteerism is poorly understood or not embraced by the population, volunteerism laws and policies may fail to be implemented properly or may be ignored altogether.



Data from the research brought out, that trends related to urbanization, migration and mobility, technology and shifting priorities of youth are challenging the existing understanding of volunteering norms in India'; factors that closely affect the mobilization and engagement of youth towards volunteerism. This was reinforced through discussions with volunteers who expressed that they often felt undervalued or that their contributions were undermined or unappreciated, particularly with respect to their peers, their parents and teachers.

There is therefore a need to raise the profile of volunteers and voluntary work. Influencers such as Government, celebrities and media must highlight the role and contributions of volunteers and their significance in current times. Equally important to create a culture of volunteerism, is emphasizing that voluntary work and careers in the sustainable development sector are as important as careers in the corporate sector; to communicate that voluntary work is also linked to honour and prestige.

Creating such perceptions and developing a culture of volunteerism is usually linked around the aspects below:

**Awareness:** In today's era, it is common to speak of "two Indias" and the ever widening canyon between them, highlighting the difference between rural and urban India and the increasing and persisting inequalities that exist. Adding to this, the diversity of sub-cultures, ethnicities and languages, it is easy to understand why actions of young people today may be driven by their individual world views and a sense that in today's competitive India, success is solely driven by financial factors, power or visibility.

Within this context, it is therefore necessary to first create awareness among young people and the next generation about global and national issues and challenges faced by different segments of society to provide the essential backdrop for a more empathetic, sensitized youth population.

Some initiatives that have been undertaken by stakeholders around the world are:

- Educating teachers on the subject of volunteerism and helping them teach their students<sup>124</sup>
- Creating workshops / awareness camps / campaigns for young people in schools around global / national challenges and the importance of volunteering and active citizenship in context to these
- Including the component of volunteering (awareness) in schools curriculums as depicted below

#### BOX 12: CREATING AWARENESS ON THE IMPORTANCE OF VOLUNTEERING - LEBANON

In Lebanon, most volunteerism is done through religious organizations. In an effort to create a culture of national, non-sectarian volunteerism, the Ministry of Social Affairs developed a policy to establish summer camps on volunteerism targeted at men and women aged 18–25. These camps promote non-sectarian volunteerism and encourage Lebanese youth to participate in volunteerism through national CSOs in addition to traditional religious or familial obligations. The Ministry of Education is now considering adjusting the national curriculum in order to teach Lebanese school children about the same topics.

Discussions with stakeholders emphasized the need to inculcate, in young Indians, the values associated with volunteerism from a very young age so that it becomes embedded in their thinking. Awareness could be created, through schools or otherwise, on India's socio-developmental challenges, the role of volunteers and by associating voluntary work with respect, stature and prestige.

**Recognition:** Each country and even groups of people within countries, have varied understanding of the act of volunteering, which is informed by the societies in which they live, or those in which they have spent the most time. Volunteers met on field stated that the perceptions associated with volunteers often were that they were unemployable, considered 'cheap labour' or that they indulged in unproductive or useless activities. There was also confusion among the terms "intern", "volunteer" or "fellow". On the other hand, it was observed that when volunteering activities were recognised and publicized, particularly in the media, the culture of volunteering flourished and initiatives were often replicated by other youth; this may be observed in the example of the much publicized 'pond cleaning' initiative in Kerala as depicted earlier in chapter four.

**Re-packaging the image of volunteerism through a focused media strategy:** The importance of media in branding and packaging the image of volunteerism cannot be over-emphasized. Primary research brought out that young people often faced pressure from parents to focus on education or skills training that would lead to financial security, and were discouraged from volunteering. Representing volunteerism in a manner that appeals to today's youth and their influencers requires a focused media strategy that also considers the differences across various parts of India.



<sup>124</sup><https://www.energizeinc.com/hot-topics/2006/august>

### BOX 13: PROMINENT CAMPAIGNS - INDIA

The Indian Army, to address its shortfall of almost 34,000 personnel rolled out an ad campaign shot in multiple bases around the country, to re-brand the image of the Indian army by inviting youth to the 'most exciting workplace'. Similarly, the 'Jaane Kya Dikh Jaaye' campaign for Rajasthan Tourism, marks the state's return to tourism marketing after 25 years to address the dips in international and domestic tourists. Focusing on attracting the youth to a different Rajasthan, a destination for adventure seekers and explorers, this campaign seeks to increase the number of visitors in the state from 1.5 million to 3.0 million by 2020.

An effective media strategy could be key in resolving these challenges of perception. The youth perceptions survey conducted as a part of this study brought out the fact that social media is an increasingly effective tool for engagement. Additionally, established newspapers and TV channels retain a wide reach and enjoy a prestige that can lend weight to the volunteering programme. National broadcasters and media groups could make especially helpful partners and collaborators.

### WAY FORWARD

In summary, the first report on the 'State of Youth Volunteering in India' that has built from insights of various stakeholders shaping and promoting volunteering, has far-reaching implications for these very stakeholders -the Government, civil society, the private sector and youth volunteers themselves.

While it can be concluded that volunteering can deliver remarkable benefits for both volunteers and communities at large, it is clear that consistent and long term investment in inclusive and sustainable volunteerism is required to ensure that volunteers stay engaged and committed.

This report aims to contribute to re-shaping the way that stakeholders and the general public think and talk about volunteering. We conclude this report therefore, with the hope that it fuels greater debate, research and analysis on the ways that youth volunteering is changing, what the needs of today's youth volunteers are and the constraints that restrain volunteerism from reaching its full potential in India.

## PICTURE CREDITS

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