

# Best Practices

Breaking the Mold and Shaping the Future



# 25

## Best Practices

Breaking the Mold and Shaping the Future



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# Preface

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Since 1999, CYDA has played a pivotal role in promoting youth rights and development across India and specially in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Goa, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. With a focus on education, health, livelihood, and engaging youth in voluntarism, the organization has implemented impactful initiatives that have positively affected countless lives.

CYDA's Bridging the Learning Gaps (BLG) initiative in Indapur significantly improved foundational literacy and numeracy for 1st to 4th graders, especially during the challenges of virtual education. Recognizing the importance of inclusive STEM education, the organization conducted awareness programs and workshops for 5th to 7th graders in Pune and Nashik, empowering young minds, particularly girls, with valuable knowledge and skills.

In Sinnar, CYDA's initiative successfully bridged the digital divide by increasing internet and digital service usage in villages, facilitating online access to higher education and job opportunities. The TARANG (Talking to Adolescents on Reproductive Health and Gender) program, running since 2005, has positively impacted adolescents' understanding of sexual and reproductive health, contributing to their holistic personal and social development. The Stepping Stones initiative provided a safe space for youth to openly discuss sensitive topics related to relationships and sexuality.

WASH Mitras successfully tackled the issue of poor operation and maintenance of Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH) facilities in ZP schools across Maharashtra. In Akrani and Akkalkuwa blocks, a 2019 project directly addressed malnutrition and maternal-infant mortality by engaging villagers in developing sustainable solutions.

CYDA's interventions during the COVID-19 pandemic provided crucial support to women who lost spouses. Through its programs, CYDA facilitated relief, empowered women through entrepreneurship, and fostered positive social impact. The Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) program trained and placed women in non-traditional careers, promoting financial independence and economic empowerment.

The 2004 launch of Youth4Change in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh addressed various issues affecting communities including homelessness, focusing on gender equity, and reducing violence. Trash Tech, implemented a successful waste management model in various locations, showcasing the organization's commitment to environmental sustainability. CYDA's interventions also positively impacted LGBTQIA+ individuals, homelessness and migrants during the lockdown, demonstrating its unwavering dedication to social justice and inclusion.

25 years of work has resulted in tangible achievements, including 105 out of 114 Gram Panchayats achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) compliance and improved WASH facilities in schools through the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar scheme. The Media4Change course reflected CYDA's commitment to equipping youth with valuable skills and fostering positive social change.

CYDA's initiatives, such as Voice of Boyz, have proven valuable for education and professional development. The organization has consistently supported disaster-affected individuals nationwide, highlighting its unwavering commitment to humanitarian aid. The initiative promoting sustainable and healthy menstrual wear is a testament to its dedication to breaking taboos and improving women's health. CYDA's commitment to volunteerism has yielded concrete outcomes, including increased youth empowerment, improved educational outcomes, and enhanced community well-being as well as well-established corporate volunteer engagement.

This unwavering dedication to youth development has left a lasting impact on communities across India. As the organization continues its journey, it remains committed to empowering young people, promoting sustainable solutions, and advocating for social justice. The future holds immense promise for CYDA as it continues to shape a brighter future for generations to come.

These best practices showcase CYDA's commitment to collaborative youth development and its dedication to creating a better future for young people. By working with diverse partners and utilizing innovative approaches, CYDA has achieved significant impact and serves as an inspiration for organizations working in the field of youth development.



**Mathew Mattam**  
Founder, CYDA

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# 1

# Education



1A

## Creative Solutions tackled the pandemic's impact on learning!



*The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdown disrupted education across the country. The impact was particularly severe for newly enrolled students in primary schools, who were unable to cope with foundational learning through online classes. Recognising the need for ensuring effective learning of primary school students, CYDA implemented the 'Bridging the Learning Gaps' (BLG) program in 41 schools of Indapur block, Pune district, Maharashtra. A series of interventions from 2021 to 2023 for teacher's capacity building and student friendly pedagogy tools, led to tremendous improvement in reading, writing and comprehension skills of 1st and 2nd graders.*

**Indapur block, Pune district, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

India implemented the Right to Education Act in 2009, however across the country learning outcomes of school going students have been reported unsatisfactory, especially foundational reading, writing and arithmetic skills<sup>1</sup>. In Indapur, children from communities primarily engaged in sugarcane farming and sugar factories, including seasonal migrants, struggle in their schooling due to poor financial and educational support.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated these problems, especially for newly enrolled primary students. Although online classes were started during the pandemic, it was difficult for newly enrolled students in the first and second grade to grasp and learn foundational skills such as reading and writing. First-grader students had never seen a school before, and second graders were promoted based on an online assessment from first grade. When schools reopened, fear of COVID-19 led to absenteeism and lack of confidence among students. While it was necessary to reinforce each child's foundation of essential skills, teachers were confounded with how to fill the learning gap in a short period.

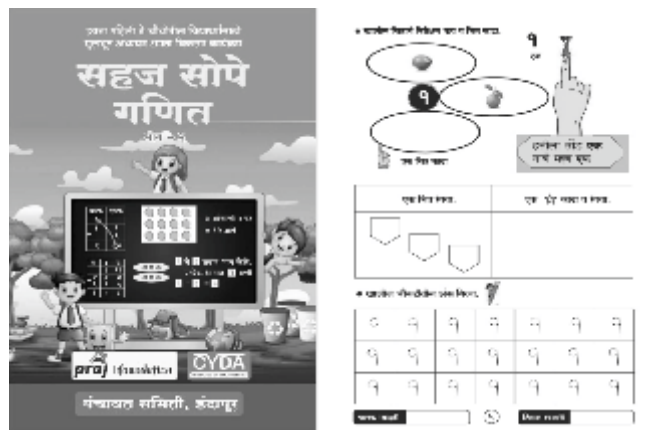
## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

CYDA launched the 'Bridging the Learning Gaps' initiative from 2021 focussing on capacity building for teachers and innovative modules for teaching-learning in Indapur block, Pune, Maharashtra. The block has 376 Zilla Parishad schools (1st to 8th grade) with 19,943 students<sup>2</sup>. By 2023, CYDA has covered 9,400 students and 422 teachers across 257 schools from 1st to 4th grade.

Under the project, teachers' training workshops were conducted to help teachers develop foundational academic abilities among students. A student-friendly pedagogy based on joyful and activity-based teaching-learning was promoted to boost the confidence and learning interest of students. An approach of 'learning by doing' was adopted as opposed to mugging up.

Marathi, English and Mathematics workbooks were distributed to students. These workbooks included innovative methods that contribute to speeding up reading, writing, comprehension and numeric skills. For example, CYDA motivated students to understand Marathi through their daily routine. Further, an activity-based approach was used for improving comprehension of alphabets and words through pictures. The English module was based on groups of letters like B-C-P-T, D-F-M-N, A-E-I-O-U etc. for easy learning.

The mathematics module included understanding of the concepts of big and small, near and far, numbers from 1 to 9 and 0, numerical process including addition, subtraction of two-digit numbers, currency, comparison as well as sequence of the numbers, and numeric games conducted by the teachers. CYDA focused on creating an enabling environment by including students, teachers and parents. Continuous follow-ups were done with teachers and students to assess their improvements.



Sample of Mathematics Workbook with Activity

An evaluation of the project was done through pre-test (1482 students) conducted in December 2021 and post-test (1419 students) conducted in April 2022 in 41 schools under the intervention. The post-test was also administered to a control group (315 students from 21 schools) to assess the difference in learning outcomes attributable to CYDA's intervention. All the schools were selected based on random sampling from the list of schools in Indapur block.



## OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

During the intervention, CYDA team witnessed how students had started to express themselves orally as well as by writing. Their number recognition ability using the workbooks had boosted their numeric skills such as counting, addition and subtraction. Teachers shared that the project had helped them inculcate self-learning, curiosity, concentration, observation skills, creativity, and communication among the students. The Education Officer and Block Development Officers of Indapur appreciated CYDA's intervention as they witnessed improvement in learning competencies among students.

The pre-test and post-test evaluation showed considerable growth in the students' foundational literacy and numeracy.

### DETAILS OF THE TEST

- A mix of simple sentences and combined words were used to assess Marathi reading skills. Writing the names based on pictures and copying words were used to assess writing. Marathi comprehension was based on recognizing alphabets, words and pictures.
- The students' ability to recognize, read and write English letters was evaluated in the English assessment.
- Numeric test included recognition of one digit numbers and mathematical sums for addition and subtraction.

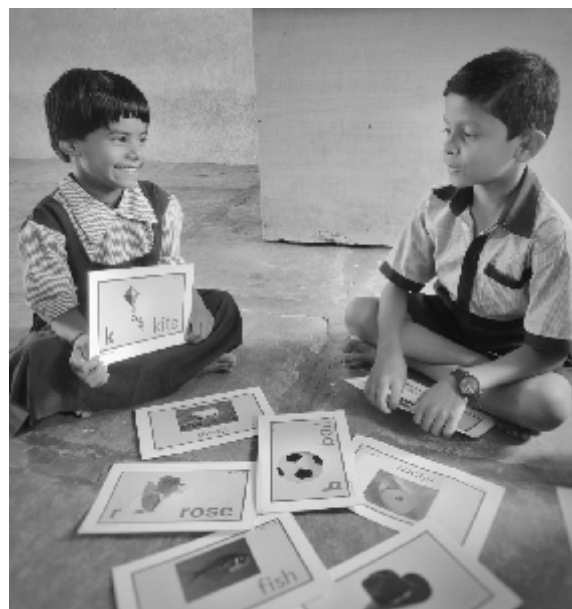
An evaluation of the pre-test and post-test conducted with the intervention group shows improvement in all spheres of basic literacy and numeracy as seen in Table 1. Marathi writing skills improved from 19% to 88% for 1st graders and from 26% to 83% for students in the second grade, from the pre-test to the post-test. Similarly English letter comprehension increased from 13% to 96% for 1st grade, and 15% to 95% for second grade students. The ability to do basic math calculations increased from 16% for 1st graders and 30% for second graders in the pre-test to almost universal (96% and 95% respectively) among the students under the intervention.

**Table 1: Evaluation using pre-test and post-test with intervention group**

Evaluation (Pre-test and post-test with intervention group)		Grade 1		Grade 2	
		Pre-test	Post-test	Pre-test	Post-test
Marathi	Reading	1%	78%	3%	80%
	Writing	19%	88%	26%	83%
	Comprehension	20%	98%	21%	98%
English (Letters)	Reading	26%	98%	25%	97%
	Writing	10%	96%	9%	94%
	Comprehension	13%	96%	15%	95%
Mathematics	Number recognition	17%	99%	24%	99%
	One digit addition and subtraction	16%	96%	30%	95%
	Math comprehension	9%	95%	13%	95%

The improvement in learning outcomes due to CYDA's intervention are evident from the results of the post-test conducted with the intervention group as compared to those students not part of the CYDA's intervention schools as seen in Table 2.

Marathi writing skills of students in the control group for both grades were lesser (43% for Grade 1, 71% for Grade 2) than the intervention group (88% and 83% respectively). Similarly, comprehension of English letters was more than 90% for the intervention group while it was 53% and 74% for Grades 1 and 2 in the control group. The ability to do basic math calculations was also higher among the intervention group (96% for Grade 1, 95% for Grade 2) than control group (52% for Grade 1, 71% for Grade 2).



**Table 2: Evaluation using Post-test with intervention and control group**

Evaluation (Post-test with intervention and control group)		Grade 1		Grade 2	
		IG	CG	IG	CG
Marathi	Reading	78%	23%	80%	33%
	Writing	88%	43%	83%	71%
	Comprehension	98%	51%	98%	80%
English (Letters)	Reading	98%	37%	97%	69%
	Writing	96%	44%	94%	60%
	Comprehension	96%	53%	95%	74%
Mathematics	Number recognition	99%	46%	99%	71%
	One digit addition and subtraction	96%	52%	95%	71%
	Math comprehension	95%	46%	95%	67%
		IG: Intervention group		CG: Control group	

The evaluation represents a clear improvement in learning outcomes of students, pointing to the need for incorporation of activity-based and interactive teaching-learning pedagogies in schools, especially for young students. It presents the need for scaling up such interventions in other schools of the block, district and beyond. It advocates for collaborative action through people and government partnerships that can help bridge learning gaps.

Basic literacy and numeracy acts as the foundation for not just a students' academic journey but also impacts their overall growth and learning curve. Through its timely intervention during adversity, CYDA succeeded in securing the educational future of these "COVID batch" students while lighting the way for further interventions to improve learning outcomes through interactive and creative teaching-learning.



*i: Pratham. (2023). Annual Status of Education Report (Rural) 2022. <https://asercentre.org/aser-2022>*

*ii: Panchayat Samiti, Indapur. (2022). Enrolment of Z.P. Schools. Department of Education.*

**By Pramodini Naik**, Program Manager, Education Unit

1B

## STEM Education: Reimagining Learning for the 21st Century



Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects are crucial to holistic learning of adolescents and for a wide range of career opportunities. However gender stereotypes have limited the ability of girls to actively engage in STEM or consider this field as a career opportunity. Identifying this gap in learning, CYDA has engaged in several initiatives such as STEM modules and activities, awareness workshops and trainings and a STEM Innovation Learning Centre for adolescents, especially girls. Aimed at increasing awareness of STEM as a career opportunity and life-skill among adolescents, their parents and teachers, CYDA's pre- and post-session assessment shows an increase in STEM awareness and a fall in gender-stereotypes associated with learning STEM and STEM-related careers.

**Pune district, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

It is important for adolescents to be well versed with emerging technologies and innovations, that can contribute to their career opportunities as well as provide holistic learning. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) act as four pillars in technical education. However, gender stereotypes have limited the participation of women in fields related to STEM<sup>1</sup>. This not only limits their career options, but also deprives STEM fields of valuable talent. Girls are discouraged from participating in STEM subjects at an early age, due to which many do not pursue their career in such fields. Consequently, STEM fields are considered to be masculine, with boys internalised to choose their careers in this field. An assessment conducted by CYDA related to STEM awareness in Pune district among 2500 adolescents showed that majority associated STEM with boys and most were unaware of practical applications and benefits of STEM education. Further, the effectiveness of STEM education depends on trained educators. Many teachers lack the necessary training and resources to provide high-quality STEM education, while there is also a shortage of qualified STEM teachers.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognising the need for inculcating inclusive STEM education, CYDA engaged in awareness programs and workshops for 5th to 7th grade students, especially girls in 15 schools of 8 wards in Pune and 4 community-level interventions since 2020. The program was later expanded to 8 schools in Nashik district as well.

Initially, CYDA started with a STEM outreach program for adolescents in urban communities. This included orientation sessions about STEM education, STEM as a career opportunity, gender-inclusivity in STEM education, etc. In schools, CYDA provided STEM-related workshops and STEM modules (5th, 6th and 7th grade) for a hands-on learning experience. The STEM modules were conducted by a STEM facilitator in the schools, twice in a month.

Various workshops and activities were also held with the students such as "STEM Mela", "Gallery of Genius", "Magic in Science" where students were made to work on STEM activities, present in exhibitions, etc.

CYDA also conducted awareness sessions with 1250 parents to sensitize them about career opportunities that their children, especially girls can have in the STEM field. Teacher training workshops were conducted in the

schools to adopt innovative pedagogies for learning STEM and providing skills to 54 teachers for promoting inclusivity in STEM education. The training included ways to adopt real-world applications, hands-on learning, project-based activities, experiments and discussions which can increase student engagement. Teachers were encouraged to highlight the relevance of STEM and its application in solving global challenges and improving daily life. Additionally, the need to highlight achievements of female scientists and engineers as role models was pursued, to break gender stereotypes and inspire girls to consider STEM as a career choice.

**Table 1: Module subjects under STEM**

Grade	STEM Module
5th	• Introduction to STEM
	• Mathematics
	• Introduction to computers
	• Human body
	• Climate Change
	• Solar System
6th	• Introduction to STEM
	• Geometry and graphs
	• Computers- Arithmetic Logic Unit and Binary Language
	• Ecosystem
	• Design challenges
7th	• Introduction to STEM
	• Mathematics
	• Physics
	• Civics

In 2023, CYDA established a STEM Innovation Learning Centre at Yerawada, Pune. It is a dedicated space designed to foster creativity, collaboration and hands-on learning for STEM through workshops, seminars and mentorship programs held through it. 64 student enthusiasts (28 girls and 36 boys) are currently developing projects through the Innovation Learning Centre to address real world challenges and find solutions that have the potential to impact society in a positive manner.

Another initiative of CYDA, elaborated in **Case 5B** highlights how training of young women enabled them to get jobs or start businesses in non-traditional livelihood sectors, i.e. sectors traditionally dominated by men.



## OUTCOMES

CYDA's intervention assessed through a pre- and post-session survey of 2500 students shows improvement in STEM awareness and fall in gender stereotypes associated with STEM.

**Table 2: Pre- and post-session survey of adolescents**

Parameters	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
STEM Awareness	8%	100%
Gender Stereotypes*	77%	2%
Preference of Activity Based Learning	55%	93%
Visiting the Laboratory	9%	82%

*\*STEM education/careers is only for boys not for girls*

Awareness related to STEM was universal in the post-session survey. While 77% adolescents in the pre-session survey considered that these subjects and related careers were for boys and not girls, 98% of the students in the post-session survey reported that STEM education and careers are for everyone, regardless of gender. This is a positive change as it indicates that the intervention is a successful means to begin addressing gender stereotypes and promoting inclusivity in STEM.

The impact of the intervention is also visible in the classroom, with teachers adopting innovative and fun ways for making STEM learning interesting for their students. This is reflected in the student responses, where compared to 55% in the pre-session survey, 93% preferred activity-based learning in the post-session survey. 82% now reported visiting the laboratory as compared to 9% before the intervention.

Thus CYDA's intervention has increased the awareness of STEM learning and STEM-based careers among adolescents, especially girls. The intervention has not only benefitted students but also bettered the teaching practices of educators. Most importantly, CYDA's intervention has acted as a start point for attitudinal changes among adolescents towards a more gender-inclusive future.

## Teacher's Speak: CYDA's STEM Teacher Training Experience



*"In my teaching career of 27 years, this was the first time I heard about STEM through CYDA, where I got to learn about the importance and need of STEM. I have been a part of the education system but I never had an idea that gender plays a role in education. The CYDA team explored STEM activities by presenting different examples connected to human life. I was a part of the first session on fractions- I never thought Mathematics, and that too fraction can be taught with pizza! As a government teacher we never give such exposure to students, but CYDA took our students to the 'Science Park', even I was with them. It was fun. As a teacher I got to learn from the CYDA team that teaching is a two-way process. Due to this (STEM) project students got activity-based learning as well as exposure and awareness about sex education. I can see a positive change in our students as they listen and participate. I thank CYDA for their initiative and support to the school and our students."*

**School teacher, Female, Kanya School, Dighi, Pune**



*"I am really thankful to CYDA for organizing STEM online training program for the school teachers. I really felt bad, the way I was teaching. Post the training program, I have started implementing the learnings from the training with the students. Now the classes are conducted outside the classroom with different fun activities. All the students enjoy learning and are building a stronger relationship with the teacher."*

**School teacher, Male, Sheth  
Ramdari Ramchandra  
Agarwal Secondary School,  
Bhosari, Pune**

## Teacher's Speak: CYDA's STEM Teacher Training Experience

*"Though Mathematics and Science are interesting subjects, I am very scared about science, because it's very difficult for me to understand the core concepts of the lessons and as such I get disappointed. But STEM education through CYDA helped me improve my understanding, as the STEM facilitator teaches the students by giving several examples and experiments. This helped me to create a science model and present in STEM Mela. Thanks to CYDA for this project."*

**Boy, 7th grade,  
Shri Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj  
Madhyamik Vidyalaya, Bhosari, Pune**

*"I love to participate in sports, dance and other activities in school, but I don't love to study because maths and science subjects are very difficult to understand. I feared raising my doubts in class and my marks in these two subjects were less. My parents were very disappointed with my performance. This year I met the STEM facilitator; they taught us various topics through activities. This made me involved in studies and I have built more confidence. I discuss my queries with the STEM facilitator and my classmates. I want to become a police officer in the future."*

**Girl, 6th grade,  
Chhatrapati Shree Shahu Maharaj  
Prathmik Vidyalaya Dighi, Pune**



**i:** *STEM Education – What Is It? And How It's Going To Help Indian Education System?*  
<https://k8school.com/stem-education-in-india/>

**By Amruta Pawar**

Program Executive, STEM Unit



2A

## Youth Internships: Launchpad for Igniting Minds

*Recognizing the need for inculcating skills and providing exposure to young people, CYDA engaged in internship programs in Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh. Interns were placed in different programs of CYDA and with programs of other organisations as well. The internship provided much-needed exposure for youth to learn about socio-economic realities through a hands-on experience. It enabled youth to experience and build their lives in a more socially responsive and responsible manner, and to contribute to the betterment of society.*



**Pune, Maharashtra and Bilaspur, Mungeli, Janjgir and Raipur districts, Chhattisgarh**

## THE PROBLEM

With India's large young population, there is a growing need for education, skilling and employment opportunities. However, a majority of educated youth are unable to find opportunities to apply classroom knowledge to real-world situations, or to develop skills that enhance their employability. A National Skill Development Corporation survey for Maharashtra showed that majority of those passing out of educational institutions lacked soft skills, were less employable, did not have placement linkages or an entrepreneurial mindset<sup>1</sup>. Several young people today are found to suffer from lack of confidence, independence and problem-solving skills.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognizing the need to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical experience, inculcate skills and provide exposure to young people, CYDA engages youth through its internship program.

Volunteerism lies at the heart of CYDA's vision for youth engagement (More about volunteerism in **Case 2F**). CYDA thus aims to create an enabling environment for young people to grow as responsible and independent adults. In line with this aim, CYDA offers internship opportunities for young people to gain valuable experience and skills in various fields.

The internship program started in Pune with the support of National Foundation for India in 2002 until 2012 and again resumed for a year in 2017. In Chhattisgarh, CYDA engaged in internship programs through its Youth4Change initiative (More about Youth4Change in **Case 2B**) from 2005 to 2008. The selection of interns was done through seminars and workshops in various colleges. Consequently, applications were received, and interviews held for selection of the interns. A five-day intensive training was given to the interns by various experts from socio-political fields to update them on socio-economic and political issues relevant to the time. After the training, interns were placed in different areas where CYDA works.

CYDA engaged interns in educating children of houseless persons and other children under Teach for India program, engaging with children of NGO Manavya suffering from HIV, support during disaster relief (Refer **Case 2G**), organizing cultural programs, contributing to fund-raising programs, designing campaigns for traffic safety, anti-genetically modified food, gender-equality and safe villages (Refer **Case 2D**) and

several other social issues. Through the Learn4Change program as a part of this initiative, CYDA with support from National Foundation for India, promoted youth in urban areas to learn about rural life and provided rural youth a learning about urban settings.

## OUTCOMES

More than 300 young people in Pune and 400 in Chhattisgarh were involved in the internship program, several of which were motivated to work in various developmental issues at the community -level and joined community-based, non-governmental, or development organisations to build their careers.

### Interns Speak: Learnings and Growth from CYDA's Internship Program

*"I joined CYDA as an intern for my social cause internship during a marketing project as a student of Masters in Business Administration. While working on this project, I realized that my skills are different and I was appreciated and recognized by CYDA. Here I realised that working with youth is my passion. CYDA always gave space for growth and self-improvement. My informal engagement later transformed me and I found my innate leadership qualities. CYDA recognised that and I am today a board member of CYDA."*

**Priya Kothari, Member, CYDA**

*"Actually speaking, volunteering changed my perspective about life. I became aware about the problems affecting the lower strata of society. Till now I had only read about poverty but it was only during the course of my internship that I realised its gravity".*

**Madhuchanda, Intern**

*"I completed MA from Aurangabad University and was wandering everywhere for a job. Till I completed MA I had no worries but after the completion, I did not know what to do and where to go. Nobody guided me and then someone told me to join 10 months' internship with CYDA. I contacted CYDA and luckily, I was selected. At CYDA, my confidence, computer skills, communication skills and stage courage increased. I learnt how to work with community, schools, group work, case work, and conduct sessions on various youth and health issues. The TARANG sessions at municipal schools for students and discussions thereafter on issues that affected them made me a mature social worker. I was also part of the silent street theatre group which took up various social issues to the public. That engagement I will always remember. I completed my 10 months' internship, and this motivated me to apply for MSW course. I got a job and I am successful in my life".*

**Sharad Dede, Intern**

*"Soon after graduation, I came to know about the internship with CYDA and it seemed to be very attractive as it had a theory component clubbed with practical exposure as well and the best deal about it was that I did not have to pay for it and would instead get paid a stipend for the internship. This was the best combination that I could have had as I was financially not in a position to afford another course of study. More than anything else I realized that I was a different person after that almost one year I spent at CYDA. I grew up in the chawls of Mumbai and was brought up in a protective environment. Taking a step to move out of home was the biggest challenge. But the internship seemed to make sense to my family to give me that chance I needed. Independence and the kick of making decisions by myself both in the office and outside made me realize my responsibilities as an adult. I discovered the best part of myself during my interface with CYDA. I finished the internship and had a one-point agenda: to study at TISS but by the virtue of what the internship did to me, I already had job offers".*

**Yasmin Sayed, Intern**

The internship provided much-needed exposure for youth to learn about socio-economic realities through a hands-on experience. It enabled youth to experience and build their lives in a more socially responsive and responsible manner, and to contribute to the betterment of society.

## Interns Speak: Life-Changing Experiences through CYDA's Internship Program

### ***"Breaking the Shackles of Differences"***

*My association with CYDA internship actually started in 2004. At that time my application was not considered as I was young and would get a chance later. I came to know that the selection had already started and in the midst of my examination I went for the interview. I was thrilled when I came to know that I was selected and thought to myself that the internship program is just what I wanted to experience. Away from the sheltered life of home to another place where I could learn as well as be responsible for myself is what I thought the internship program would give me. But I never in my wildest of dreams thought that the place would be Assam.*

*I was placed in the Indo Global Social Service Society (IGSSS) where I was provided with lots of reading materials on the North East, its culture, history, geography and issues. Our exposure duration was basically divided into two parts, one was to understand the work of SHGs or self-help groups in coordination with an organization called Diocesan Social Services. The basic lifestyle of the rural and urban people is poles apart, right from drawing water from the well to the absence of electricity. Getting up at 5:00am in the morning due to early sunrise was quite unusual. Northeast has early sunrise. The 7o clock of Pune is like the 5o clock of Assam.*

*Bicycle was the only mode of transportation, which used to make the mornings more enjoyable. Villagers were the main source of inspiration that made me think how people can be so enthusiastic after a hard-working day in the field. Each one of us was eager to talk about their work and future plans of their respective group.*

*These incidents helped to erase my inhibitions of caste and class by seeing the unity and coordination among the villagers. I was impressed by the hospitality, which forced me to break the shackle of difference between us. In all my observation, one thing that greatly struck me a lot was the freedom women enjoyed, how they took charge and lastly the importance of family planning and girl children.*

**Yashoda Pradhan, Intern**

### ***“An Eye Opener to Real Problems”***

*I had just got out of the examination hall and after writing a three-hour exam I was drearily heading home to prepare for the next day's paper. Casting a glance at the college notice board, I saw a poster put up by CYDA for the internship program, and I was immediately hooked. For weeks before exams started, I had been looking for something different and challenging that I could do during my upcoming vacations and the opportunity to spend a month dealing with tribal and rural issues was like a god sent gift for me.*

*Through CYDA, I was sent to an Amaravati based NGO called Apeksha Homoeo Society. This NGO is working against child labour in rural and tribal areas. However, through various other schemes and programs, they also work towards integrated development of the area. As an intern, my job was mainly to write process documentations for each of the 3 project areas that I visited. Two of these areas were rural blocks, one in Amaravati district and the other in Akola district. The third a tribal district comprising the Korku's from Dharni.*

*The most important lesson that I learnt through the internship was to be grateful for all the luxuries that were available to me. I realized that simple amenities that we take for granted in urban areas are luxury for most. A tap with running water all day, electricity, bathrooms, milk to drink every morning, telephone were all luxuries to the families I visited. I realized that all rural and tribal areas today have become caught in a poverty spiral. Because of lack of infrastructure, no entrepreneur is willing to invest in the area. Secondly, despite government efforts to increase literacy rates, results haven't been seen. I would hence like to conclude by saying that the internship program for me was an eye-opener into the real problems faced in rural and tribal areas.*

**Radhika Joshi, Intern**

In conclusion, the youth internship provided opportunities of exposure and learning for youth while it has also enriched CYDA, and enabled it to grow as an organisation in building a culture for youth participation and engagement in social issues.



The Indian EXPRESS  
 Newsline in TULSINEE APRIL 19, 2005

NEWS

## If your heart beats for life's flipside, try CYDA's internships

### Former interns swear by the experience that changes you inside out

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE  
 04/19/05

HEALTHY hearts remain engaged with the lives of the underprivileged and the forgotten. The mission of the Africa Centre is to improve...

This Robert told for students. The student SCOT, student of University of Chicago, NY, Stanford, Berkeley, and Johns Hopkins. He spent with NDA began last year's 5-4th meeting. After working in the field, he deployed at Harvard as Medical Director and then in Maharashtra. Robert has decided to take up a career in alternative development.

De working for the NDA could do it. (used to be) in 1998 in Nigeria, and then in India. In the field, the impact of organized internships is the highest. It has been planned. "The idea is to provide a structured, meaningful, and impactful experience in society," says Pradyota Sharma, project manager at CYDA. From January 2003, internships in post-graduate students in large cities. In the internship program, students are provided with a stipend of Rs 10,000 per month. They are also provided with a monthly allowance of Rs 5,000. The program is run by the NDA and is supported by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.

Shri Anand Sharma, a second-year IIT Bombay student, has also worked in...

school after the experience. "An inspiring lawyer, the internship made me realize that the cause of the oppressed is my cause and I will stand with them the best way I can."

After returning with a degree in law from IIT Bombay, he is working for the rights of the oppressed in New Delhi. He is now a member of the National Human Rights Commission and is working for the rights of the oppressed in New Delhi.

"The students in the internship program are doing a great job. We are looking for more students to join the program. We are looking for more students to join the program. We are looking for more students to join the program."



Students working with Pradyota Sharma

Students who participate in a two-day orientation program are selected by the organization. The students are selected from the country's best universities. The students are selected from the country's best universities. The students are selected from the country's best universities.

will be invited to work outside India or abroad. The students will be invited to work outside India or abroad. The students will be invited to work outside India or abroad.

After the success of last year's program, CYDA has increased the number of applications to 20 for this year. The internship program will be held from April 21 to June 15, 2005.



**i: District-wise Skill Gaps Study for the State of Maharashtra (2012-22)**  
<https://skillsip.nsdcindia.org/sites/default/files/kps-document/maha-sg-reports.pdf>

**By Vikas Abnave**  
 Research & Documentation Coordinator (R & D Unit)

2B

## Nurturing Youth Leadership for Social Transformation



*CYDA started with an aim to empower youth by working with young people and providing them a platform to become self-reliant and responsible citizens. Recognizing the varied socio-economic pressures faced by young people in India today, CYDA launched its Youth4Change program to train youth in becoming self-confident and skilled citizens who can drive several initiatives for social change. Through a three tier cadre of youth volunteers trained and mobilized over the years, CYDA has enabled several groups of young people to bring about change in their communities while also acting as a base for expanding youth networks across the country and beyond.*

**Pune, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Young people face several pressures related to education, employment, skills, social desirability coupled with life-challenges such as living and working environments, inequality, mental health concerns, among others, which impact their overall wellbeing, opportunities and development in society. This is particularly exacerbated for youth living in urban informal settlements of India's cities, such as in Pune. Limited access to quality education and vocational training, often due to economic constraints and insufficient infrastructure, hinders the ability to acquire skills necessary for better employment prospects. Inadequate housing conditions and lack of basic amenities further contributes to a challenging living environment. Economic hardship within slum communities creates barriers for ones' ability to move beyond a cycle of poverty. Efforts are being made by government, non-government organizations and various stakeholders to address these challenges and create opportunities for the youth. However, addressing the diverse and complex issues facing today's youth requires extensive and sustained efforts across multiple sectors.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

The primary goal and purpose of CYDA as an organisation rests on the need for empowering youth – working with young people to provide a platform for youth through which they can become self-reliant and responsible citizens. In line with this objective, CYDA launched its Youth4Change Movement in 2002.

The Movement aims at providing a platform for youth to develop their capabilities in the face of challenges. It is based on values of equity, justice, human rights, diversity, democracy, participation, transparency and accountability. CYDA witnessed that despite challenges in urban informal settlements, a spirit of resilience and resourcefulness existed among the youth for engaging in local initiatives to uplift their communities. CYDA sought to draw on these energies to inspire, involve and initiate young people into building a future for themselves. A youth-driven, youth-centric, youth-led, and youth-owned platform would enable a collective fight against inequities, support for an environment conducive to holistic development of youth to utilize their potential, and to make the larger public, educational organisations and policy makers aware of the issues faced by youth in the country.

CYDA engaged with several youth-based organisations to mobilize as many youth possible, across different communities in Pune. It sought to build a youth-based cadre with three levels of participation.

- 1) Youth Mitra:** The first level of participation where youth were inducted and encouraged to participate in various youth-based activities organized by CYDA. Young people are considered as full-fledged partners in the process in building a better society, since those who face problems first-hand are the best solution providers. Various initiatives have been organized over the years to increase engagement of youth participants, provide trainings and enhancement of their skills. This included remedial classes, sports, music, arts, life skills, computer skills, science and technology-related education, health awareness, gender sensitivity, etc.
- 2) Youth Sahyogi:** This included participants in Youth Mitra who grew to act as change agents, initiating and driving several initiatives in their community. Recognizing the under-representation of young people in decision-making that affects their lives, CYDA sought to harness their leadership potential by encouraging and supporting young members as change makers under the program to address social issues in their community. Interested persons were provided advanced life skill trainings, capacity building sessions to develop leadership, critical thinking and engagement skills. Training sessions related to rights and duties were aimed at drifting youth away from deviance and for them to recognize their role in society. CYDA engaged in various programs such as Y-Talks and Youth Explore to provide a space where young people could engage in critical thinking, voicing and discussing their opinions freely and learning from their peers. Moreover, each Sahyogi was mandated to welcome and support at least five Mitras, showcasing a ripple effect in increased engagement of youth.
- 3) Youth Saathi:** This included trained participants who over time actively led initiatives in the community. Young people formed collectives to raise a strong voice against various issues. For instance, youth Saathi groups conducted social awareness campaigns and acted as youth representatives in various national and international networks and forums.

CYDA set up Youth Resource Centres that acted as an epicenter for youth-led activities of all the three tiers in the community. For more details on these Centres explore **Case 2C**.

## OUTCOMES

Over the years, CYDA's Youth4Change program has provided life skills training to more than 2 lakh youth of which around 50,000 have engaged as youth volunteers with CYDA. CYDA's encouragement to youth, building a cadre of responsible and active citizens have translated into many youth-led and youth-based

initiatives over the years. The success of the Youth4Change Movement in Pune also led to its expansion in other areas of Maharashtra, as well as several other states including Chhattisgarh, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha and Telangana. In collaboration with the State of Maharashtra, the concept of Youth4Change was also propagated and promoted in neighbouring countries of the South Asian region.

Some of the key initiatives undertaken by youth trained under the Youth4Change platform have been highlighted as follows.

The youth leaders in Youth4Change considered houselessness a grave concern in Pune for which they wanted to do something. With the support of CYDA they launched a Pune4Change initiative to provide shelter, food provisions, livelihood support and access to identity/government cards for houseless persons, details of which can be read in **Case 6D**.

Recognizing the need for equal educational and employment opportunities, a Youth4Change group highlighted how it was important to have equitable access to filmmaking institutes such as the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII). Consequently, CYDA with the support of FTII and the National Film Archive of India (NFAI) launched a Media4Change initiative with twelve-module workshop sessions including the major theoretical and practical aspects of filmmaking for those who could not attend regular coursework. Further details of the Media4Change initiative can be found in **Case 3B**.

Youth4Change volunteers were among the first to reach Tamil Nadu for relief and rehabilitation work, and have been at the forefront of CYDA's disaster relief programs over the years, as explored in **Case 2G**.

In Gavshi, Maharashtra the Youth4Change unit gave inputs on the formation of women self-help groups. They also created awareness among residents for rainwater harvesting and provided trainings to villagers on functioning of the Panchayati Raj. They also engaged in other development works for the village such as aiding in road construction, setting up of a balwadi (kindergarten) and tree plantation.

In Chhattisgarh where the Youth4Change program expanded, youth were appreciated by district/block level government officials and involved in governance work related to the Panchayats such as ensuring the implementation of schemes, awareness programs, cleanliness and sanitation, etc. In fact, two of the Panchayats where Youth4Change volunteers worked were selected as the best panchayats by the state government of Chhattisgarh. Involvement in the functioning of daily governance of villages, also led some

youth to adopt political careers and contest for Panchayat elections. Youth4Change units in Chhattisgarh have also worked towards developing safe villages, elaborated in **Case 2D**.

Apart from these initiatives, through the Youth4Change, young people have been continuously engaged in several outreach and networking activities such as attending conferences, organizing youth festivals etc. For instance, Youth4Change in Pune launched annual youth festivals from 2003 with varied themes including youth and social harmony, sexuality reproductive health and AIDS, etc. In 2005, they organized an International Summer School in Association with Centre for Innovation in Voluntary Action (CIVA), United Kingdom and Pravah, New Delhi, and were part of the National Peer Convention organized by United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and National Aids Control Organisation (NACO) to spread awareness and voice concerns of youth related to HIV/AIDS. In 2006 Youth4Change volunteers participated in an India Pakistan Youth Forum to highlight how commonalities and collaboration between youth could weld the gaps between the countries. In 2007 youth from the program participated in an International Conference on Youth and Democracy in South Asia through which they propagated the Youth4Change program in eight neighbouring countries. A magazine called 'Generation Next' was also launched and managed by the youth to independently express their thoughts and opinions on socio-political issues. Youth4Change participants have also been involved in several other platforms such as the World Social Forum, Asian Social Forum, India Social Forum, Global Dialogue Asia, Global Dialogue International, International Youth Conference, National Leadership Forum, Y20 Youth Conclave held in various parts of the country and abroad.

Youth4Change has thus acted as a base for CYDA's activities while expanding youth networks across the country and beyond. It has provided an effective platform to train youth and give them an opportunity to build their futures. It has also helped build a cadre of young people, aware and responsible towards socio-political issues, who are inspired to engage in initiatives for bringing about a positive change in society.



**By Kaustubh Bhamare**

Project Coordinator, Youth Unit

## The Youth Resource Centres: Community Hubs for Holistic Growth



*Adolescents and young people in urban informal settlements of Pune faced several challenges during the pandemic, especially in relation to their education outcomes and career prospects. CYDA provided them an opportunity for continued education, learning new skills and career counseling through a Youth Resource Center. CYDA engaged with around 2000 youth and enabled those who had discontinued education to restart their schooling. Skill based trainings and formation of youth groups greatly benefited young people in mobilizing collectively and taking initiatives in their community.*

**Yerawada, Pune, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Adolescents and young people in urban slum communities of Pune have unequal access to academic and employment opportunities. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the situation for families in slum settlements adversely impacting the overall development of adolescents. Poor digital access to online learning during the lockdown hampered educational prospects of adolescents. Due to a challenging social environment, many youth in urban slum communities were also unable to effectively develop life skills for their future career prospects. Due to the pandemic, the primary challenge in these settlements was to ensure food security and restore livelihoods, while the needs of young people were pushed to the backburner.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognizing the need to support adolescents and young people (13-25 years) during the pandemic, in 2020 CYDA set up a Youth Resource Center in collaboration with United Way Delhi. CYDA reached out to 2000 young persons in Yerawada, Pune including adolescents attending school, adolescents who have dropped out of formal education or were lagging behind, young people attending college/vocational training and unemployed youth. The Youth Resource Center acted as a vital space to address young peoples' challenges and achieve their full potential. This was done through various activities such as remedial classes, career guidance, digital literacy, mental health guidance, sports, arts, gender sensitization and knowledge of reproductive health. The Center provided a platform for youth to sharpen their leadership and communication skills and gain self-confidence.

First CYDA engaged in door-to-door mobilization and building linkages with key persons in the community to identify young people in need of support. Schools, colleges and community groups such as women volunteer support groups were approached to build networks in the community.

Remedial classes were conducted for young people who needed support in education during COVID-19 pandemic to prevent them from dropping out of the formal education system. Students from 8th to 12th grade were provided remedial classes for Science, Maths, Economics and Accounts at least four times a week. Practical sessions and participatory learning techniques were used to improve learning outcomes of the students.

Apart from remedial classes, for upskilling of youth, basic digital literacy classes as well as English speaking classes were engaged for adolescents attending schools and those who had dropped out of schooling. Other life skills training on gender and reproductive health was also conducted with youth in the community to address gender stereotypes and concerns related to sexual and reproductive health. Games, activities, documentaries, debates and discussions were conducted to impart information on gender and reproductive health.

A library was set up in the Center to encourage youth to develop a habit of reading and broaden their perspectives. Books including novels, general knowledge, sports, encyclopedia, science, history, etc., were made available in the library with free access. Once a week, students had a 'reading day' where they read and also discussed what they had read with others.

An attempt was also made to engage young people in the community through art, sports, music and theatre. For instance, in 2021 martial art training was provided to interested youth in the Yerawada community.

'Chai pe charcha' and 'Y Talk' sessions were initiated by CYDA as discussion platforms for youngsters to discuss, debate and brainstorm on issues and concerns that affected them, their community, and the society at large. Resource persons were invited in these sessions to facilitate discussions. Young people were provided with opportunities in public speaking. The sessions were organized by youth leaders in the communities. 'Core groups' of young people were also formed for peer-to-peer learning and developing leadership skills. Such groups were encouraged to participate in community-wide campaigns and action projects.





Career counselling was also done with youth to understand their strengths, personal qualities, skills and career goals. Job fairs were held to improve job seeking skills among youth and present available career opportunities.

In 2023, CYDA also organized a youth festival 'Yuva Rang' to bring adolescents and young people together to explore and showcase their artistic talents. 350 girls and 150 boys participated in various events and competitions such as dancing, singing, debate, street play, science exhibition, etc.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's intervention provided much needed support to young people in slum communities in Yerawada, Pune during the pandemic. Many students who had dropped out of school but who attended remedial classes, rejoined schooling after schools reopened.

Skill based trainings and formation of youth groups greatly benefited young people in mobilizing collectively and taking initiatives in their community. For instance, several youth part of the Center took initiatives in organizing street plays, debates, awareness sessions, community walks etc. on road safety, prevention of pollution, protecting the environment, health and hygiene, prevention of domestic violence, child marriage and instilling gender equity. Groups of young people also formed separate street play and music groups, taking initiative for awareness of issues such as menstruation, addiction etc. For instance, the girls core group engaged in playing musical instruments, performing street plays and flash mobs at various events in the community to create awareness about gender equality. Youth groups also celebrated different days and organized activities for Earth Day, Environment Day, Girl Child Day, Human Rights Day, Cycling Day, LGBTQIA+ Pride March, etc. They also engaged in conducting surveys in their community related to migration and school drop-outs in order to connect with CYDA for support.

## Cases of Youth Involvement through CYDA's Youth Resource Center Activities

*A 20-year old boy in Yerawada, Gandhinagar joined the Youth Resource Center after completing his 10th grade. His father is an alcohol addict and his mother, a sanitation worker was the only bread winner of the family until her untimely death. He felt very lonely after his mother passed away.*

*The personality development and life skills sessions at the Center helped the boy to become confident and enhance his skills. He spent most of his time at the Center, considering it as his home. He actively engaged in various activities organized by CYDA and took the lead in mobilizing and creating awareness in the community about social issues. During the pandemic he also helped in distribution of ration kits and managing vaccination camps in the community.*

*He currently works in a mall for an earning, while also pursuing his second year B.Com. His ambition is to join the police force and address social problems in his community.*

*A 17-year old girl who benefitted immensely from the remedial classes provided by CYDA during the pandemic shared her experience-*

*"My family could not afford to send me to private tuition classes due to our weak financial condition. When I heard about the Youth Resource Center from my friends who were already part of it, I joined for Math and Science as I felt these were a little bit difficult subjects for me. Here I got a free environment where I asked questions and understood everything better. I also sat in the Center during my free time to engage in self-study. If I had any doubts I asked didi (CYDA volunteer) who cleared all my queries. My parents also supported me to go the Center and they were very happy when I scored 90.91% in my SSC exam (10th board examination). My teachers were also happy and I just want to thank CYDA for such Centers in the community where each and every person can learn and explore themselves!"*



*In one of the Chai pe Charcha discussions held in Yerawada, Pune in 2022, the topic of discussion was plastic pollution. The youth discussed that plastic use can be reduced only if an alternative to plastic is found. Instead of only limiting their suggestions to the discussion, some young persons from the community formed a group and decided to make paper bags as an alternative to plastic bags used widely in the community. They were also given training on how to make paper bags. The group interacted with community members and street vendors and informed them about the significance of using plastic alternatives. The group also engaged in selling paper bags at a low cost to street vendors. In this way, young people in the community were motivated to take initiatives for social issues through the platforms of interaction provided by CYDA.*

Youth Resource Centres act as a focal point for mobilizing youth cadres (Refer **Case 2B**) and youth volunteers(Refer **Case 2F**) for enabling youth participation and youth-led social change.

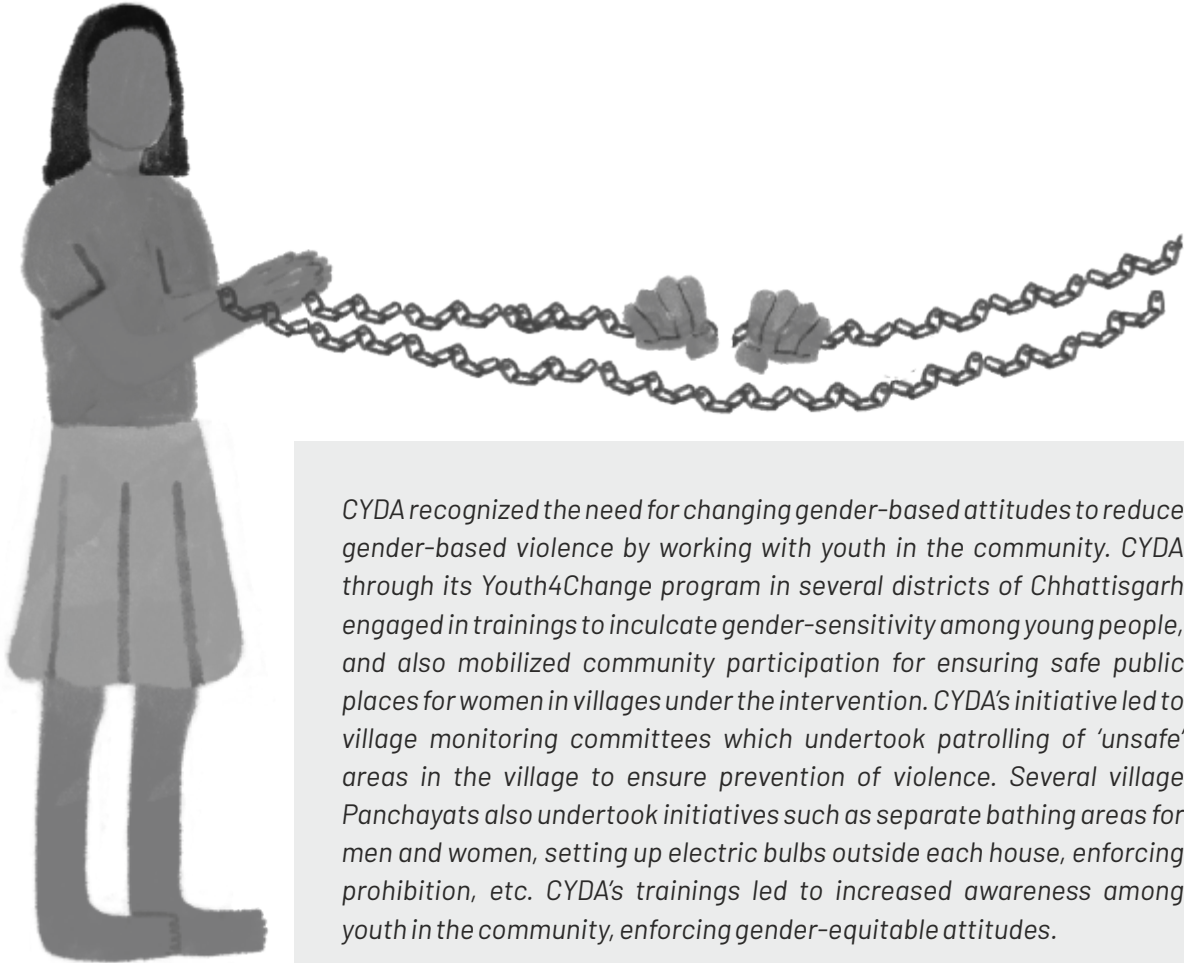


**By Kaustubh Bhamare**

Project Coordinator, Youth Unit

2D

## Community Mobilization for Gender-Equity and Safe Spaces



*CYDA recognized the need for changing gender-based attitudes to reduce gender-based violence by working with youth in the community. CYDA through its Youth4Change program in several districts of Chhattisgarh engaged in trainings to inculcate gender-sensitivity among young people, and also mobilized community participation for ensuring safe public places for women in villages under the intervention. CYDA's initiative led to village monitoring committees which undertook patrolling of 'unsafe' areas in the village to ensure prevention of violence. Several village Panchayats also undertook initiatives such as separate bathing areas for men and women, setting up electric bulbs outside each house, enforcing prohibition, etc. CYDA's trainings led to increased awareness among youth in the community, enforcing gender-equitable attitudes.*

**Domanpur, Farhada, Kuwangaon, Mungeli district; Jhulan and Hadaspur, Janjgir-Champa district; Thakurkapa, Kekadar Bilaspur district, Chhattisgarh**

## THE PROBLEM

Gender-based violence is one of the most prevalent and socially tolerated forms of violence across the globe. It is a grave challenge in India, due to deep rooted patriarchy that offers men the privilege and power to inflict violence<sup>i</sup>. The existing socio-cultural milieu in India acts as a barrier for women to fully exercise their economic and political rights and live a life with freedom and dignity. Gender inequal attitudes develop in early years- from childhood, adolescence to young adulthood which have the potential to translate into acts of gender-based violence and sexual crimes. Gender-based violence impacts the safety and autonomy of victims, apart from its effects on ones' physical and mental health. It also reflects on a society, devoid of equal respect to all genders, and a lack of security and safety for its citizens.

Like other parts of the country, gender-based violence is prevalent in Chhattisgarh. The National Crime Records Bureau data for Chhattisgarh showed approx. 3.18 lakh cases related to sexual offences registered annually<sup>ii</sup>. CYDA's study in several villages found cases of underage and forced marriages, poor reporting/registering of cases related to gender-based violence, education and livelihood opportunities of girls hindered due to fear of violence, and movement restrictions for females, such as girls not allowed in public places after sundown. Deserted roads, common bathing platforms, areas near the hand pump for drinking water, village chowks, fields, etc, were all considered unsafe spaces for women, where incidents of molestation, indecent gestures, verbal abuse and sexual violence were reported. Further, family and community environments did not welcome or support discussions about gender-based violence or gender equity.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

CYDA recognized that one way to tackle gender-based violence and propagate gender-equitable attitudes was to target the youth in the village community. Through the Youth4Change unit in Chhattisgarh, an initiative to train and mobilize youth for social change (Refer **Case 2B** for details), CYDA engaged with village youth in gender sensitization and awareness, starting 2008. CYDA engaged in creating a space for young people to socialize and sensitize them on gender issues to promote gender equality. It engaged in building a cadre of conscientious young people who would campaign for gender equality and raise a voice against atrocities. The program was based on Youth4Change's basic concept of training youth as change agents.

CYDA mobilised youth in the intervention villages and conducted trainings on reproductive health, 'growing-up' issues, human rights, gender equity, social justice and good governance. Through this, it aimed at bringing about attitudinal change towards gender issues at the individual level.

Consequently, through the Youth4Change units formed, village youth (15 to 25 years) developed their own community groups for gender-equality and violence-free villages. The youth groups would organise 2 to 4 meetings every month to discuss gender-based issues in the village and possible solutions for tackling gender-based violence at the individual and village level. Through the discussions they developed a platform for experience-sharing and learning, advocating gender-equitable attitudes among youth.

At the village and community level, youth groups aimed at mobilising community participation, motivating and encouraging the creation of a positive and safe environment to combat gender-based violence. They adopted the role of facilitators in disseminating the message of gender-equity to the community. Youth groups engaged in several activities including awareness on gender issues and women's leadership, prevention of violence against women, right to information, voter awareness, anti-liquor campaigns, AIDS campaign, etc. in their villages. Youth groups were also involved in training Panchayat members on gender budgeting. They also worked on streamlining several government schemes such as advocating for social audit under government schemes benefiting women, filing right to information applications for widow pension scheme, etc.

The youth groups also worked to transform 'unsafe spaces into safe spaces' under the Race4Safe campaign. A 'Sadbhavna Dal' was formed, including villagers and public representatives- heads of the district Panchayat, Executive Officer of the Women and Child Development Department, Project Officer of the Sports and Youth Welfare Department, Police officers, officers in charge of community engagement at the District Superintendent's Office, etc. This group was mobilized to make the village a safe place, particularly for women through a four pronged approach 'RACE'- R (Ready) i.e. readiness for community action through awareness-building, A (Action) i.e. working towards community-based micro-planning in identifying potentially 'unsafe' places and working towards monitoring safety in those places in the village, C (Continuous) i.e. engaging in continued monitoring through community participation to prevent and act against gender-based violence, E (Excellent) i.e. achieving excellence of the village community in ensuring a safe, secure and 'violence-free' environment.

## OUTCOMES

The initiatives of Youth4Change members in Chhattisgarh led to several tangible changes in the villages to create awareness towards gender-equity, ensure women's safety and reduce gender-based violence.

At the individual level, trainings among youth in the village community led to attitudinal change towards gender-based issues.

At the community and village level, the initiative has led to successful community mobilization for transforming public places in villages as 'safe spaces.' A monitoring committee comprising villagers engages in daily surveillance of spaces considered potentially unsafe for women and a weekly review of the committee is held to understand problems and identify solutions. Several initiatives have been taken by village Panchayats under the intervention, to make public places safe for women. This included creation of different bathing times for men and women in the pond/bathing areas, construction of a separate bathing shed for women, ensuring availability of household toilets for women, setting up electric bulbs outside each house for better lighting, enforcing prohibition and cracking down on drug abuse, etc.



*"After the training I said sorry to those whose emotions I had hurt. I decided to listen to people, earlier I never used to listen to anybody. I was not able to communicate freely, but now I communicate frequently. I have increased respect for women and faith in their ability and skills. I realized that men and women are both equal. The cooperation of both is important for society. I now believe that girls should be given better opportunities in their lives. It is very difficult to write about the experience I have gone through while in the training. I just feel that I am more civilized now".*

**A male participant of gender-equity trainings**



Over the years, the committees and youth groups of the villages have been successful in preventing child marriages of 102 girls and 31 boys, encouraged 129 girls to start/restart basic education, higher education and employment and encouraged registration of cases related to gender-based violence with the police.

The mobilization of youth for bringing about social change through gender-equity also inspired some to join politics and participate in governance. 18 CYDA volunteers were elected to various Gram Panchayats over the years, while others have advocated and supported women in the villages to get elected as the village head (Sarpanch).



**i: Gender-Based Violence.** eGyanKosh: <https://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/58097/1/Unit11.pdf>

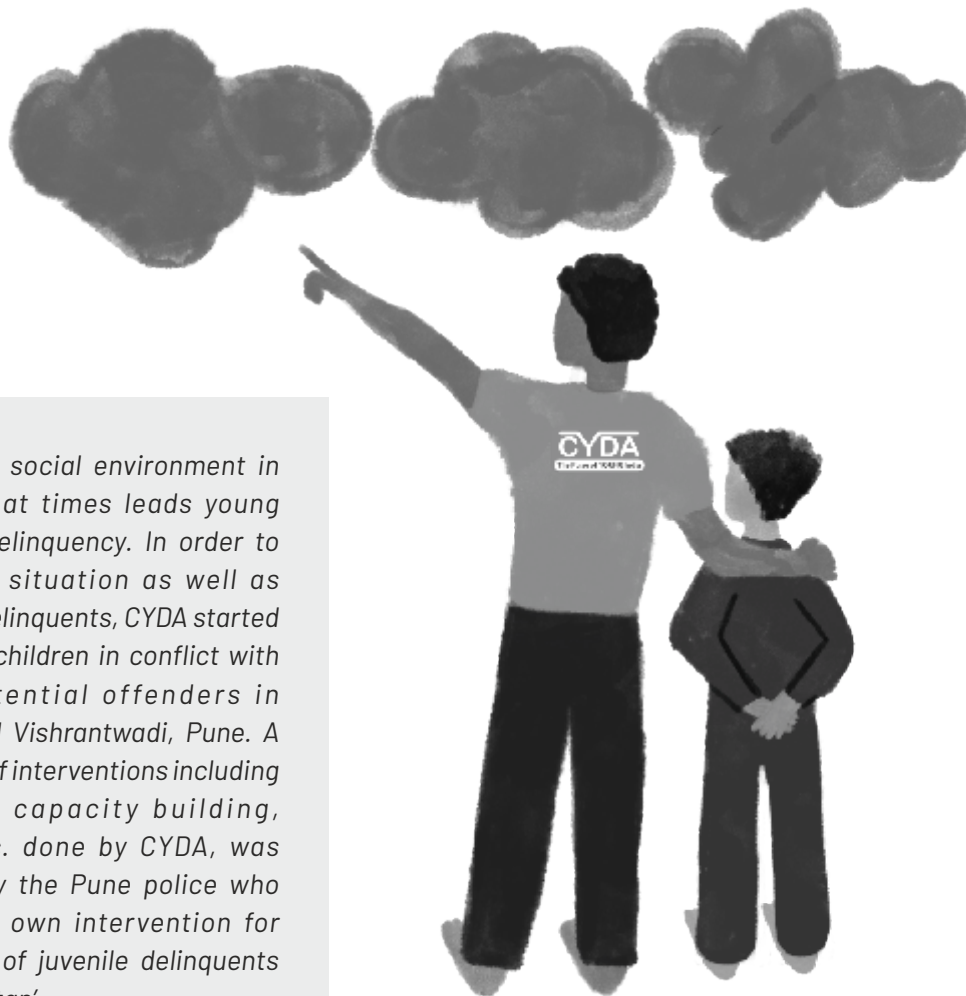
**ii: National Crime Records Bureau:** <https://ncrb.gov.in/>

**By Nitesh Singroul**

Executive Committee Member, CYDA

## Restoring Young Lives from Delinquency

*A challenging social environment in urban slums at times leads young people into delinquency. In order to prevent this situation as well as rehabilitate delinquents, CYDA started working with children in conflict with law and potential offenders in Yerawada and Vishrantwadi, Pune. A combination of interventions including counseling, capacity building, trainings etc. done by CYDA, was recognized by the Pune police who started their own intervention for rehabilitation of juvenile delinquents called 'Parivartan'.*



**Yerawada and Vishrantwadi, Pune, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

According to National Crime Record Bureau statistics, 31,170 cases were registered against minors across the country in 2021. The majority of them - 76.2%, or 28,539 cases were between the ages of 16 and 18. The crime rate among juveniles has also increased from 6.7% to 7%<sup>1</sup>. Apart from crime statistics, youth today are faced with several stressors such as child marriage, addiction, employment, depression etc. Although young people form a considerable proportion of the population, they are not represented in the policy making processes. Youth in urban slum communities are especially faced with several challenges such as poor education, lack of good employment opportunities, and an unfavorable social environment. Pune is a microcosm of the national situation, where crime and addiction among youth is a pressing issue.

Once labelled as juvenile delinquents or children in conflict with law, young people face several challenges. When juveniles commit crimes, they are detained as criminals at an early age. Children may then face legal consequences, including court involvement which can affect their entire future life. Juvenile delinquency can disrupt education, leading children to be left out of the mainstream of education. Juvenile offenders may develop feelings of stress, anxiety and stigma. They tend to develop mental health problems. In some cases, engaging in delinquent behavior at a young age can lead to a cycle of delinquency where the individual is involved in criminal activity throughout life. Further, parents of juvenile delinquents face many challenges when their children are involved in juvenile delinquency. Parents may face legal consequences for their child's actions, including court appearances, legal fees, and possible fines or restitution orders. Parents often experience significant emotional stress and feelings of guilt, shame and helplessness when their child is involved in criminal activity. Legal costs, fines and restitution costs can place a heavy financial burden on families. The stress of dealing with a delinquent child can strain family relationships. Siblings may feel left out and family members may disagree on how to handle the situation. Parents become socially isolated in the community and blamed for their child's behavior. Increase in juvenile delinquency is also detrimental to the city and country at large. Juvenile delinquency is more likely to increase the number of crimes committed by young individuals, which threatens the safety of the people in the community. This can include property crimes, violent crimes, and drug-related activities. Victims of physical, emotional and financial harm to whom or against whom juvenile offenders commit crimes also suffer. This can create fear and anxiety in the community, affecting the quality of life of residents. Increased crime can destroy community cohesion and trust. As residents become more fearful and less trusting of each other, this can negatively impact social relationships and overall feelings of safety and well-being. The increase in juvenile delinquency can lead to overcrowding in the juvenile justice system.

This overcrowding can strain the resources of the justice system and potentially lead to inadequate rehabilitation and supervision of juvenile offenders. Every country dreams of a bright future based on the overall development of its citizens. But when juvenile delinquency is on the rise, a large section of the society is at risk of lagging behind in terms of productivity and education.

## **CYDA'S INTERVENTION**

CYDA recognized the need to work with both children in conflict with law, potential offenders as well as the community at large. To interact with children and make them aware about the need to steer away from any criminal activity, CYDA engaged with schools and colleges in Yerawada and Vishrantwadi where awareness sessions were held with the students.

In working with the communities, CYDA found that adolescent boys were especially influenced by the portrayal of crime and violence in movies and considered that displaying violence leads to an increase in respect in the society. In order to prevent such adolescent boys who were influenced by violent behavior to potentially turn delinquent, CYDA started a project 'Voice of Boyz'. Under this CYDA first identified 42 such boys in the community and formed their groups. Thereafter various sessions, activities and trainings were held to enable such boys to build their capacity and skills for gainful employment. They were made aware of their rights and duties in society. The activities assisted them in identifying their skills and interest areas and motivated them into pursuing constructive work. The sessions included entrepreneurship development, communication skills, career guidance, personality development, reproductive health and gender, etc.

CYDA also engaged with children in conflict with law i.e., children (under 18 years of age) who are alleged or found to have committed either a petty, serious or heinous offence. With the objective of bringing such children into the mainstream of society and ensuring their effective rehabilitation, CYDA started the 'Mission Yerawada' project. With co-operation from the police, CYDA identified a list of children from police records. A first meeting with them was held under police supervision in Vishrantwadi and Yerawada police stations. Over time, the CYDA team worked with these children to build a relationship of trust. This was challenging due to hostile behavior of the children and decreased faith and trust in anyone. Counseling was done for the children where considerable time was spent with each individual, talking to them, understanding their mindset, their problems and needs. Various sessions and activities were held with these children, similar to the Voice of Boyz project. The aim was to build confidence in their ability to

emerge out of their current situation, towards a better future. Education, Employment and entrepreneurship opportunities and skill building was aimed at enabling these children to move away from committing further offences.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA has witnessed an improvement in attitudes of adolescents under the Voice of Boyz program. Their approach towards society and family has been changing; some of them who had discontinued education have resolved to resume their further studies. Many of the boys have now stopped roaming with gang leaders or 'dada' in the community.

CYDA's intervention with children in conflict with law has seen a considerable impact on the Pune Police Administration. Taking cognizance of the work done by CYDA, Pune Police has started its own initiative for children in conflict with law called 'Parivartan'. CYDA has been included as a part of their initiative to help in rehabilitation of such children. CYDA is currently engaged with 100 children under the Parivartan initiative.

CYDA aims to continue its efforts in this project to prevent more youth from falling into delinquency and ensure a secure future for adolescents in slum communities. In the near future, CYDA has also planned to add other components to its intervention with juveniles including provision of legal aid and assistance in starting businesses.

*A now turned 18-year old boy, part of CYDA's Mission Yerawada project received regular counseling and also joined CYDA's Youth Centre. After a few sessions he realized that he had made a mistake and promised to not engage in delinquent behavior in the future.*

*CYDA discovered that he is an excellent football player. He is now engaged in coaching other children in CYDA's Youth Centre in football. He has also rejoined his college (11th grade) to pursue further studies.*



**i:** Chauhan B. 24.12.2022. Why children conflict with law and order. <https://www.newindianexpress.com/opinions/2022/dec/24/why-children-conflict-with-law-and-order-2531149.html>

**By Kaustubh Bhamare**, Project Coordinator, Youth Unit

## Volunteering provides a melody to community development

*Volunteerism lies at the heart of CYDA's vision as an organisation and is a major driving factor for its activities across the country. While increasing commercialisation and competition in education and employment hinder the interest in volunteering among the youth; CYDA through its culture of training, providing opportunities and building volunteers as change-makers for community development, has flourished due to its steadfast commitment to voluntarism.*



**Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Goa and Kerala**

## THE PROBLEM

Volunteering among the youth inculcates values of respect, help and contribution to ones' community, locality and country. However with increasing commercialisation, marketisation and competition in education and employment, there is a hesitance among youth to engage in volunteering work. A lack of interest in volunteering also arises due to no monetary compensation, busy schedules, lack of organisation and proper management of volunteers, and often lack of clear purpose or goal. In fact in order to engage people in volunteering, institutions have to impose compulsions such as mandatory volunteering as a part of academic curriculum, or employee volunteering as a part of corporate social responsibility.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Volunteerism lies at the heart of CYDA's vision as an organisation and is a major driving factor for its activities across the country. CYDA aimed to create a youth volunteer base, not only to inculcate skills, values and life experiences to young people through volunteering, but also to encourage youth volunteers as change-makers in society. CYDA is a voluntary organization and has flourished due to its steadfast commitment to voluntarism.

CYDA positions as a demonstration to the influence of voluntarism. Originating as a grassroots initiative driven by the passion of individuals committed to community development, CYDA has not only sustained its voluntary code but has also expanded its reach and impact over the years. CYDA's journey began as a response to identified community needs. The organization's founders, driven by a shared vision for positive change, came together to address specific challenges faced by youth.

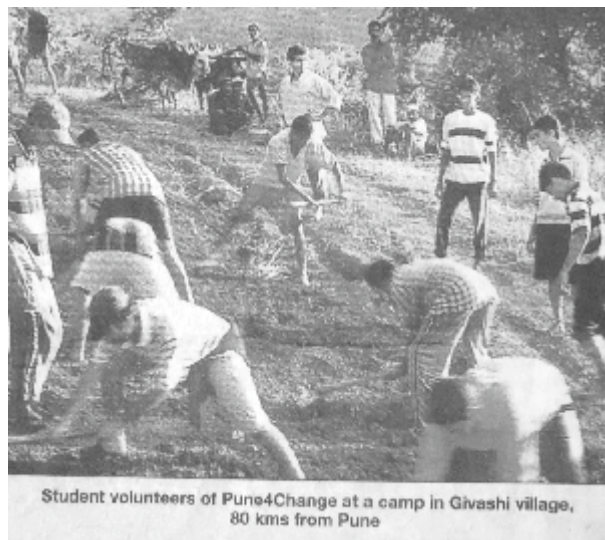
Volunteers are the backbone of CYDA. The organization has implemented effective strategies for recruiting, training, and retaining volunteers. By providing ongoing training opportunities and recognizing the contributions of its volunteers, CYDA has created a culture of empowerment, motivating individuals to actively participate in community development. Engaging with youth in the communities that CYDA works with, involving them in its initiatives and in decision-making processes have been integral to CYDA's approach. CYDA has actively taken on the role of a champion for volunteerism. Through awareness campaigns, workshops, and community events, the organization spreads the message of the transformative power of voluntary action. By advocating for volunteerism, CYDA not only attracts new volunteers but also inspires a culture of giving back to society.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's commitment to volunteerism has yielded concrete outcomes, including increased youth empowerment, improved educational outcomes, and enhanced community well-being. This commitment has created a positive ripple effect, fostering a sense of ownership and resilience among the people it serves.

CYDA has leveraged its volunteer base for engaging in immediate response, relief and rehabilitation in crisis situations such as disasters. CYDA engaged in relief and rehabilitation work after the tsunami in 2004, Mumbai floods in 2005, Kerala floods in 2018, Maharashtra floods in 2021-22, etc. elaborated in **Case 2G**. Volunteers from CYDA played an essential role in the COVID-19 pandemic response. This included supporting migrants and urban poor residents with food, temporary accommodation and medical aid, details of which can be found in **Case 6B**. CYDA's youth volunteer units have also aided several of CYDA's interventions such as the women entrepreneurship initiative to help COVID-19 affected families in starting businesses for livelihood support, elaborated in **Case 5A**.

Despite its successes, CYDA has encountered several challenges in its journey. These challenges, ranging from resource constraints to evolving community dynamics, have been valuable learning experiences. The organization's ability to adapt and innovate in response to challenges underscores the resilience ingrained in its voluntary foundation. CYDA stands as an ideal of voluntarism, showcasing how a grassroots initiative can evolve into a catalyst for community transformation. By embracing inclusive community engagement, empowering volunteers, fostering collaborations, and advocating for voluntarism, CYDA serves as a model for organizations seeking to create sustainable impact through voluntary action.



By **Godfrey Colaco**, Manager – Volunteerism & Disaster Management

## Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation through volunteerism



*Immediate support and relief are of prime importance in disaster situations. At the same time more longer-term rehabilitation of disaster-affected people is essential to recoup from disasters. In view of the need to provide support to the government and other relief agencies during disasters, CYDA has over the years engaged in relief and rehabilitation programs across the country, tapping on its wide youth volunteer base. CYDA's continued efforts have helped thousands of families to successfully rebuild their lives and livelihoods post disasters. It has also provided an apt example of collaboration with different stakeholders and shown how to mobilise volunteer participation for immediate action during crises.*

### PAN-INDIA

**Nagapattinam and Pushpavanam, Tamil Nadu (Tsunami relief support)  
Idukki, Kottayam and Alappuzha districts, Kerala (Flood relief support)  
Mumbai, Pune, Nashik, Nandurbar, Sangli, Kolhapur and Satara districts, Maharashtra  
(Flood and COVID-19 pandemic relief support)**

## THE PROBLEM

In disaster situations, timely support in the form of relief and rehabilitation is of primary importance. The lack of immediate relief can increase the loss of lives, and also exacerbate adverse effects such as a rise in epidemics especially in the case of floods and tsunami. Lack of timely rehabilitation for restoring property and livelihoods leads to socio-economic hardships for disaster-affected persons while also mounting economic losses for the district/state. In handling such situations, governments often require support from non-government organisations and citizens at large, to reach out and provide relief to those adversely affected in disasters.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Providing relief and rehabilitation during crisis and disaster situations has been one of CYDA's objectives as an organisation. CYDA aims to train youth in providing immediate relief and response in disaster situations so that they are well-equipped to volunteer for disaster management activities. CYDA has always been on the forefront in providing support to emergency response programs. It has built experience in acting during times of crisis and emergency, and providing immediate relief required to disaster-affected persons. With its large base of volunteers and other organisational networks, CYDA has been able to mount quick relief operations over the years. Youth from CYDA's Youth4Change initiative (Refer **Case 2B**) have been crucial in providing volunteer support for disaster relief and rehabilitation.

### 2004 Tsunami Relief and Rehabilitation in Tamil Nadu

The 2004 tsunami majorly affected the Nagapattinam, Chennai, Cuddalore, Velankanni and Poompuhar areas of Tamil Nadu. Over 8,000 people lost their lives in Tamil Nadu of which 6,065 were from Nagapattinam district<sup>1</sup>. Considerable property was destroyed including fishing boats, nets, houses, shops and other establishments along the coast.



With support from various agencies, CYDA with a team of 300 volunteers engaged in rehabilitation work in Nagapattinam for almost one year. CYDA worked with 107 fisher families in providing them with boats and nets to restore their livelihood. CYDA's team also helped farmers by working on removing saline sludge from around 50 acres of paddy land owned by 45 families. It also provided organic manure to farmers to restart their agricultural activities. Apart from this, CYDA in association with Tetra Pak, provided eco-friendly tables, benches, desks and cupboards worth Rs. 6 lakh to restore and renovate two primary schools in Pushpavanam. It also provided scholarships to affected students to continue their studies.

### **2005 Flood Disaster Response in Maharashtra**

The 2005 floods primarily affected the Mumbai Metropolitan Region and other parts of coastal Maharashtra, in which 1,094 people died<sup>ii</sup>. CYDA mobilised 100 volunteers for the relief initiatives. CYDA garnered financial and material support through crowd funding in Pune city and other interested donors. With support from various organisations including Confederation of Indian Industry, Mumbai, Tata Motors, Kirloskar Oil Engines Ltd., Zensar Foundation, Forbes Marshall, Samvedana and Foundation for the Enhancement and Enrichment of Life (FEEL), CYDA distributed dry-food items to flood-affected people, provided temporary shelters, clothes, medicines, etc. in Mumbai. In other affected districts including Pune, Sangli, Kolhapur and Solapur, children were provided with uniforms, notebooks and other study material to support them in rejoining school.

### **2018 Flood Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation in Kerala**

Unprecedented rainfall led to floods in the state of Kerala in 2018, affecting 5.4 million people<sup>iii</sup>, 433 deaths and economic losses to the tune of Rs.31,000 crore<sup>iv</sup>. CYDA engaged in relief and rehabilitation work with financial support from Terees Homes Germany and Plan International in India. Through its teams, CYDA engaged in cleaning of houses, schools, and places of worship, retrofitting damaged sanitation infrastructure in schools, and repair of 50 flood-damaged houses. CYDA provided livelihood support in the form of cash compensation due to loss of cattle, which

were a major earning source for small farmers. Tribal families whose main livelihood was through bee farming were provided required equipment to restart bee cultivation. Livelihood support was also provided to fishers and farmers by distributing required equipment and materials. For example, seeds and fertilisers were distributed to 105 families in Idukki district to help them restart their farming and agro-businesses. Counseling services including health and hygiene information was also provided to families reached through the above initiatives.

### **2019 and 2021-22 Flood Disaster Relief and Rehabilitation in Maharashtra**

In August 2019 and 2021-22, the state of Maharashtra faced severe flooding in several districts including Kolhapur, Sangli and Satara, killing 99 people and 181 cattle<sup>v</sup> in 2019 and 213 people in 2021<sup>vi</sup>.

CYDA partnered with local organisations for rescuing people affected by the flood. Many were shifted to shelters and also aided in restarting their livelihoods. In collaboration Help for Children in Need Foundation and Charities Aid Foundation, business aid was provided to affected families in Sangli and Kolhapur such as for buying new livestock and agricultural materials viz. seeds and fertilisers. CYDA also provided basic relief materials and counseling for affected families in Pune.

In 2021, CYDA with the support of Help for Children in Need Foundation aided in relief operations including helping differently abled persons affected by the flood in Kolhapur. With the support of UNICEF and Yashwantrao Chavan School of Social Work, CYDA distributed 27,500 relief kits (including non-food item kits, hygiene and dignity kits, 9-14years developmentally appropriate for learning kits, 3-8years developmentally appropriate for learning kits and psycho-social support kits) in Satara, Sangli and Kolhapur districts. Caregivers, teachers and community health workers from 157 villages were trained on the use of the learning kits and psycho-social support kits.

In 2022, residents in some areas of Satara district were shifted to nearby schools and relief camps due to the threat of landslides owing to heavy rainfall. CYDA provided dry ration kits, ready-to-eat food packets, bedding and other basic facilities to these families.

## COVID-19 Pandemic Support

The COVID-19 pandemic was not only a health emergency but also impacted several other aspects of life including basic services, livelihood, education, etc. CYDA engaged in various initiatives for migrants including food support, temporary accommodation and transport through campaigns such as the 'No One Shall Go Hungry' campaign elaborated in **Case 6B**. CYDA also worked in 13 hospitals and 8 dispensaries in Pune providing equipment for handling and storing bio-medical waste and ensuring its safe disposal, pedal-operated handwash stations, sanitizer stands and PPE kits for health workers. CYDA with the support of Help for Children in Need Foundation also provided semi-fowler beds, mattresses with pillows, and saline stands to Taloda sub-district hospital in Nandurbar district. Apart from this, CYDA provided equipment as well as infrastructure support to develop a 400-bed COVID Care Centre at Chikli, Pune and later handed over the set up to the health administration. CYDA provided volunteers' support to facilitate vaccination at different primary health care centres for crowd control, registration and to ensure safe behaviour.

With the support of Help for Children in Need Foundation, dry ration kits and COVID-19 protective gear were provided to 175 poor families. Women were provided skill-building trainings and monetary support for their businesses in Pune, elaborated in **Case 5A**.



## OUTCOMES

CYDA's continued efforts over the years to support disaster-affected persons across the country, have helped thousands of families to successfully rebuild their lives and livelihoods. CYDA's efforts during the tsunami and floods helped prevent the outbreak of diseases. Food support during the pandemic helped prevent grave food insecurity among the urban poor due to loss of livelihoods. Through its disaster relief efforts CYDA has shown the way of effective collaboration with corporates, non-governmental organisations and governments in tackling crises situations and cushioning the adverse impacts of such disasters. Most importantly, it has shown how to successfully mobilise volunteer participation to provide support to fellow citizens during crisis times.

CYDA received accolades for its work from Idukki district authorities in Kerala. Several other government representatives working on disaster relief have acknowledged the support provided by CYDA.

*"Our efforts extended to five tehsils of the Satara district- Satara, Wai, Mahabaleshwar, Patan and Jaoli. Most of the areas in this region witnessed landslides and had been declared disaster-prone. So, people were shifted to temporary relief camps. When UNICEF and CYDA approached us, our first step was to identify the affected people, for which we trained our volunteers to use the Google forms to collect information through a survey."*

**Professor, Yashwantrao Chavan  
School of Social Work, Satara,  
Maharashtra during the 2022 floods**



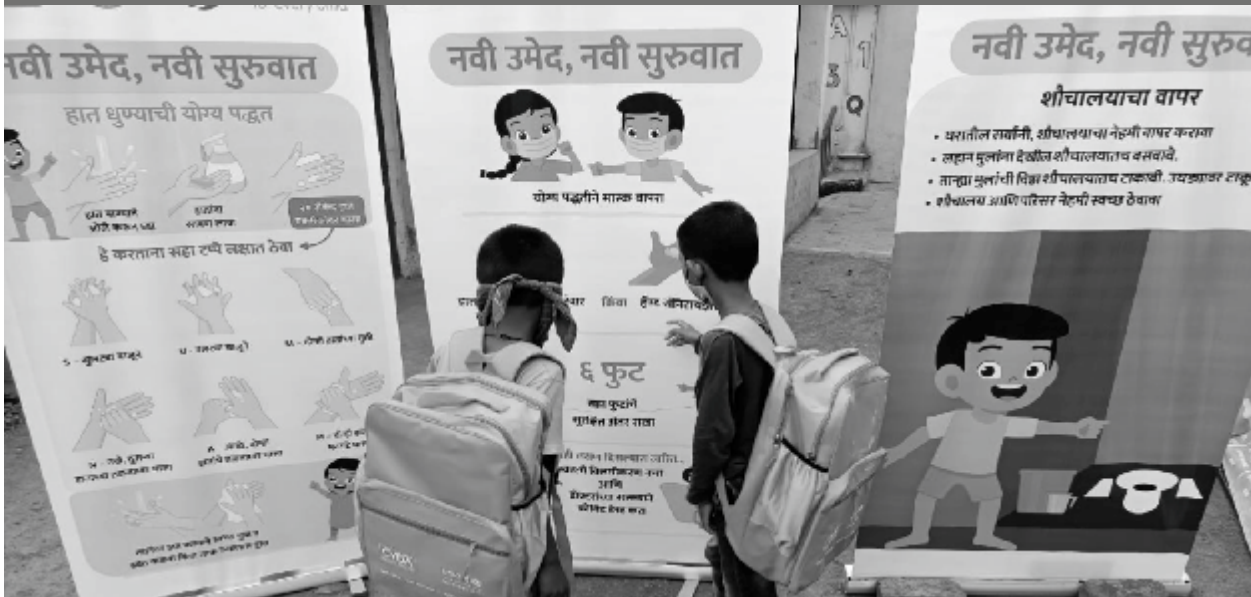


"The fowler beds will benefit the tribal people in Nandurbar in such a situation where there are difficulties in getting beds."

**Medical Officer, Taloda Block,  
Nandurbar, Maharashtra, during COVID-  
19 pandemic response.**

"The psychological support kits were great in helping the children to divert their minds from the situation around them, the floods, pandemic and lockdown. It was such a wonderful gesture for them."

**Community Health Worker, Kolhapur, Maharashtra, during the 2021 floods**



“The flood situation has arisen this year and similarly had arisen last year too, the agricultural land was washed away, and livelihood means were no longer available. Thanks to CYDA for the disaster relief support.”

### Police Patil, Dare village, Satara, Maharashtra during the 2021 floods



**i:** Times of India. December 26, 2004: When tsunami killed 8,000 in Tamil Nadu. 26.12.2019. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/chennai/december-26-2004-when-tsunami-killed-8000-in-tamil-nadu/articleshow/72975364.cms>

**ii:** Flood Status Report. Undated. <http://mdmu.maharashtra.gov.in/pdf/Flood/statusreport.pdf>

**iii:** Joseph K. Anand D. Prajeesh P. Zacharia A. Varghese A. Pradeepkumar A. Baiju K. 2020. Community resilience mechanism in an unexpected extreme weather event: An analysis of the Kerala floods of 2018, India. International Journal of Disaster Risk Reduction. Vol 49: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijdr.2020.101741>

**iv:** Krishnakumar R. 27.09.2019. Kerala flood of 2018 in list of world's worst extreme weather events in five years. The Hindu. <https://frontline.thehindu.com/dispatches/article29530296.ece#:~:text=Fifth%20biggest%20flood&text=Rainfall%20in%20August%202018%20in,31%2C000%20crore.>

**v:** ABP News. Maharashtra Rains: Orange Alert Issued In Palghar, Pune, Satara. Death Toll Reaches 99 – Updates. 15.07.2022. <https://news.abplive.com/news/india/maharashtra-rains-news-latest-news-orange-alert-issued-in-palghar-pune-satara-death-toll-reaches-99-updates-1542583>

**vi:** Times of India. Maharashtra CM Uddhav Thackeray visits flood-affected areas in Kolhapur. 30.07.2021 <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kolhapur/maharashtra-cm-uddhav-thackeray-visits-flood-affected-areas-in-kolhapur/articleshow/84886818.cms>

**By Vikas Abnave**

Research & Documentation Coordinator (R & D Unit)



## Stepping Stones towards building relationships



*A lack of adequate information and discussion about sexual and reproductive health and behaviours, both within the family space and in the public domain, increase young peoples' exposure to risks arising from uninformed choices in their sexual behavior. Recognizing the need for a practice-based approach to prevention of HIV and support in better relationship management for youth in Maharashtra, CYDA adopted the Stepping Stones program. Under the program CYDA has engaged in capacity building and training of trainers, grassroot organisations and young people in Maharashtra. The trainings have led to visible changes in attitudes and practices related to sex, sexuality, gender discrimination, violence, HIV, etc. Stepping Stones also acted as a tool for building and sustaining youth groups in villages through which they could work with many more young people and on several issues concerning youth.*

**Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

In a society where talking about sex is a taboo, young people are often unable to fully comprehend and express issues related to sex, sexuality and relationships. There is a lack of adequate information and discussion about sexual and reproductive health and behaviours, both within the family space and in the public domain. This often increases young peoples' exposure to risk arising from uninformed choices they make in their sexual behavior. For instance, peer pressures or experimentation with promiscuity, increase vulnerability to contracting HIV.

While there are several programs aimed at helping participants practice safer sex and protect themselves from HIV, most of these are based on the belief that changing attitudes can lead to behaviour change. However, CYDA's experience of working with youth has often shown that practice does not always follow increased awareness.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognizing the need for a practice-based approach to prevention of HIV and support in better relationship management, CYDA associated itself with the Stepping Stones program. The Stepping Stones program initially started in response to a growing need for interventions to strengthen relationships, promote safer sexual practices and prevent HIV in Uganda in 1994. As a part of the program, a manual was developed for improved communication and awareness to prevent HIV. Stepping Stones was later developed as a module by Strategies of Hope, an organisation based in the United Kingdom. It was written by Dr. Alice Welbourne with inputs from Action Aid International<sup>1</sup>. Over the years, the module has been widely used by several organisations across the world. An Indian version of the manual was promoted by Action Aid India in partnership with CYDA.

The Stepping Stones program is a participatory adult learning program which focuses on communication in relationships, acknowledges the gendered context of our lives and the broad range of influences on our sexual practices. It discusses communication skills, relationship management and sexuality, among others. The goal of this training module is to facilitate information exchange in a participatory manner. The training moves through four basic themes that is Learning, Sharing, Caring and Changing. This workshop is highly interactive, with intense focus on each participant. It is for this reason that the number of participants are restricted to around 30 per session, with equal gender representation. Participants are

divided into gender-based groups where they discuss these issues separately. Thereafter common sessions allow for sharing the learnings across gender groups.

### **CYDA used the Stepping Stones module in three ways.**

- 1) Training of the Trainers:** In collaboration with Action Aid, CYDA has organized eleven 10-day training programs with 180 non-governmental organisations across the globe. This includes national and international workshops where organisations are trained on how to implement the Stepping Stones module in their respective work and communities.
  
- 2) Capacity building of Grassroot organisations through Stepping Stones:** CYDA aimed to build capacities of organizations working at the grassroots level, to mobilize and sensitize youth as change agents and to network for collective efforts in the areas of HIV/AIDS and gender issues using Stepping Stones. This was implemented in Maharashtra, where grassroot organisations were encouraged to form Youth Resource Centers across the state (Refer **Case 2C** for details). Through these Centres, youth in the community were involved in Stepping Stones workshops. They were further encouraged to extend their knowledge and insights to sensitize other youth in their communities. Under the program, 3300 youth from 15 districts in Maharashtra were trained in Stepping Stones with the help of Samaj Vikas Sanstha, Khoj, Prakash Shikshan Prasarak Sanstha, Astitva Samaj Prabodhan Sanstha, Rajashree Shahu Samaj, Prabodhan Mandal, Swayam Prerit Samajik Vikas Sanstha, Navchetana Samajik Vikas Sanstha and several other community-based organisations.
  
- 3) Capacity building of Young People through Youth4Change:** Apart from providing Stepping Stones training to youth in Maharashtra, CYDA also engaged in training youth to act as facilitators and peer educators for the program. Trainings of Youth Facilitators were organized through the Youth Resource Centres where four participants from each village were included. A total of 152 youth were trained as facilitators from six districts in Maharashtra. These participants formed a core team for Stepping Stones in their respective villages, while also becoming a part of several other change initiatives through CYDA's Youth4Change program (Refer **Case 2B** for details). Similarly, the training for peers was implemented at the village level.

## OUTCOMES

The Stepping Stones initiative provided a platform for youth to be comfortable and open in sharing their concerns and experiences related to relationships and sexuality. The trainings led to visible changes in their attitudes and increase in knowledge regarding sex, sexuality, gender discrimination, violence, HIV, etc. Following the training, many youth participants voluntarily went for HIV testing. In Solapur, a body mapping session made the male group realise the meaning of abuses used by them after which some of them started a 'Shivy Mukta Yuvak' group i.e. youth group who would not use abusive language in their conversations. Stepping Stones also acted as a tool for building and sustaining youth groups in villages through which they could work with many more young people and on several issues concerning youth.

*"A participant from Gunjewadi made a street theater group on the issue of HIV/AIDS and child sexual abuse. They performed street theater in schools in Kasar village. These activities helped the participants increase their confidence and become a potential awareness-building group in the area"*

**District Co-ordinator, Swayam Prerit  
Samajik Vikas Santha**

*"The youth come to the Youth Resource Center for meetings, debate and discuss on issues related to them or even for reading books. The CYDA FAQ on Sex, Sexuality and HIV/AIDS is one of the most read books in the center."*

**Member, Rajashree Shahu Samaj  
Prabodhan Mandal**



*“After the Stepping Stones program, youth started getting involved in the community development process too. In Latur, youth groups came together to make a soak pit, which benefitted the community at large. The group has decided to continue community service as an important area of intervention and also to start stepping stones with other youth in their village.”*

**Member,  
Navchetana  
Sanstha**

Through the international training of trainer sessions, various organisations in different countries were able to adopt the Stepping Stones module, expanding its reach and impact.

*“In February 2008, for the first time in Nepal, Plan International in collaboration with a local NGO – General Welfare Pratishthan organized and had invited me as a facilitator for the Stepping Stones training in Bastipur, Hetauda in Makwanpur district of Nepal. The training was very effective among women as they could identify a lot of issues where women have been discriminated and dominated in their communities. I would like to add that Stepping Stones is making its way in Nepal.”*

**Participant of  
Training of the  
Trainers from  
Prerana  
organisation**

The success of CYDA's initiative in Maharashtra also led to its expansion in other states, specifically Chhattisgarh where several Youth4Change groups were formed in many villages using Stepping Stones as an initiating tool. CYDA has also engaged in several other trainings regarding reproductive health and gender for adolescents called TARANG, elaborated in **Case 3C**.



**i:** <https://www.stepsstones.org/>

**By Priyanka Sharma**

Treasurer, CYDA



3B

## Lack of time and money no more steals their filmmaking dreams



*Recognising the need to provide opportunities to aspiring filmmakers from diverse backgrounds, CYDA started a Media4Change initiative with twelve module workshop sessions including the major theoretical and practical aspects of filmmaking. Students who participated in the Media4Change initiative benefited immensely from it, many went on to start their own studios and production houses.*

**Pune, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Youth are often unable to get equal academic and career opportunities, limiting their ability to explore their full potential and contribute to society. One such industry is that of filmmaking. Pune is known for two renowned institutions in the field of filmmaking- the Film and Television Institute of India (FTII) and National Film Archive of India (NFAI). However entry into institutes such as the FTII, with stringent rules and eligibility criteria is often difficult for everyone to avail. Many youth who are aspiring to be film makers are involved in other jobs for a living, making it unfeasible for such aspirants to attend full-time courses at the institute.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

In order to provide an opportunity to young aspirants to pursue their passion and careers in filmmaking, CYDA started a Media4Change initiative in 2004. This initiative was launched under the guidance of Prof. P.K. Nair, Founder Director, NFAI and Prof. K. V. Kurien, former Head of Department, Production, FTII.

Media4Change provided a platform for aspirants who were unable to attend the regular media curriculum, but were passionate towards having a formal training in filmmaking. The weekend schedule of the course accommodated the professional commitments of the students. The course fee was also affordable, making it accessible to a wider range of aspiring filmmakers.



In collaboration with film experts, a series of workshops, consisting of 12 modules were formulated for these aspirants, comprising all major aspects of filmmaking. Each module was conducted by eminent teachers from FTII, along with eminent personalities from South Indian and Bollywood cinema who shared their knowledge with the students.

Under the program, students enrolled were provided access to the facilities of the NFAI. Each module was designed in such a way that along with the theoretical aspects, students got the opportunity to watch some rare movies only available in the NFAI. Through this, students were able to relate each module with the screening of selected movies.

Further, practical training such as using cameras, visiting the editing studio, sound recording studio and art direction sets of FTII was included in the curriculum. Students were also

made part of opportunities for hands-on training in filmmaking from time to time. For instance the first batch of students got the opportunity to learn about film release and promotions first hand, as a part of the organising committee of the premiere of a movie titled 'Manasarovar' made by Mr. Anup Kurian, an FTII alum. As part of the practical curriculum, students also got the opportunity to make documentaries. Some of the documentaries made by students include- 'Juna Bazaar' on one of the oldest markets in Pune, 'Rise of Multiplexes' tracing the change in movie-watching experience over the years, and 'Caravan' in collaboration with Action Aid India- Fight against Poverty project to highlight rural distress and farmer suicides.

With the advent of advanced technology, filmmaking has become more accessible than ever before. Anyone with a smartphone can now create high-quality short films. The Media4Change course encourages aspiring filmmakers to embrace technology and utilize it to express their creative vision and bring their stories to life.

### **Twelve Modules in the Media4Change Curriculum on Filmmaking**

- Understanding of Cinema(Prof. P.K. Nair)
- From Concept to Screen(Prof. Madhu Nair)
- Production, Budgeting and Scheduling(Prof. K.V. Kurien)
- Camera and lights, still photography(Prof. A.S. Kanal)
- Basics of Script writing and advanced Script writing (Prof. P.K. Nair and Mr. Dilip Chitre)
- Cinematography(Mr. Sunny Joseph)
- Art Direction(Prof. Mahesh Taware)
- Music in Cinema(Prof. Bhaskar Chandavarkar)
- Basics of Sound recording(Prof. Milind Bapat)
- Editing and post- production(Prof. Yogesh Mathur)
- Making of Short films and Documentaries(Prof. P.K. Nair)
- Concluding with Overall Learnings

CYDA has continued to nurture aspiring filmmakers through its Media4Change club under the Youth4Change banner. Youth4Change is a youth movement initiated by CYDA, to provide opportunities for young people to realise their right to grow and develop as independent individuals and build their capacity to make decisions regarding their own lives (Refer **Case 2B**). The club focuses on documentary production, with a special emphasis on social causes. The club also organizes a film club, which hosts discussions, debates, and screenings of rare classic movies.

## OUTCOMES

The course has been a valuable resource for young filmmaking aspirants from diverse backgrounds. The course empowered students to pursue their passion for filmmaking. After attending CYDA's sessions, some students successfully gained admission to the FTII and went on to make their mark in the film industry. Two students established their own production house, named 'Media-Tech Productions'. Another student founded an animation and graphics studio.



One student also received an opportunity to visit the London Film Academy- "I got an opportunity to meet the higher officials of London Film Academy. I shared with them the courses which Media4Change offers. They seemed to be interested in the activities. The meeting has culminated in a tie up with London Film Academy, where interested students would be sent to the academy under the Media4Change banner."

The Media4Change course is a testament to CYDA's commitment to empowering young people to pursue their dreams and make a positive impact on society. The course has inspired several aspiring filmmakers to embark on their journey in the captivating world of cinema.



**By Sofy Mathew**

Board of Director, YouthAid Foundation

## TARANG : Empowering Youth for Gender-Equity and Reproductive Health



*Lack of adequate awareness of sexual and reproductive health among youth can cause adverse consequences during adolescence and later adult life. Recognizing the need to break taboos associated with sexuality and provide correct information related to reproductive health, CYDA engaged with municipal schools in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations since 2005, to provide holistic training for adolescents on reproductive health and gender called TARANG. An assessment study conducted in 2013 showed that majority of the participants reported benefiting from the program. The study showed that 91% students felt that the sessions helped them change their attitudes towards gender, 87% felt that the information helped reduce SRH-related confusions and 75% considered that the sessions would help them in future SRH-related issues.*

**Municipal schools in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation**

## THE PROBLEM

Adolescence is a crucial and formative period in one's life, marked with rapid emotional, physical, psychological and social growth. Awareness and information related to puberty, sexual and reproductive health (SRH) are often absent in formal education. Further, these topics are considered a taboo in society and therefore not discussed openly with family.

Due to lack of adequate awareness on SRH, adolescents and young adults are more likely to conform to gender-inequitable attitudes, with higher risk of gender-based violence, and increased susceptibility to sexually transmitted diseases. Data from National Crime Records Bureau reports show 7,111 juveniles were involved in rape, of whom 1,756 were aged between 12 and 16 years. (2017-21) According to a UNICEF study, 35% of all AIDS cases in India are reported in young people of the age group 15-24 years.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

CYDA in partnership with Forbes Marshall developed unique, comprehensive and participative modules on SRH called 'TARANG'- Trainings for Adolescents on Reproductive Health and Gender. It was implemented primarily in municipal schools of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations from 2005 for students of grade 8th to 12th. The intervention was later also expanded to communities across Maharashtra, where CYDA has a presence.

The TARANG training is an awareness generation and sensitization program that includes seven modules. TARANG consists of introduction and communication, self-awareness, creative and critical thinking, value education, gender awareness, body mapping, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Each session is of one and a half hour and is conducted separately for boys and girls. Various participatory methods are used to help adolescents open up and talk freely about issues concerning themselves. TARANG provides students an opportunity to increase their awareness about sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS, reduce stigma related to such diseases, and provide an environment to freely talk about SRH and sexuality. It also includes training adolescents in focusing on their academics and career, and on how to be healthy and responsible adults.

In the initial stages of the program, CYDA's first task was to convince school authorities and local bodies on the importance of imparting SRH-related trainings to their students and to provide space and time slots

for conducting these sessions. Students were also initially reluctant to talk about SRH freely. Continued perseverance, regular communication and feedback from students and schools, helped resolve these issues.

Since 2005, CYDA has engaged 25,000 students across 50 schools in the TARANG program.

Along with TARANG trainings for improved awareness of sexual and reproductive health among young people, CYDA also engages in the Stepping Stones trainings aimed at relationship management and prevention of HIV, elaborated in **Case 3A**.

## OUTCOMES

An assessment of the TARANG program was conducted in 2013 that included adolescents, school principals/teachers, and parents involved in the program from 2009 onwards. The students who had attended the sessions prior to 2009 were not included since they were difficult to trace. The assessment included 6 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with students, survey questionnaires with 979 students and personal interviews with school principals/teachers and parents.



It was heartening to witness that most of the students who participated in the FGDs recollected learnings from the TARANG sessions. They mentioned that they had benefitted immensely from receiving SRH information at the right age. They reported that TARANG sessions had benefited in clarifying their myths and misconceptions about menstrual cycle, masturbation, sexuality, reproductive health and HIV/AIDS. Some boys mentioned using condoms in their sexual relations post the TARANG sessions. Some boys also shared about helping their mothers/ sisters in household chores on a regular basis due to these sessions. Some girls shared that they no longer bunked school for fear and discomfort during their menstrual cycle, after attending the TARANG sessions. They mentioned that they now used separate cloths during

menstruation as compared to using cloths that were shared with their mothers/sisters earlier. Girls also reported that they now dried the cloths used during menstruation in the open rather than in dark corners. Students also shared that the sessions had helped them in improving their overall behaviours towards others, setting life goals, improving their personality etc. The FGD participants mentioned that the information received in TARANG sessions was shared with at least 8 to 10 more people including their friends, siblings and family, snowballing the impact of the intervention.

*“After the session on physical changes in girls and boys during adolescence, I understood why my sister and mother isolate themselves every month. I went home and explained to them the entire process of menstrual cycle and also told them what I had learnt about behaving as usual during that period too. Thereafter, they have not been isolating themselves during their menstrual cycle and also do all the household work during those days.”*

#### **Boy Student during FGD**

*“My boyfriend used to blackmail me to have sexual contact with him. He used to say things like everybody does this when they have affairs, there is nothing wrong in it and it is a way I can prove my love and trust to him. After TARANG sessions, I realized the consequences of my behaviour and I firmly said no to him for his demand to have sexual relations. It broke my relationship with him. But in the process I realized that all that he wanted was to have fun and sex. He didn't really love me”*

#### **Girl student during FGD**

The survey questionnaire results conducted with students showed awareness and positive attitudes towards gender and SRH. 82% respondents considered it normal for girls to go out after 7pm. This denotes that girls have become more confident and boys have become more gender sensitive. 58% of the respondents considered masturbation as normal, signifying increased awareness about sexuality. Majority of respondents did not subscribe to SRH related myths- 70% students considered that menstrual blood is not impure while 65% agreed that a person with HIV would not immediately die. 73% reported that they did not encounter any incident of sexual abuse in the past year, while 20% mentioned successfully being able to protest against sexual abuse they had encountered.

Overall, students mentioned that they considerably benefitted from TARANG sessions. 91% respondents felt that the sessions helped them change their attitudes towards gender, 87% felt that the information on physical, psychological and emotional changes in adolescence helped reduce their confusions regarding sexuality and reproductive health, while 75% students considered that the sessions would help them in future SRH-related matters.



Parents also reported positive changes in their children due to the sessions.

*"My daughter is yet to get her menses, but it is good that she has all the information beforehand. In fact, during TARANG sessions, she has got all the information that I should have given her."*

**Parent of a girl participant in community-based TARANG sessions**

*"My elder daughter had dropped out of school after passing 10th grade. She used to be at home all day doing nothing. She was scared of going out. I was also reluctant to send her for the sessions. But I could notice the change in the other girls. Gradually, I started sending her for the sessions. As a result, she started studying again; she has joined college and also has taken up job. Now all my three daughters are regular participants for TARANG Sessions."*

**Parent of a girl participant in community-based TARANG sessions**

Teachers acknowledged the work done by CYDA in imparting SRH-related information to their students.

*"This training programme not only gives information to the adolescents on growing, but also teaches them responsible behaviour. Today's youngsters are bombarded with information from various sources which can at times be misleading. It is always good that NGOs like CYDA talk to these youngsters and also teach them about what is right and what is wrong".*

### Teacher at a School in Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation

In conclusion, CYDA's continued intervention with adolescents has not only provided them valuable information related to SRH, but also significantly changed attitudes towards gender and sexual health equipping them for effectively managing their SRH-related issues as adults.



**By Dilmeher Bhola**

President, CYDA



## Counselling and Youth Development Courses for sensitizing the young generation



*Recognizing the need for continuous skilling and training of professionals to excel in their respective fields, CYDA in collaboration with Tata Institute of Social Sciences started two diploma courses in Pune. A range of professionals were engaged in the courses related to counseling and youth development and social change from 2013 to 2019. The courses provided participants professional education that enabled them to advance and specialize in their respective field of work.*

**Pune city, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

As India's youth population grows, it has become extremely crucial to provide them with adequate skills and education, for the country to be able to reap its demographic dividend. For this, there is a need for continuous skilling and training of professionals. It is also important to develop a set of professionals who can work with the youth- who can understand and listen to their needs and concerns and provide them guidance in achieving their aspirations.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognizing the need for well-qualified counselors for youth at the grassroots level, CYDA first collaborated with the Centre for Lifelong Learning at Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in 2013. TISS's Diploma in Counseling Program was thereafter conducted in CYDA's office in Pune. Following this, TISS approached CYDA to also run their Diploma in Youth Development and Social Change Program in Pune. CYDA decided to include this program as well which would provide opportunity for skilling of professionals in working with youth. The course was open to graduates in any field with a rigorous interview to ascertain the candidate's interest in the topics.

The Diploma in Counseling program ran for six academic years from June 2013 to May 2019. The curriculum consisted of 8 modules along with skills workshops and a month of field placement. Each module was of 30 hours and had a written and group/individual assignment. The skills workshops and field work placements were for 180 hours each. Field work placements were at reputed non-governmental organisations and semi-government settings. The Diploma in Youth Development and Social Change Program ran for two academic years from July 2015 to June 2017. It included 10 courses of 30 hours each and 180 hours of workshops and field work. The organisation of the programs in Pune was done by CYDA and experts from varied fields were invited to conduct sessions. The facilitators included professors from different colleges, counselors and psychology professionals as well as psychiatrists. The rigor required to get a CYDA-TISS certificate was maintained to perfection along with 2 visits to the TISS Mumbai campus for sessions.

### **Course Details- Diploma in Counseling**

- Introduction to Counseling and other Helping professions
- Concepts in Psychology
- Human Growth and Development across the Lifespan
- Personal and Interpersonal Development of the Practitioner
- Counseling Process
- Counseling Theories
- Understanding Psychological Problems
- Theoretical Approaches to Counseling and Techniques
- Establishing boundaries for helping roles (New module introduced in 2018-19)
- Developing Self Awareness (New module introduced in 2018-19)
- Use of Self Awareness in helping roles (New module introduced in 2018-19)
- Issues of Ethics and Diversity in a helping role (Added in 2018-19)
- Field Practicum – I (Skill Workshops)
- Field Practicum – II (Field Work)

### **Course Details- Diploma in Youth Development and Social Change**

- Youth Identity and Development
- Citizenship And Participation
- Programmes, Policies, Schemes and Services for Youth
- Education and Livelihood
- Core Leadership Skills for Working with Youth
- Participatory Training Methodology for Development
- Field Practicum – I (Skill Workshops)
- Field Practicum – II (Field Work)

Through the years, the number of enrolments increased and included a range of professionals from varied backgrounds such as school teachers, counselors, homeopath doctors, lawyers, human resource personnel and social workers who wanted to upgrade their skills in their own professions. The learners also included homemakers and retired persons who were aiming to engage in voluntary work. The programs were also open to CYDA staff to improve their skills in working with the youth.

**Chart 1: Participants from Varied Professions in the Diploma Courses**

Qualification	Total
Homeopath doctor	5
Psychologist	4
Social worker	25
Teacher	15
Counselor	11
Lawyer	6
Homemaker	11
Corporate employee	10
Physiotherapist	1
Graduate Student	8
Dietician	1
Corporate Trainer	1
Gym Trainer	1
Bank Manager	1
Business person	4
Film maker	1

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's academic endeavor proved beneficial to young professionals and other interested residents of Pune for their upskilling in the areas of counseling, youth development and social change. A total of 92 participants were engaged in six batches of the counseling course and 13 participants in two batches of the youth development and social change course. The diploma courses provided an opportunity for professional education that helped participants advance further in their work and contribute to societal development and wellbeing.

*"I am a practicing homeopathic doctor and career counselor. My key objective in joining the course was to understand concepts of counseling and gain knowledge from experts. I learnt various theories of counseling, concepts of psychology and related fields. The skill-based workshops were immensely beneficial. I truly evolved and became a better person and most importantly I built close relationships with my batchmates."*

**Female, Second Batch of Diploma in Counseling**

*"The biggest advantage of the TISS-CYDA Diploma in Counseling is that it's a TISS course offered locally for Pune-ites. The location is convenient; the course covers the ground required for ensuring that participants get a solid understanding of their roles as counselors. The facilitators convey key learnings, drawing on their real life experience which serves as a valuable learning. The field work at the end of the course gives the much needed real life experience which helps students to apply the learnings in class and clarify their concepts in the real world."*

**Male, Third Batch of Diploma in Counseling**

*"I have been working with youth since 8 years and the course has given me a better perspective and improved my skills of working with youth."*

**Male, First Batch of Diploma in Youth Development and Social Change**

*"I joined the Diploma in Counseling course to hone my skills as a counselor. I have been working as a corporate trainer and was always good at giving people a new perspective. However, the course turned out to be serendipitous in nature, as I saw myself visiting new realms of myself- it engaged me to delve deeper into myself and gave insights into my behaviour. The course design is meticulous with a seamless structure, introducing concepts interspersed with life skills and field work. The friendship amongst the group of students was the most beautiful take away from this course. I would do it all over again if I was allowed!"*

**Female, Fourth Batch of Diploma in Counseling**

*"The course has provided me a rationale, scientific and practical knowledge of sustainable youth development. It has given me an insight on various issues of youth and their significant role in social change."*

**Male, First Batch of Diploma in Youth Development and Social Change**



**By Dilmehar Bhola**

President, CYDA



## CYDA's WASH movement: Schools with Three and Four-Star Ratings for WASH increased 7-fold!

*The progress among Zilla Parishad schools in Maharashtra, with regards to Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) infrastructure and practices has been inadequate, having a direct bearing on the health of students and overall school environment. To enable schools to improve their WASH infrastructure, CYDA engaged with Zilla Parishad schools across the Maharashtra. CYDA provided support to schools for preparing School Sanitation Development Plans and to leverage funds for their WASH infrastructure. It also provided training and technical support to schools as a part of the Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar (SVP) initiative of the government. CYDA's intervention benefitted several schools who improved their WASH infrastructure, received finances for WASH-related activities, and also improved their 'star-rating' under the SVP.*



**Nandurbar, Gadchiroli, Washim, Osmanabad, Nashik, Buldhana, Hingoli, Latur, Ch. Sambhaji Nagar (Aurangabad), Parbhani, Nanded, Pune, Satara and Kolhapur districts in Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Schools have been provided with mandates to strengthen their WASH infrastructure, but several studies have shown that progress in this regard has been inadequate. The World Health Organization (WHO) and United Nations Children's Fund's (UNICEF) Joint Monitoring Programme report 'Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: 2000-2021 Data Update'<sup>i</sup> reveals that 3 in 10 schools did not have a basic drinking water service, impacting 546 million school children, 28% did not have basic sanitation services, impacting 539 million children and 42% schools did not have basic hygiene services, impacting 802 million children as on 2021.

Maharashtra is currently recognized as an important state in the country, but this is not reflected in the facilities provided in its government schools. An SVP survey in 2016-17 showed the lack of water supply in 70% schools, poor toilet facility in 44% schools, need for handwashing stations in 60% schools and the need for inculcating WASH-related behavioural change in 52% of the Zilla Parishad schools surveyed<sup>ii</sup>. Similarly, a UNICEF study in 2018 found that 93% of schools surveyed in 12 districts of Maharashtra had no hand washing materials, toilets in 40% of the schools were unclean and litter was found in the premises of 67% schools<sup>iii</sup>. Many of the existing facilities were also in a state of disrepair having been constructed a long time ago, without proper operation and maintenance facilities. The lack of clean water, inadequate sanitation facilities and poor hygiene practices in schools has a detrimental effect on the health and overall wellbeing of students.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognizing the need for improvement in WASH facilities in government schools of Maharashtra to provide a healthy environment for students, CYDA engaged in various initiatives with schools.

Under the School Sanitation Programme of the government, schools are mandated to develop a School Sanitation Development Plan that helps monitor progress and leverage funds for WASH-related development and activities in schools. In order to mobilize schools in preparing this Plan, CYDA in collaboration with UNICEF organised an online state-level training on 'Benchmarking and Preparation of Swachhata Action Plan'. Over 2000 teachers and heads of Zilla Parishad schools across Maharashtra participated. Thereafter, according to a government five-star rating system to assess schools' performance in WASH, schools with one- and two-star ratings were selected for preparation of the School

Sanitation Development Plan to aid them in improving their WASH facilities. CYDA's team provided support to sensitize the school staff and school management committees of the selected schools to work on WASH facilities and sustain WASH behaviours for their school. These plans were then sent to the district level to prepare district-wise Swachhata Action Plans. These Plans enabled better monitoring of progress on WASH infrastructure in schools. More importantly they acted as a means through which schools could demand funds from various sources for building and maintaining their WASH infrastructure.

CYDA worked towards leveraging such funds for WASH infrastructure in schools. As per the Finance Commission, 60% of grant funds provided to Gram Panchayats are tied grants for supply of drinking water, rain water harvesting, water recycling, sanitation and maintenance of open defecation free status<sup>iv</sup>. In furtherance of this, CYDA co-ordinated with the Gram Panchayats for providing WASH-related funding to schools. At the state-level, CYDA worked to leverage corporate social responsibility funding from various businesses for WASH facilities in schools.

In collaboration with OCWEN, CYDA also assisted schools in preparing item wise intervention needed, such as augmentation, retrofitting or new construction of WASH-related infrastructure. It assisted schools in constructing handwash stations, supplying water storage tanks, augmenting toilets for boys and girls, addressing plumbing issues, fixing new tiles, etc. Through the WASH Mitras, CYDA enabled entrepreneurship for working on improving WASH-related infrastructure in schools, elaborated in **Case 6G**. Apart from this, CYDA engaged in several activities for capacity building of schools for improvements in WASH facilities and practices. For instance, CYDA encouraged celebration of several 'days' such as World Toilet Day, Global Handwashing Day, Menstrual Hygiene Day, etc. to improve WASH-related behaviours among students. With the support of Atlas Copco (India) Private Ltd., CYDA promoted WASH and hygiene practices among school children with specific focus on menstrual hygiene. WASH Clubs were created for school students to engage in leadership roles to ensure WASH-related behaviours among students.



During the pandemic, CYDA in association with CIE India and CIE AEL engaged in a 'Reopening of Schools in COVID-19 pandemic' project. The main aim of this project was to provide support to schools for re-opening while maintaining COVID-19 protocols and promoting COVID Appropriate Behaviours. Training and information, education, communication with the involvement of teachers, parents and students was done for following appropriate sanitation and hygiene practices.

CYDA also assisted schools for the government-led SVP program, where schools are awarded based on their star-ratings that reflect their performance in WASH. In 2022, CYDA organised a state-level training for the SVP nomination and provided technical support. It organised separate district-level and block-level trainings in 11 districts, where 2,597 teachers participated. Following this, a team of five CYDA representatives regularly followed up with schools. They shared the SVP app and dashboard links and supported 14,050 teachers in submitting forms for their respective schools. CYDA provided technical support through more than 25,000 phone calls to various teachers and heads of school to submit their forms for SVP. CYDA was also included as a part of the evaluation committee for the SVP. CYDA provided technical support in the evaluation process and conducted trainings for preparation of the evaluations across Maharashtra.

CYDA formulated a 'WASH in Schools Alliance' with government departments, development organisations, non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations, research organisations, corporate social responsibility wings, etc. to form a network for sharing knowledge, experiences and expertise to improve WASH facilities and practices in schools.

## OUTCOMES

Through its support in developing School Sanitation Development Plans and leveraging finances for WASH infrastructure through it, CYDA was able to garner funding to the tune of Rs. 18.37 crores for 180 schools which had a one- and two-star rating.

Based on data collected from SVP surveys in collaboration with UNICEF, a comparison was made between 2018 data on star-rating of schools with 2021. A total of 6242 schools from six districts of Maharashtra were covered in 2018 whereas 6085 schools were covered in 2021. The proportion of three-star rating schools improved considerably during the period, while one- and two-star rating schools reduced. This highlights the work done by CYDA with one- and two-star rating schools, which led to WASH-related improvements, increasing their star-rating as well.

**Table 1: Percentage of Schools with WASH-based Star ratings in 2018 and 2021**

District	Baseline 2018 (in %)				Endline 2021 (in %)			
	One star	Two star	Three star	Four Star	One star	Two star	Three star	Four Star
Washim	16.8	83.2	0	0	1.9	13	56.9	28.1
Osmanabad	9.4	71.7	17.2	1.8	3.8	21	72.4	2.8
Parbhani	43.2	45.0	11.8	0	9.7	32	57	1.3
Nandurbar	43.5	56.5	0	0	6.3	18	67.9	7.8
Gadchiroli	35.9	51.9	12.2	0	11.6	36.6	51.2	0.6
Aurangabad	8	51.1	31.7	9.2	9.9	25	63.4	1.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>30.6</b>	<b>59.6</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>7.2</b>	<b>24.6</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>6.4</b>

Owing to CYDA's intervention, WASH infrastructure has improved in several government schools in Maharashtra.



#### Appreciation from Schools for CYDA's initiative

*"We have two separate toilets for girls and boys. There was no proper drainage and outlet for the boys toilet, therefore smell used to spread in the surrounding areas and sometimes students would go back home for accessing toilets. There was an urgent need and accordingly, the renovation work was carried out through CYDA's initiative, which has had a great impact on the health of the students. We must thank you for this."*

**Head of Zilla Parishad School, Nehereshivar**

*"Back to Schools is a very nice and unique program for me and my students, because, it has improved WASH behaviours among teachers, non-teaching staff and the student community. After the School Management Committee (SMC) training, the SMC members are actively taking initiatives for development of the school and also taking day-to-day care of the school infrastructure"*

**Head of Zilla Parishad School, Bhivapur**

*"There was no hand wash station in our school and the toilet had no roof. Through CYDA's activities, the handwash station installation and renovation of toilet works were completed. It helps to maintain cleanliness in the school and surrounding areas. Now, we are using the facilities, we are very happy."*

**Class 6 student, Zilla Parishad School,  
Pavlewadi**





Thus, CYDA’s intervention enabled systemic changes for improving WASH-related infrastructure in schools and provided much-needed support to schools for the implementation and success of government initiatives related to WASH. This has also contributed positively to students’ health, learning, wellbeing and overall growth.



**i:** WHO and UNICEF. 2021. *Progress on Drinking Water, Sanitation and Hygiene in Schools: 2000-2021 Data Update*. <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/progress-on-drinking-water-sanitation-and-hygiene-in-schools-2000-2021-data-update>

**ii:** Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar. (2016-17). <https://swachhvidyalayapuraskar.com/>

**iii:** UNICEF. 2022. *Report on “Clean India: Clean Schools”*. <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/clean-india-clean-schools>

**iv:** Swachh Bharat Mission. *Rural Local Body Guidelines of The 15th Finance Commission*. [https://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/SBMCMS/writereaddata/portal/images/pdf/RLB\\_Guidelines\\_for\\_the\\_15th\\_FC.pdf](https://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/SBMCMS/writereaddata/portal/images/pdf/RLB_Guidelines_for_the_15th_FC.pdf)

**By Pravin Jadhav**  
Executive Director, CYDA

4B

## Open Defecation Free Campaign: 40% increase in toilet functionality, 28% increase in use



*While the Swachh Bharat Mission has focused on construction of toilets and achieving open defecation free status for villages, towns and cities, the endurance and sustainability of the initiative needs to be ensured. To fix the gaps in toilet construction and maintenance, and to ensure no open defecation over a period of time, CYDA engaged in several awareness generation and community mobilization activities that led to progress in actual use of toilets and fall in the practice of open defecation in villages of Navapur block, Nandurbar, Maharashtra.*

**Navapur Block, Nandurbar district, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Several government schemes specifically the Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) focused on sanitation infrastructure and achieving Open Defecation Free (ODF) status<sup>i</sup>. Recently the sustainability of sanitation structures and their usage has been given attention in rural areas through the 'Open Defecation Free-Sustainability (ODF-S). ODF-S prescribes for ensuring that the sanitation program does not limit to only achieving an ODF status, but engages in continuous strategies for making ODF achievements sustainable, providing a post-ODF intervention with clear implementation arrangements that offer continuous engagement with ODF communities and motivation.

### What is ODF?

According to Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) guidelines, ODF is the termination of fecal-oral transmission, defined by no visible feces found in the environment/village; and every household as well as public/community institutions using safe technology option for disposal of feces. There are 12 parameters provided by the guidelines. Mandatory parameters included that all households must have access to a toilet facility and should regularly use the toilet. Toilets should be fly proof with no human contact with fecal matter and have a safe disposal mechanism of the waste from toilets. At the village level no visible faeces should be found, toilets in other institutions like schools and anganwadis should be regularly used and have safe disposal mechanisms. Other optional parameters included practice of hand-washing before meals, handwashing with soap after defecation, availability of soap and water in or near the toilet.

Nandurbar district in Maharashtra was part of the "Transformation of Aspirational Districts" program by the NITI Aayog under which 101 backward districts across India were to be "quickly" transformed through provision of basic facilities, such as toilets. In the baseline conducted by NITI Aayog, Nandurbar district had the lowest score among the four districts selected from Maharashtra (Gadchiroli, Washim, Osmanabad)<sup>ii</sup>. While Maharashtra including Nandurbar was declared ODF in April 2018.<sup>iii</sup> However, a survey conducted by CYDA in Navapur block, Nandurbar showed that out of the 53,464 households in the 114 Gram Panchayats of Navapur (with a population of 2,71,852 of which 86% is tribal (ST) population), 22,717

households reported practicing open defecation. Poor quality of construction, lack of the operation and maintenance of toilets and lack of behavioral change were some of the reasons reported behind dysfunctional toilets and practice of open defecation.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

In order to ensure the practice of ODF and move towards achieving sustainable ODF, CYDA has been engaged in several activities in Navapur block, Nandurbar from 2018 to 2022.

Meetings and discussions were conducted with key leaders of the village such as Gram panchayat members, Anganwadi etc. to educate them about Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH), seek their ideas and support to address the issue of ODF. The importance of positive hygiene behaviour and community-led approaches for sustainable change was highlighted in the meetings. An exposure visit was organized for 50 people including the village sarpanch (head) and other village leaders to an ODF Gram Panchayat in Aurangabad district to help communities in first-hand learning. This Gram Panchayat had made several efforts through creative methods, community engagement and regular monitoring to maintain their ODF status.



The meetings/sessions were also conducted with women since they are more affected by open defecation practices. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) strategies such as the use of wall paintings, posters and banners were employed. WASH days such as the Global Hand Washing Day, World Toilet Day, campaigns on sanitation by the Government of Maharashtra and Government of India were celebrated. Special days were organized to reinforce the concept of sustainable WASH practices.

Ratri Chaupal or Ratri Sabhas were held to mobilize the community for behaviour change. It was used to trigger people and help them reflect on their situation, and to make up their minds to seek collective action for improving sanitation. Through the Chaupal, a voluntary committee for monitoring open defecation, referred to as the Nigrani Samiti was set up. The Samiti included women, men, youth and children from different hamlets/areas in a village. Members of women self-help groups



played an active role in the Nigrani Samiti. Nigrani Samiti decided about their morning follow-up exercise to ensure ODF in the Ratri Chaupal. Consequently, in the morning the Samiti volunteers would go around the village, particularly visiting open defecation sites, and providing messaging to offenders. This was referred to as “good morning Pathak” exercise. CYDA conducted Ratri Chaupal in 110 Gram Panchayats in Navapur, of which Nigrani Samitis have been formed in 109 with active Good Morning Pathaks.

For households that had toilet facilities or wanted to construct/repair toilets, awareness was done to motivate villagers to enhance usage of their toilets or repair defunct toilets. Along with the Gram Panchayat, CYDA helped identify households eligible for new toilets under the SBM. Special sessions were also conducted with 770 masons involved in constructing toilets. The sessions focused on helping masons to learn more about the techniques of constructing/repairing toilets as per SBM guidelines. A total of 10,660 toilets were constructed or repaired with the support of CYDA till January 2022.

CYDA also engaged in providing awareness and guiding behavioural change for better solid and liquid waste management, which is an essential part of ODF-S. For this, Visarwadi village in Navapur has been developed as a model. IEC trainings and capacity building of various village leaders was done for generating awareness and behavioural change in managing both solid and liquid waste. For liquid waste, villagers are encouraged to use wastewater in their kitchen garden and through proper construction/repair of toilets the use of effective disposal methods has been ensured. For solid waste management, CYDA collaborated with TrashTech for implementation of segregation and recovery facilities, elaborated in **Case 6F**.

CYDA also engaged with 13,406 students in schools, 2,500 students in Ashramshalas and 5,070 children in Anganwadi Centres for WASH related behavioral change. This included imparting WASH training through storytelling, demonstration of correct handwashing process, demonstration of toilet use, importance of personal hygiene and maintaining hygiene in their environment. Child Cabinets with ‘Minister’ students overseeing different areas of WASH in their schools were appointed to lead fellow students.

## OUTCOMES

By 2022, 109 out of 114 Gram Panchayats remained ODF Compliant. A pre- and post-intervention evaluation survey was conducted for mapping ODF-related progress in the villages. Toilet use across the villages increased considerably from 68% in the baseline to 96% in the endline.



**Table 1: Toilet functionality and use**

Indicator	Pre-intervention (2018)	Post-intervention (2021)
Households with Toilet	58%	90%
Toilet Functionality	58%	98%
Members of the family using toilet	68%	96%

At the school level, overall students who washed their hands before lunch increased from 42% to 98% in the intervention period. Awareness-generation among school leaders also led to an increase in schools with separate toilets for boys and girls. Under the SBM, Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar scheme schools are to be rated based on availability of WASH facilities including drinking water, handwashing, waste management, sanitation, and its operation and maintenance, regular IEC and teacher training for behavioural change. Most schools moved from 2-star to 3-star rating in the intervention period while 3% schools under the intervention also achieved a 4-star rating.

**Table 2: Improvements at the School-level**

Indicator		Pre-intervention (2018)	Post-intervention (2021)
Number of schools with star rating	1 star	6.4%	0%
	2 star	86.3%	14%
	3 star	7.3%	80%
	4 star	0%	3%
Students wash their hands before lunch		42%	98%
Schools with separate toilets for boys and girls		70%	83%

Through its intervention in sustaining improvements in rural sanitation, CYDA has provided a valuable example of community and non-government organisation support and continuous efforts in making government schemes successful.



**i:** Ministry of Jal Shakti. 2015. Swachh Bharat Mission (Gramin) Guidelines. [https://jalshakti-ddws.gov.in/sites/default/files/SBM\(G\)\\_Guidelines.pdf](https://jalshakti-ddws.gov.in/sites/default/files/SBM(G)_Guidelines.pdf)

**ii:** NITI Aayog. 2018. Transformation of Aspirational Districts Baseline Ranking 2018. <https://niti.gov.in/sites/default/files/2018-12/AspirationalDistrictsBaselineRankingMarch2018.pdf>

**iii:** Ghadyalpatil A. Maharashtra now an open defecation free state: CM Devendra Fadnavis. 18.04.2018. The Mint. <https://www.livemint.com/Politics/kcRwGgY4CmMDHHa94MrrNL/Maharashtra-now-an-open-defecationfree-state-Fadnavis.html>

**By Pravin Jadhav**

Executive Director, CYDA

## Fighting Child Malnutrition: Nutritional Status of 74% SAM and 87% MAM Children Improved in 3 years



*Malnutrition is a primary health concern among children in Nandurbar district of Maharashtra. Recognising the need to work on improving nutrition among children and their mothers, including pregnant women, CYDA engaged in several interventions through awareness, community mobilization and coalescing with government agencies for improving nutritional and maternal care services. A post-intervention evaluation showed considerable improvement in children who moved from malnourished to normal nutritional status, and an increase in the uptake of government services such as referral care.*

**Akraani and Akkalkuva Block, Nandurbar district, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Malnutrition among children is a grave public health concern and India accounts for one third of the global burden<sup>i</sup>. Malnutrition among infants leads to stunted growth, delayed cognitive development, high risk of infections and mortality. In Nandurbar, Maharashtra a predominant tribal district, notified as 'backward' by the government, malnutrition is a serious problem. Nandurbar also suffers from high maternal and infant mortality rates. Government data of malnutrition among under six children in Nandurbar revealed 3,687 SAM and 14,673 MAM cases in 2018<sup>ii</sup>. 844 child deaths (0-6 years) were reported in 2018-19<sup>iii</sup>. Malnutrition is especially grave in the remote blocks of Akrani, Akkalkuwa and Taloda in the Satpura hills.

High malnutrition points to a cycle of poor nutrition among girls, undernourished mothers, and consequently malnourished infants that increases the risk of mortality. Social factors such as lack of education, large families, child marriage, unemployment and inadequate health facilities have an adverse impact on maternal and child nutrition and their overall health.

### Malnutrition Explained

As per the World Health Organisation (WHO)<sup>iv</sup>, malnutrition refers to "deficiencies or excesses in nutrient intake, imbalance of essential nutrients or impaired nutrient utilization." Malnutrition refers to both undernutrition and overnutrition.

We presently deal with undernutrition which includes:

**Wasting:** Low weight-for-height

**Stunting:** Low height-for-age

**Underweight:** Low weight-for-age

**Micronutrient deficiencies:** Lack of essential vitamins and minerals

The severity of undernutrition measured through wasting and arm circumference as per WHO Child Growth Standards is as follows:

**Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM):** Low weight-for-height (z-score between -2 and -3 SD), or mid-upper arm circumference between 115 millimeters and <125 millimeters

**Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM):** Very low weight-for-height (z-score below -3 SD), or a mid-upper arm circumference < 115 mm, or by the presence of nutritional oedema.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognising the need for addressing acute malnutrition in Nandurbar, CYDA engaged in a series of interventions across 100 villages in Akraani and Akkalkuva blocks in the district from 2019. CYDA understands the benefit of using community's insights to design and co-create interventions to ensure that such interventions are adopted and acceptable to the community. The interventions were accordingly based on initial interactions with villagers to better understand the reason for high malnutrition among children and maternal and infant mortality in the villages.

Following this, CYDA first engaged in home visits to educate and spread awareness about breastfeeding, complementary feed, supplementary nutrition, vaccination, antenatal and postnatal care, family planning and maintaining water and sanitation facilities.

Weekly village cleanliness drives were also organised to guide residents on appropriate practices related to sanitation and hygiene and its importance for nutrition and overall health. Monthly vaccination days were also organised and concerned beneficiaries were mobilised to avail vaccination services.

Residents were encouraged to create kitchen gardens so that women (pregnant and lactating) and their children can be provided with nutritious food. With the help of Krishi Kendra Nandurbar, CYDA's team underwent complete training on kitchen gardens and shared it with the villagers along with a kitchen garden kit which included seeds of brinjal, chilies, tomatoes, tubers, leafy vegetables and other fruits and vegetables.

CYDA engaged with the Anganwadis under the Integrated Child Development Services scheme of the Government of India to monitor weekly the identification and registration of high-risk pregnant women as well as under-five SAM and MAM children. CYDA organised fortnightly meetings with women through the Anganwadis, guiding them on the first thousand days of motherhood.



This was done through innovative activities including games and videos in the local language. CYDA's team also participated in local festivals through which they inculcated the importance of and appropriate practices for the first thousand days of motherhood. CYDA conducted regular monitoring of under-five SAM and MAM children by ensuring their daily dietary intake, home visits, follow-up with parents regarding diet, hygiene and vaccination.

CYDA also acted as a link for mothers and children in accessing referral services, especially in high-risk cases. For instance, if any child under the SAM category fell sick, CYDA would ensure a referral to the Nutritional Rehabilitation Centre (NRC) at the block level for treatment. Children generally received 14-day treatment at the NRC and after recovery they would be sent back to the village. Similarly, high-risk cases of pregnant women would be referred to the clinic or hospital for treatment.

As a part of CYDA's intervention to address malnutrition, health workers and women and child development workers in the Anganwadi were also provided training on the importance of first thousand days of motherhood. Trainings included information on how to conduct home visits, how to counsel concerned beneficiaries, etc. Some of the villages did not have easy access to healthcare services such as hospitals for deliveries. So that the pregnant women do not suffer during the time of delivery, local midwives or 'dai' were trained on how to ensure safe deliveries. CYDA also ensured co-ordination with the Community Nutrition Worker (Poshan Prahari) in maintaining work reports, monitoring behavioural change communication and social mobilisation, etc.

CYDA conducted monthly meetings with officers of the Health Department and Women and Child Development Department. The meetings included discussion on challenges faced and help required from the government in improving child health and nutrition in the villages.

## OUTCOMES

The intervention by CYDA was well received and included a total of 3,091 beneficiaries. It led to improvement in referral services for better healthcare for pregnant women. Out of 1,750 high-risk pregnant mothers, 1,200 pregnant mothers were provided complete antenatal care with iron sucrose supplements and hospital deliveries.

A 41-year-old woman in Shelke, Dhadgaon had six children and was pregnant for the seventh time. Her haemoglobin level was only 6 g/dl while the ideal is between 12 to 16 g/dl, resulting in swollen limbs and fatigue. The staff from Women and Child Development and Health Department had requested her multiple times admitted to the block level Referral Hospital, but there was no response from her. When the CYDA team got to know of this case from an ASHA worker (Accredited Social Health Activist under National Health Mission) they visited her home and counselled her and her husband regarding the risk of not taking treatment in such a condition. After much persuasion the woman agreed to avail of the government services. Thereafter she received two antenatal care services at the block-level Referral Hospital, along with blood transfusion and iron sucrose supplements. Due to low haemoglobin, she was admitted two days prior to her delivery date at the hospital. She gave birth to healthy twin girls- weighing 2.7kg and 2.4kg.



Of the 462 SAM children monitored during the intervention, 200 with medical problems were referred to the NRC for treatment.

*A 12-month-old girl in Burkhetpada, Dhadgoan was severely malnourished (SAM category) and CYDA team was informed that she was ill since the past three weeks. Her haemoglobin was below 5g/dl and her head had blisters. Her mother was not at home due to a quarrel with the husband. The child's grandfather was a traditional healer and insisted on treating her at home instead of sending her to the hospital. For one week, the CYDA team went to their house every day, requesting them to admit the child to the hospital. Another team with UNICEF representatives also accompanied and counselled the family members. The child was eventually admitted to the block-level NRC, however due to her serious condition she was sent to the district-level NRC. There the child was in need of blood, but her blood group was not available in the blood bank at that time. A CYDA team-member donated blood thereafter for the child's treatment. The girl was monitored in the NRC for 21 days after which her haemoglobin increased to 8g/dl. Her weight also increased by 1.5 kg, after which she was safely sent home. As a followup, CYDA conducted counselling with the family members to ensure that the child is sent to the Anganwadi everyday for monitoring.*

One of the biggest successes under the intervention was the improvement in nutrition status among children. Nutrition status of 340 SAM children (out of 462) improved to normal at the end of the intervention in 2021. Further 700 MAM children (out of 802) improved in their nutrition status to the normal category.

Further, 500 families with SAM/MAM children, 400 high-risk pregnant women and 100 lactating mothers created home gardens or kitchen gardens which they felt benefited them as well as their families towards a more nutritionally-diverse diet.

Overall, mothers and children in the intervention areas were able to increase their access to health services provided by the government. Attitudinal change and recognition of best practices for maternal and child nutrition, helped improve the overall health of mothers and their children. Through the intervention, CYDA has secured the future of several communities by preventing their children from falling into a cycle of malnutrition.



**i:** Global Nutrition Report 2018 <https://globalnutritionreport.org/reports/global-nutrition-report-2018/>

**ii:** Joshi P. 19.09.2020. Nandurbar administration explains spike in child malnutrition, attributes increase to data collection during this period. IndieJournal. <https://www.indiejournal.in/article/nandurbar-administration-explains-spike-in-child-malnutrition-attributes-increase-to-data-collection-during-this-period>

**iii:** Shelar M. 24.12.2022. Four thousand child deaths in five years. Lokmat

**iv:** World Health Organisation. Child Growth Standards. <https://www.who.int/tools/child-growth-standards>

**By Vasim Shaikh**

Project Coordinator, WASH Unit



## Entrepreneurship Opportunities make Successful Business Women

*The COVID-19 pandemic brought several hardships for women who lost their family members including financial instability, emotional trauma and increased vulnerability. CYDA's intervention provided an opportunity for such women to rebuild their lives and livelihood, through the entrepreneurship development trainings. Consequently, several women who participated in these trainings and received business-related support from CYDA, started or expanded their business to support their families.*



**Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur, Pune and Nagpur districts in Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic and ensuing lockdowns gave rise to unprecedented hardships and for many families led to both the loss of lives and livelihoods. Several studies have documented the adverse impact of the pandemic on women. Women who lost their spouse faced several hardships including challenges in paperwork due to lack of information after their husband's death<sup>i</sup>, increased vulnerability to abuse from family members<sup>ii</sup> and the loss of an earning family member leading to financial instability<sup>iii</sup>. Moreover, existing vulnerabilities such as caste and gender inequalities disproportionately impacted women's ability to restore their lives and livelihoods during the pandemic<sup>iv</sup>.

Recognizing the vulnerabilities of families who had lost their dear ones to COVID-19 and also faced financial hardships, CYDA conducted a study in June 2021 to assess the extent of the issue and gauge the immediate requirements of such families in urban slum areas of Pune city. 61% of 800 families reported loss of the only breadwinner of their family. Since most of the deceased members worked in the informal sector, 95% families reported having no social protection schemes such as pension or insurance. 93% families surveyed requested for livelihood support such as assistance in finding jobs or starting a business. 88% also requested food support and 90% asked for educational support for their children.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

CYDA decided to assist the families who had lost their sole earning member, by providing them with entrepreneurship development trainings and support to start their own businesses. COVID-19 affected families, specifically widows with children who required livelihood support were targeted under the intervention. Need identification surveys were conducted in 2022 in the five intervention districts- Pune, Kolhapur, Satara, Sangli and Nagpur with 1060 persons. CYDA contacted participants telephonically and counseled them to become part of the training. Based on this, interested participants were identified for the training.

Thereafter entrepreneurship development trainings were conducted by trained personnel. This included trainings in formulating business ideas, developing business plans, understanding markets, financial literacy, digital literacy, knowledge of government schemes, legal compliances and documentation, marketing and promotions, financial support for start-ups, business management and implementation etc. for setting up and managing businesses.

The trainers also engaged in one-on-one discussions with women participants who were facing trouble coming out of their homes for the first time after their spouse's death and going through emotional trauma. It was also observed that the trainings acted as a means through which women participants received support from one another, since they faced similar grief and problems. Regular mentoring and counseling support was provided to all the participants to start their business.

After the training, many participants started their business and CYDA also provided support in sustaining these businesses. Marketing support was provided such as training on retention of customers, promotion of the business online, etc. They were provided with income-expenses passbooks to keep records of the income and expenses of their business. Women were also encouraged to participate in several exhibitions and flea markets. In collaboration with 10Stitch, an upcycling clothing brand and Nava Aahar, a healthy food brand, women's business products were branded and marketed through exhibitions and outlets. In collaboration with Yes Talk, CYDA provided a platform for the women to share their journeys of starting a business, to inspire other women. Through CYDA's corporate social responsibility network, seed capital support was provided to 300 participants.

A similar entrepreneurship development was also done with persons from the LGBTQIA+ community in Maharashtra, details of which can be found in **Case 6A**



## OUTCOMES

CYDA's intervention provided crucial and timely support to COVID-19 affected families facing financial hardships. It enabled women who had lost their spouse to COVID-19 to start afresh and gain confidence in living their lives and earning for themselves and their families.

The training helped increase women's self-confidence and communication skills. Women now travelled and worked for hours outside their home, talked to strangers and engaged with clients and customers.

*"I was in depression for one year, all of our women group that came for the training shared the same grief. With each other's support we started our business. Relatives are there but CYDA has supported us like a family. Business has made me so busy that now I don't get time to think about my grief."*

### Participant of CYDA's Entrepreneurship Development Training

Women who did not have control over their own lives now seek to employ other women in their businesses to empower them. They act as role models for the community, especially for women suffering similar challenges.

*"My social status increased since I am doing some work and people are now appreciating me."*

### Participant of CYDA's Entrepreneurship Development Training

*"I have never been outside the house; I was not having any knowledge of the market. I and other ladies received lot of support from the CYDA to come out and attend the training."*

### Participant of CYDA's Entrepreneurship Development Training



## Success Story

*A woman from Satara who lost her husband during the first wave of COVID-19, was able to start a pickle business with the support of CYDA's intervention. Her husband had blood cancer and succumbed to it when infected with COVID-19. She was a daily wage worker, but after her husband's death gave up work and was falling into depression. Her friends helped her out and she got to know about CYDA's entrepreneurship development training. When she attended the training, she got an idea of a pickling business especially turmeric pickle which she used to give her ailing husband. She was motivated to start the business but did not have any money to do so. Through CYDA's support she received Rs. 10,000 as seed capital for starting her business. CYDA also supported her in getting food licenses, packaging, marketing etc. She went from shop to shop and after tasting her pickle, many shopkeepers started keeping her product. She started receiving many orders for her turmeric pickle and people demanded for other pickles as well. Gradually her business did well enough for her to earn around Rs. 50,000 per month. She is saving Rs 4000 each month and now plans to purchase her own packaging machine and also expand her business beyond Satara. Through CYDA she was chosen for participating in a YES Summit at Kolkata- "I went to Kolkata for the YES summit and my confidence increased. I learnt new things from all the lectures at the summit. I also got an opportunity to speak on stage. I had never thought that I will speak on stage. I thought I will die after my husband's death, but the business support provided by CYDA gave me new confidence." She is now inspired to support other women in her community- "I have recruited two ladies as my village ladies who have to go and work across different villages, my future is to provide employment to ladies and support other ill people like my husband."*

CYDA's intervention has provided an example of a successful women's entrepreneurship model by empowering women to start businesses and support their families. In the future, CYDA aims to create greater awareness among men in including women in businesses and providing continued support to women entrepreneurs in sustaining and scaling their business. Likewise, CYDA also started another initiative for empowering women to take up jobs in non-traditional livelihood sectors elaborated in **Case 5B**.

## Success Story

A 37-year-old woman from Sangli lost her husband to COVID-19. She was involved in tailoring but that was not sufficient to support her family of seven. She got an opportunity to attend CYDA's entrepreneurship development training after which she decided to introduce some changes in her business. She decided to give a fashion designing twist to her tailoring business. She received a seed capital of Rs. 10,000 from CYDA using which she bought the latest multi-function sewing machine. Using this machine saved her time, gave a fine finishing to her clothing and enabled her to do buttoning, zardozi work, fall-pico etc. with ease. She now designs different types of blouses, ghaghra-choli, salwar-kurti, sarees, quilts, tarpaulins etc. She started using WhatsApp as a marketing platform where she regularly updates new work samples and designs. She now asks for feedback from her customers about her work and improves her designs accordingly. While earlier she earned Rs. 800 to 1,400 per month, this increased to Rs. 4,000 to Rs 9,000 per month. During Diwali her monthly income crossed Rs. 10,000. She aims to expand her business, while also save for her children's education and marriage.





- i:** Roy L. 24.01.2022 How Life Changed for The COVID Widows of India. Outlook India <https://www.outlookindia.com/national/how-life-changed-for-the-covid-widows-of-india-news-46912>
- ii:** Khanna M. 31.08.2021. India's COVID 19 Widows. Think Global Health <https://www.thinkglobalhealth.org/article/indias-covid-19-widows>
- iii:** Pineiro K. and Kathuria P. 30.01.2022 Rural Gujarat: No Land for Widows. The Wire. <https://thewire.in/women/rural-gujarat-no-land-for-widows>
- iv:** Kulkarni S. Bhat S. Harshe P. and Satpute S. Locked out of livelihoods: impact of COVID-19 on single women farmers in Maharashtra, India. Economics, Politics and Social Sciences(Bologna). 39(1):185-202

**By Jyostna Bahirat**

Chief Operating Officer, YouthAid Foundation

5B

## We will decide what is Normal! Women take up Male-dominated Jobs



*Recognizing the need to empower women to live independent lives and to break gender stereotypes prevalent in society, CYDA started the Non-Traditional Livelihoods initiative in Pune. Through this initiative CYDA trained young women to pursue careers in sectors traditionally dominated by males. Through the program CYDA not only increased awareness towards non-traditional livelihoods and provided skill-based training to young women but also enabled several women to successfully join companies or start businesses in non-traditional occupations, becoming financially independent and breaking gender stereotypes.*

**Yerawada and Tadiwala, Pune, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

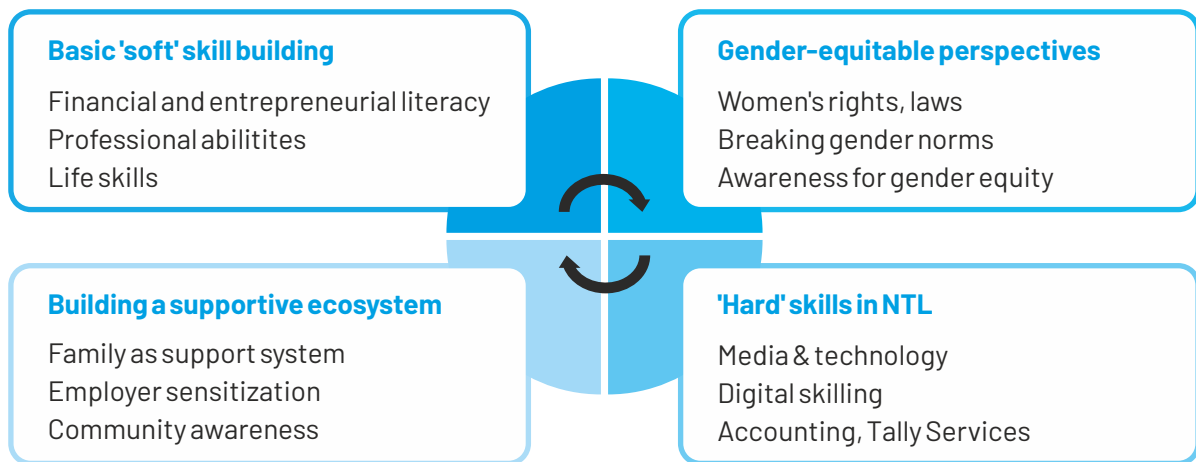
Women empowerment is a precondition for a just, sustainable and right based economy. Yet women continue to be disproportionately affected by poverty, discrimination and exploitation. The participation of women in India's labour force is low due to gender discrimination in terms of wages and opportunities. Moreover, such gender discrimination is responsible for the over representation of women in insecure and low wage jobs.

CYDA found that women in communities where the organisation worked, had been systematically excluded from higher education, vocational trainings and as a result from remunerative work and employment. Families and households gave greater priority to the education and training of boys and men, creating a vicious cycle whereby girls and women were consistently denied an opportunity to improve their work and employment prospects, their access and capacity for decision-making and determining the course of their own lives. A survey of 348 women conducted by CYDA showed that 45% of young women from low-income families had studied until 8th or 10th grade, which was not enough for better career opportunities. 11% worked as labour, 7% as housemaids while the rest were dependent on their family members' income. However, the survey found that majority of the women (72%) were ready to work and open to engaging in occupations traditionally dominated by males.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

In order to promote livelihood opportunities among women and to present a case for gender-equitable livelihoods, CYDA started its Non-Traditional Livelihoods (NTL) initiative in 2020. Non-traditional livelihoods refer to the engagement of women in jobs and sectors traditionally considered to be the domain of men. This enables a breaking of gender stereotypes in society, while also building self-esteem and economic independence of women. It is said to increase livelihood choices available to girls and young women and provide them access and control over skills, technology, market, mobility and resources. For the initiative, it was essential to build an ecosystem comprising family, community, employers and the women that could enable the success of non-traditional livelihoods.





CYDA first engaged in mobilizing women for non-traditional livelihood job roles. Individual and group orientation meetings were held with the women to make them understand about the importance of non-traditional livelihoods. To understand their interest and need in the program, focus group discussions were also conducted in the communities. Through these orientation sessions, women were explained about the opportunities in the field. Based on their willingness and interest in such jobs, women were then selected for training under the program.

Post the selection of women, a five day soft skills training was conducted to build effective relationships and enhance their listening, communication, critical thinking and problem solving abilities. Women were trained in their personality development, self-identity, gender sensitivity, spoken English, communication, interview skills, CV writing and women rights and laws. This helped the young women to boost their confidence level and feel independent to work in non-traditional fields and also ensure their retention once they are placed in jobs.

Followed by soft skills, based on the interest and evaluation of the women they were trained ahead for hard skills. Such training included specific job-profile related skills including graphic designing, repairing of home appliances, plumbing, managing petrol pumps, electrical works, mobile repairing, accountancy, computer languages, security, tourism, etc. This enabled young women to acquire specialized knowledge and enhance technical abilities/skills.

Entrepreneurship Development Training was provided to those young women who wanted to initiate their own businesses rather than work for someone. Women were trained in how to set up businesses, fund raising, marketing, etc. Women interested in plumbing, repairing automobiles and repairing home appliances particularly chose to start their own businesses.

For the others, CYDA provided placement support based on their skills and interests. CYDA collaborated with various platforms to explore job placements for the women. CYDA also conducted follow-up visits three months after the placement, with the women as well as the employer.

For providing a supportive environment to women in non-traditional livelihoods, CYDA also conducted community-level awareness campaigns to highlight the importance of non-traditional livelihoods, encourage young girls to opt for non-conventional career choices. Street plays followed by discussions were organized in the community to raise awareness and acceptance of non-traditional livelihoods. The sensitization of employers was also done by CYDA to ensure that the workplace is safe and gender-sensitive.

CYDA has formed an NTL alliance- a networking group with local leaders, experts, like minded NGOs, women working on gender issues and other key stakeholders. The said group meets once in every quarter, to resolve issues and frame suggestions for challenges faced by women in non-traditional livelihoods. The group provides guidance to ensure sustainability of women's jobs and effective implementation of the project.

CYDA also has a related initiative for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education to encourage young girls to adopt STEM related fields as a career choice, elaborated in **Case 1B**.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's initiative helped increase awareness towards non-traditional livelihoods, encouraging girls and young women to widen their career choices and break gender stereotypes. It helped women in building their personalities, leadership and communication skills increasing their self-confidence.

## Building Confidence and Self-Respect through Non-Traditional Livelihoods

*"Initially I felt the work is hard, but I could learn it in 2 days and now my confidence has boosted up and I will continue working further. Girls if decide can do anything, we need to take the step ahead."*

**Beneficiary, CYDA's NTL initiative**

*"My husband was of the opinion that women should only confine themselves to household chores. However, when they saw me earning and supporting the family during COVID they promoted me. Hence, I urge women to take up this field and become independent."*

**Beneficiary, CYDA's NTL initiative**



Of the 519 women selected and imparted soft skills, 455 continued in the hard skills training of which 236 have been placed across different sectors upto now, 15 started their own businesses and the remaining are in the process of placement. Some of the women did drop out due to migration, health and other issues, but a majority of the women have become financially independent through pursuing non-traditional livelihoods. Women have been placed as petrol pump assistants, machine operators, delivery assistants, accountants, security guards and electricians at various companies such as Delivery.com, Bharat Petroleum, Ansec Securities etc.

In line with this initiative, CYDA has also been successful in providing support to women in COVID-19 affected families to start/restart their businesses to become financially independent and support their families, elaborated in **Case 5A**.

## Women at the Petrol Pump: Case Stories from the NTL Program

*A 23-year-old woman lives with her uncle, aunt and grandmother after losing her parents at a young age. Aware of her family's situation, she studied till the 11th grade and then began working as a security guard to support her family. However, she lost her job during the COVID-19 pandemic and her uncle became the sole breadwinner, leading to financial constraints for the family. When she came across CYDA's NTL program she decided to join it. After the training she became assertive, and her communication skills improved. She successfully secured a job at a petrol pump overcoming gender barriers and proving that careers do not have a gender- "There is no shame in having any job. Although men and women are different physically, in terms of jobs, women can do the same job as men." She now earns Rs. 12,000 per month and supports her family. Her family and neighbours are filled with pride seeing her working in a male dominated field. Even her customers often appreciate her spirit and ambition. "It is a matter of pride for my family to see me working alongside men. I don't have parents to show me the right direction or guide me towards the right path. I am very grateful to CYDA for guiding me on the right path. I hope the organization continues helping girls become self-reliant."*



*A 19-year-old girl lived with her family in Pune. Her mother, a domestic worker and the sole breadwinner of her family of six, lost her job in the COVID-19 lockdown. Her family survived on free ration kits and loans. Although she wanted to work to support her family she had failed her 10th grade exam and was unsure of her future. Through CYDA's Youth Resource Center she got to know of the NTL program and participated in the same. Thereafter she secured a job at a petrol pump earning Rs. 10,000 per month. "I am very happy with the work at the Petrol Pump. I have learned new things and now know how to interact with others at work and how to present myself in a work environment. I am thankful to CYDA for their guidance and support." She also restarted her education and successfully completed her 10th grade. She is now part of the NTL Network mobilising other girls like her to join the program, through her own example- "No work is small. Develop yourself and show your skills."*



In conclusion, CYDA has played a crucial role in empowering the lives of several women and acting as an agent of change towards a more gender-just society.

**By Neela Kale**

Director, RMU



6A

## Rainbow Revolution: Equitable Rights and Opportunities for LGBTQIA+



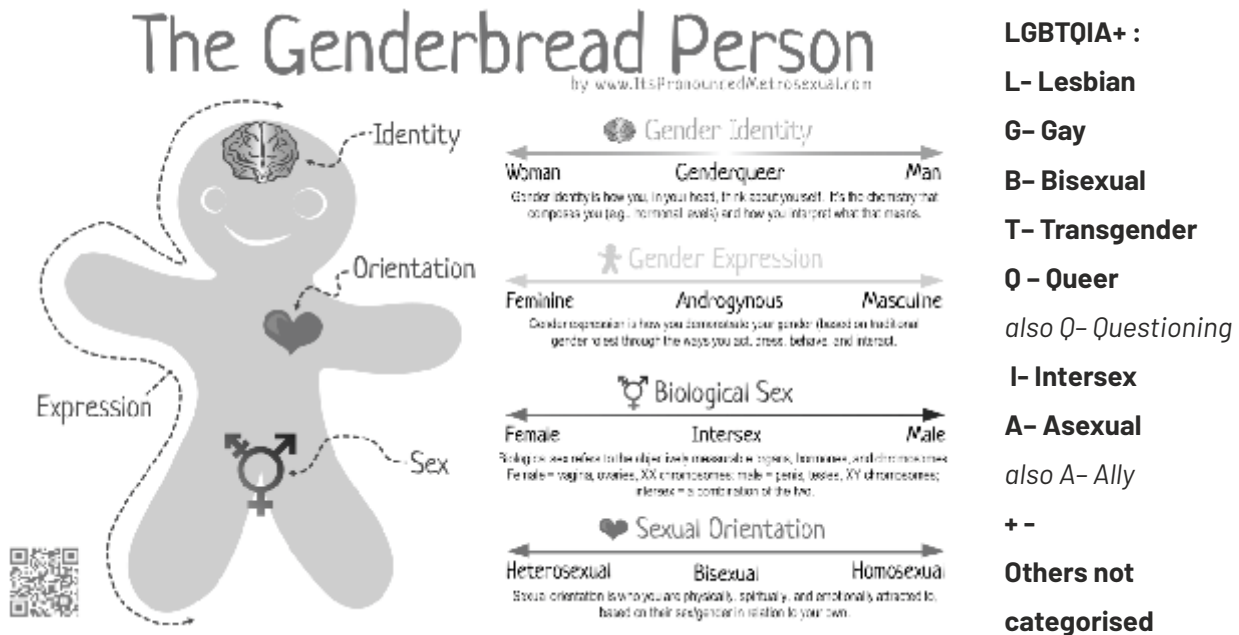
*LGBTQIA+ persons have historically faced discrimination and abuse, denying them equal social, economic and political rights and opportunities. Recognising the need to work towards providing equal and holistic rights to those identifying themselves as a part of the LGBTQIA+, CYDA is engaged in several interventions with the community related to livelihood generation, physical and mental health and overall wellbeing. This has enabled better self-employment opportunities among the LGBTQIA+ community in Pune, while it has also increased confidence and wellbeing among the participants.*

**Pune city, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

The LGBTQIA+ population in India is faced with multiple challenges owing to stigma and lack of societal acceptance at large. This is manifested in their social and economic status where equal rights have not been accorded to this set of population. According to the 2011 Census in India<sup>1</sup>, around 5 lakh individuals reported “other” in their gender category. While this is most likely an underestimate, various studies report how gender identities and sexual orientations not conforming to the ‘binary’, have led to discrimination and abuse. This includes lack of equal educational and livelihood opportunities, lack of social acceptance and absence of basic human rights such as the right to have a family, poor access to health, social security and other services/schemes of the State. The discrimination attached to being LGBTQIA+ also hinders some individuals from showcasing their identity or orientation explicitly.

An assessment study done by CYDA with 304 LGBTQIA+ persons in Pune showed that almost 75% had poor livelihood options and engaged in begging or sex work. 69% respondents were not with their family because of their sexuality and 68% had faced some form of abuse (verbal, physical, psychological).



## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognising the need to work towards providing equal and holistic rights to those identifying themselves as a part of the LGBTQIA+, CYDA is engaged in several interventions with the community since 2019, for improving livelihood opportunities and their health and wellbeing.

CYDA started an awareness campaign "Satrangi Charcha" on rights, opportunities and self-identity for LGBTQIA+ persons. It provides awareness to LGBTQIA+ persons about their rights, freedoms and entitlements, empowering them to advocate for their rights, and confront discrimination and prejudice. It also provides a platform for LGBTQIA+ persons and other community members, to facilitate interaction without preconceived judgements or biases. Discussions included topics such as gender and its typology, gender roles, sexual orientation, and dispelling myths. Another initiative "Rainbow Katta" serves as a safe and inclusive platform designed to promote understanding, acceptance and empowerment within the LGBTQIA+ community and among its allies. Conducted every Sunday and on special days like Transgender Visibilities Day, Friendship Day, National Coming Out Day, etc. this event celebrates diversity, raises awareness about LGBTQIA+ issues, and fosters inclusivity where members can be themselves without societal pressure or stigma.

Awareness sessions were held with 653 LGBTQIA+ persons where they were acquainted with anti-discrimination laws, marriage rights, equality, adoption rights, and other relevant entitlements. Additionally, the participants were briefed about various government schemes and their benefits. They were informed about schemes such as Atal Pension Yojana (APJ) and Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise (SMILE). Under the SMILE scheme, detailed information was provided on different categories, including certificates and ID cards, scholarships, skill training and composite medical health. Participants were informed about "Garima Greh," a shelter for destitute and abandoned transgender persons, which aims to provide basic amenities such as shelter, food, medical care, and recreational facilities. Participants were informed about the National Portal for Transgender Persons, Govt. of India, designed to support marginalized transgender individuals and provide updates on government schemes. A separate camp in collaboration with The Mangalmukhi Charitable Trust was also held to increase access to Apghati Suraksha Yojana- 93 transgender individuals enrolled in the scheme through the camp, securing a Rs. 10 lakh accident insurance policy by investing Rs.399 through the Post office.

One of the major interventions of CYDA for the LGBTQIA+ persons was the Entrepreneurship Development Program focused on providing livelihood opportunities and empowering individuals to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. An Entrepreneurship Development module was used for capacity building of LGBTQIA+ in setting up and growing their businesses.

### **Box 1: Topics Covered in the Entrepreneurship Development Module for LGBTQIA+**

- Information about different types of businesses and partnerships (proprietorship, partnership, single person company, and private limited etc.)
- Essential business skills
- Communication skills
- Business idea development
- Marketing strategies
- Finance strategies and budgeting (profit calculation, accounting expenses, monitoring cash flow)
- Legal documentation (such as Municipal Corporation License, Udyog Aadhaar, Shop Act, Food Licenses)
- Digital literacy (including digital marketing and payments)
- Establishing connections with other entrepreneurs/entrepreneurial community

The capacity building trainings also included showcasing the journeys of small startups that grew into major enterprises, demonstrating how businesses that fulfil people's needs can achieve remarkable success. They were also informed about various government and non-government assistance programs tailored for businesses, with a particular focus on schemes like Mudra Yojana, Chief Minister Employment Generation Programme and Prime Minister Employment Generation Programme. 74 LGBTQIA+ persons participated- 50 participants were provided material kits worth Rs. 10,000 to start their businesses other 20 participants who already owned businesses were given cash support of Rs. 10,000. These businesses included clothing, food, photography, beauty and massage parlours and imitation jewellery.

A similar entrepreneurship development was also done with women from COVID-19 affected families in Maharashtra, details of which can be found in **Case 5A**.

Along with awareness and livelihood training, several health-related initiatives were introduced by CYDA. An eye check-up camp held at HV Desai Hospital, Pune was organized with the specific aim of providing free eye check-ups to LGBTQIA+ persons, raising awareness about eye health, and promoting inclusivity. 142 persons underwent comprehensive eye examinations and individual consultations- 10 were identified with cataract issues, while 132 were identified with visual impairments and prescribed glasses. An informative session was conducted to educate participants about maintaining good eye health, the importance of regular check-ups, common eye conditions, and preventive measures. Referral services were made available for those requiring specialized care. CYDA and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation, with support from United Way Hyderabad, also inaugurated a transgender-compliant toilet with both Indian and Western-style toilets, two urinals, a changing room, washbasin and mirror at Yashwantrao Chavan Hospital, Pimpri.

Mental health challenges faced by LGBTQIA+ highlighted in awareness and community sessions such as the Rainbow Katta, led CYDA to organise mental wellbeing sessions. Although seeking treatment was considered essential, many were reluctant to approach counsellors due to stigma, discrimination, high counsellor fees and lack of awareness. The session dealt with participants' ability to navigate emotional challenges, seek help when needed, and build resilience in their journey towards improved mental health. Group therapy methods were used to address unresolved issues and various exercises and simulations were employed to help them understand various components of mental wellbeing.

## OUTCOMES

The LGBTQIA+ persons who participated in various interventions, reported an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem, increased ability to earn, and a respectful and safe space where they can share their views and be themselves.



## LGBTQIA+ Voices: Experiences and Learnings from the CYDA intervention

*"I attended the mental health session, and it provided me with newfound energy to face the day. It was my first time attending such a session, and I initially felt a bit hesitant. However, as the session progressed, I found answers to all of my questions. I gained valuable insights into improving my well-being. The facilitator explained everything with great care, like a mother. I frequently experienced depression and anxiety, now I have discovered a way to take deep breaths and relax. I am immensely grateful to CYDA for organizing this session, especially for individuals like me. They invested a lot of effort in promoting our wellbeing, and it has made a substantial positive impact on my life."*

**Participant, Mental Wellbeing Session**

*"When I first came to know about the entrepreneurial training, I thought it would be very boring or not of use. But after attending the session, I realised it was so helpful and useful to setup a business or how to run a prior business. Thanks to the CYDA team, from them I got lots of business ideas and learnt how to invest, how to save money, each and everything. Thanks to CYDA for taking the efforts for LGBTQ community and helping people to setup their future and career"*

**Participant, Entrepreneurship  
Development Program**



"I am a proud transgender community member and I want to express my deep gratitude to CYDA for their transformative initiative. As transgender individuals, we face unique challenges, and accidents are a real concern, especially when some of us engage in activities like begging at traffic signals for survival. This insurance has given us a newfound sense of security and hope. Your initiative is a testament to the power of positive change when organizations support marginalized communities. We are immensely grateful for your dedication towards our wellbeing and eagerly anticipate more empowering initiatives in the future."

### Participant, Awareness campaign on the government scheme Apghati Suraksha Yojana

"We are delighted that many members of the (LGBTQIA+) community have come forward to avail the scheme's benefits. More camps like these should be organized to ensure awareness and access to such valuable schemes."

### Assistant Post Master, Apghati Suraksha Yojana

"I am delighted that you organized an eye checkup camp for us. It is really needed. Please arrange such kind of camps for us."

### Participant, Eye Check-up Camp

Feedback :-  
Mannat Shaikh.

- ① The training conducted for 4 days for Entrepreneurship for LGBTQ community was informative & helpful for the business knowledge.
- ② We got detailed information about the business startup policies.
- ③ Government schemes/policies were also explained to us in detail which was really helpful for us.
- ④ Pratik & Mayur were friendly and gave us most of the necessary information to start a business as well as to grow our business.
- ⑤ All the objectives, necessary things for business were told and Mathew sir also gave us good information.

हायवेज ४ दिनीं अभो येरुन रुपुन जम  
वालेन रुपु हादी शिकानथा मिवाले.  
नाविन माकडिया मिवालेपु, रुपुप मोतापी  
मादीपी मिवाली. हेरुनि के लवक्यापन जगन  
हेतु. जानावरुण रेवडीमेडीने दोले  
रुपु आकारुण मागी रुपु मिवाले.  
गविन मित्र मिवाले.  
विपनिन वरुण रुपु मारु जते.

सुनवारी  
[Signature]



CITIES

### Govt to set up helpline to redress grievances of transgenders

The regional offices of the social justice and special assistance department will be directed start a helpline service to address issues faced by transgenders.

Written By Ravina Warkad

Pune | 55 minutes ago

Listen to Article



The regional offices of the social justice and special assistance department has been directed start a helpline to address issues faced by transgenders. (Express File Photo)



विश्रांतवाडी : तृतीय पंथीयांसाठी ट्रान्सजेंडर कार्ड ऑनलाइन नोंदणी उपक्रम राबविण्यात आला.

### 'ट्रान्सजेंडर कार्ड' नोंदणीसाठी 'सीवायडीए' संस्थेचा पुढाकार

विश्रांतवाडी, दि. २३ - जागतिक ट्रान्सजेंडर स्मृतिदिनाचे औचित्य साधून सीवायडीए संस्थेच्या वतीने तृतीय पंथीयांसाठी ट्रान्सजेंडर कार्ड ऑनलाइन नोंदणी उपक्रमाची सुरुवात करण्यात आली. ट्रान्ससेंड दी इमसफर ट्रस्ट व रिमझिम या संस्थांच्या सहकार्याने हा उपक्रम राबविण्यात आला. कार्यक्रमाला प्रमुख पाहुणे म्हणून प्रादेशिक परिवहन विभागाचे वरिष्ठ निरीक्षक नितेश बनसोडे, दी इमसफर ट्रस्टचे राज कनोजिया, रिमझिम संस्थेच्या निकि रे आणि निशी, सामाजिक कार्यकर्ते अक्षय साळवे, युवराज बनसोडे यांच्यासह सीवायडीए संस्थेच्या संचालिका अनिता केदारी, कार्यक्रम व्यवस्थापक प्रमोदिनी नाईक, समन्वयक प्रितेश कांबळे तसेच रोहित गवळी उपस्थित होते. यावेळी दहा तृतीयपंथीयांचे प्रातिनिधिक ट्रान्सजेंडर कार्ड ऑनलाइन नोंदणी करण्यात आले. या महत्त्वपूर्ण संवेदनशील विषयासाठी समाजातील विविध समाज घटकांनी पुढाकार घ्यावा असे आवाहन सीवायडीए संस्थेच्या वतीने यावेळी करण्यात आले आहे.

While achieving equitable rights and opportunities for the LGBTQIA+ is a continuing struggle, CYDA's initiatives have been an attempt to enable LGBTQIA+ persons in Pune to live with dignity and self-confidence.



i: Ministry of Home Affairs India. 2011. Census 2011. <https://censusindia.gov.in/census.website/>

By **Pritesh Kamble**

Program Manager, Inclusion Unit

6B

## Migrants Matter: Support to Migrants who built cities that couldn't shelter in them during COVID



*The COVID-19 pandemic brought to light the grave inequities faced in India's cities, with lakhs of migrants returning back to their home towns due to loss of livelihood during the lockdowns. Recognising the immediate need for providing relief, CYDA engaged in several measures such as food and medical aid to migrants & Urban poor communities in Maharashtra. In order to ensure that migrants can successfully restart their lives in cities after the lockdown, CYDA provided them skill-based training, placement support and connected them to government schemes. Through CYDA's initiative several migrants as well as people in urban poor communities benefited by availing government schemes, restarted their businesses or got placed in better paying jobs.*

**Pune, Ahmednagar, Satara, Solapur, Beed, Nashik, Nandurbar and Osmanabad districts,  
with specific focus on Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations in  
Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

The COVID-19 pandemic and consequent lockdowns threatened the lives of millions of internal migrants and their families in cities, who faced loss of livelihood and food insecurity. Internal migration is an important and pervasive feature of the Indian economy and society. There is a reciprocal relationship between city development and migration<sup>i</sup>. The destination cities benefit from migrants' contribution that fuels economic activity. However, it is paradoxical that migrants remain invisible and highly ignored actors in cities, often living in inadequate housing with poor access to basic services<sup>ii</sup>.

During the COVID-19 lockdown, the plight of migrants in cities became visible, when wanting to return to their villages, migrant families began to walk back in the absence of any transportation<sup>iii</sup>. Due to this, they were largely stigmatised as 'carriers of infection' and 'a burden on systems'<sup>iv</sup>.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Due to the grave situation faced by migrants during the pandemic, CYDA engaged in several short-term relief measures as well as longer-term initiatives to stabilise livelihoods of migrants after the lockdowns. Along with a specific focus on the migrant population, CYDA's initiatives also included other urban poor communities such as people living in urban slum settlements who faced adverse consequences of the lockdown.

From April to August 2020, CYDA undertook massive relief operations for stranded migrants and urban poor communities by distributing ration kits and cooked meals, providing health and medical aid and support to enable migrants to travel back home. For this CYDA formed a network of various organisations who were willing to contribute for migrants' welfare which included six international aid agencies, eight national level foundations, six corporate social responsibility entities, twelve non-governmental organizations and a large number of individual volunteers. The work also interfaced with various administrative and government structures including municipal corporations, police, railways, and State government departments, particularly the health administration.

CYDA engaged in relief work through various campaigns. Under the 'No One Shall Go Hungry' campaign CYDA covered the districts of Pune, Ahmednagar, Satara, Solapur, Beed, Nashik, Nandurbar and Osmanabad and reached more than 30,000 individuals. 30,579 ration kits, 5,760 sanitary pad packets and

4,800 hygiene kits were distributed. A total cash contribution of Rs. 1,00,161 was collected and accordingly distributed for medical needs of those who had contracted COVID-19. Under 'Migrants Matter' campaign, 5,850 migrant families were provided ready-to-eat food. CYDA also facilitated the travel of 3,400 migrants and helped 200 migrants with cash assistance. 'Flush the Virus', campaign was undertaken in the city of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad where 3,50,000 soaps and 20,000 sanitary napkins were distributed in areas where migrants resided.



In the 'new normal', CYDA helped migrants who returned to cities and others who had continued to live in the city to restore their livelihoods. From September 2020 to November 2021, CYDA reached out to 3000 migrant workers and 100 contractors in facility management and service industry, construction sector, petrol pump owners, etc. for a survey, to better understand the grassroots realities of migrants and the labour market. It also highlighted the importance of enumerating migrants and making them visible. For this CYDA sought to support the e-Shram initiative of the Government of India, started in 2021. The e-Shram portal aimed to form a database for unorganised sector workers, provide them labour cards and connect them to several social security schemes such as accidental insurance cover. CYDA identified 700 persons looking for jobs. CYDA conducted several trainings to make them aware of their labour rights, provide skill development and entrepreneurship development. For instance, a short informative video was prepared in the regional language to encourage workers in the construction sector to register for the Building and Other Construction Workers (BOCW) card. CYDA also encouraged workers to register on the e-Shram portal for better social security. 400 workers opened their bank accounts and also got it linked with their Aadhar card. 105 workers submitted their application for a PAN card while 102 submitted their application for the BOCW registration.

A 'Restoring Livelihoods' initiative by CYDA was started to provide financial support to 35 women to produce and sell around 1 lakh masks and to 45 street vendors to restart their businesses. It also collaborated with various employers, labour contractors, labour departments, labour welfare board, and allied government departments for placement opportunities for migrants and those from urban slum communities.

A workers' center called Kamgar Samvad Sahyog Seva Kendra (KSSSK) was initiated by CYDA at three locations in Pune to facilitate all the initiatives including registration, placement and other support required.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's intervention provided much needed relief to migrants in Maharashtra, stranded without livelihoods and without means to return back to their villages. Moreover it also enabled migrants to restart their businesses or find work after the lockdowns. CYDA's assistance also increased awareness and helped connect migrants to avail of government schemes. CYDA's intervention also included persons from urban poor communities in providing food security and livelihood support to them during the pandemic.

Due to CYDA's training and placement initiatives, 100 persons found jobs with better pay and improved working conditions as compared to their work before the pandemic. 54 persons started their own businesses after attending the entrepreneurship trainings. 210 persons who registered and were provided BOCW cards received safety kits while 41 also availed of educational scholarships (Rs.2500 for 1st to 7th grades and Rs.5000 for 8th to 10th grades) for their children. Under the registration in BOCW, 49 contractors received direct benefit cash transfers for their labourers.

*"I had to wait for nearly 2 months to finally come back home" - a daily wage worker in Pune recounted as he informed the CYDA team of his arrival in his home town. He had left Chhattisgarh in search of better opportunities three years prior to the pandemic, and worked in Pune to earn a living and support his family. The sudden lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic changed everything for him. His work stopped and his income was zero. Some fellow workers had walked back home, and some were helped by the contractor, but his 'turn' didn't seem to come. The locality where he resided was declared as a containment zone, making it difficult for him to leave. Moreover, there was no clarity about trains or buses towards Chhattisgarh. Some private vehicles charged exorbitant money which he could not afford. Ration supply was a constant worry and making ends meet in a city like Pune was expensive. He used his savings and borrowed some money from the contractor. During this time he was connected to CYDA through which he received dry ration kits that relieved his food insecurity woes. With no signs of work resuming, CYDA arranged for a private bus for migrants going to Chhattisgarh in which he safely returned back home.*



A 32-year-old resident of Karnataka had studied up to 9th grade before his family migrated to Pune city a few years before the pandemic. He lived with his family in Yerawada, Pune where he worked in the flooring business. He also worked as a construction worker for earning an additional income. During the pandemic he continued to stay in Pune. One day, while working at a construction site, he overheard a discussion about some schemes for migrant workers facilitated by CYDA. In a meeting organised by CYDA he learnt about BOCW schemes designed for workers like him. He collected all the necessary documents for the registration and visited the KSSSK center. With the support of CYDA, he successfully completed his BOCW registration on the government portal. Within a month of his registration, he received his BOCW card and a safety tool kit from the labour commissioner's office. - "I am really happy and thankful to CYDA team for supporting me in getting the registration done under BOCW scheme."



- i:** Rajput, K. Rajan, S. 2023. *Visibilising Invisible Population: e-Shram Portal and Essentiality of Internal Migration Database in India.* *Journal of Social Inclusion Studies:* 1-13.
- ii:** Bhagat R. 2011. *Migrants (denied) right to city.* In Zérah M.H. Dupont V. Tawa Lama-Rewal S. (ed.) *Urban policies and the Right to the City in India.* UNESCO: 48-57.
- iii:** Bokil M. 2020. *Lessons from Covid-19: In the Context of Relief work by CYDA.* CYDA.
- iv:** Rajan S. 2020. *Migrants at a crossroads: COVID-19 and challenges to migration.* *Migration and Development.* 9(3): 323-330.

**By Kuldeepsingh Rajput,** General Body Member & Research Consultant, CYDA

## Digital Accessibility Rewrites Rural Reality



Many rural areas lack access to the internet and digital information, limiting the ability to connect with new ideas, people and opportunities. Inadequate digital infrastructure and low digital literacy in rural areas are major challenges for digital inclusion. CYDA's intervention SMARTPUR worked with 20 villages in Sinnar, Maharashtra to impart digital literacy and increase access and use of the internet for educational, livelihood, financial and government-related services. CYDA's Digital Service Centres led to marked improvement in use of internet for various services including accessing government schemes, applying for higher education and jobs, growing businesses through online marketing, etc.

### Sinnar block in Nashik, Maharashtra

## THE PROBLEM

While India has made significant progress in recent decades in terms of economic growth and digital technology, its villages still lag behind in terms of access and use of digital services. Digital inclusion is essential to provide a platform to connect with new ideas, people and opportunities. Inadequate infrastructure, low levels of digital literacy and language barriers act as major challenges for digital inclusion in villages.

Many rural areas lack access to the internet and digital information, resulting in limited knowledge about government schemes, market trends, weather forecasting and crop management. Lack of digital literacy hampers prospects of better job opportunities among the youth. It also hinders the potential for rural entrepreneurship because of limited access to digital tools for e-commerce and digital marketplaces, which could boost their income.

CYDA conducted a randomly sampled survey with 11,225 rural households in 20 villages of Sinnar. It found that computer centres were not present in any of the villages. 24% of the households surveyed had access to internet through smartphones, but this was mainly used to access social media accounts like WhatsApp and Facebook, to watch videos or play games. The network connectivity of mobile internet was found to be poor in most places surveyed. Majority respondents were not aware about the use of digital technology for accessing information or for academic and career prospects.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognising the need for digital inclusion in rural Maharashtra, CYDA launched its project 'Impacting Rural India Through Digital Inclusion' called SMARTPUR in 20 villages in Sinnar block, Nashik district, Maharashtra in 2020. The project aimed to increase digital inclusion through working in the following arenas- education, livelihood, entrepreneurship development, finances, and governance. Under the project, CYDA developed 20 Digital Service Centres in the villages to connect the community with the digital platform and provide services related to these areas.

In the area of education, CYDA provided digital literacy classes for adolescent girls and boys and plans to expand to other age groups as well. The digital literacy classes were aimed at equipping rural youth in using online services and information. This included awareness about the importance of digital literacy, digital

concepts, basic computer knowledge, advantages and disadvantages of digitalisation, career guidance and linkages with academic and vocational institutions through the web.

For livelihood and entrepreneurship development, CYDA provided basic literacy trainings along with trainings on how to search and apply for jobs online and connect with employers and other job seekers. Entrepreneurship development trainings were done for youth and women on how to start and grow their business through digital platforms, access capital and build networks with other businesses.

Through its digital service centres, CYDA also provided opportunity for accessing digital banking services and training on how to use such services.

CYDA also provided a digital connect to government schemes and government-related online services so that these can be easily availed by the community. This includes training the community on how to access and use these services effectively.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's intervention led to an increase in the use of internet and digital services among the population. Before the intervention, people had to travel to Sinnar town to access stable internet. Now many youth in the intervention villages use CYDA's Digital Service Centres to register for higher educational courses online, apply for jobs online and give online job interviews. Villagers also visit the Digital Service Centres to access information about government schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM Kisan).

A pre and post-test of 244 adolescents (12-18 years) who participated in the digital literacy sessions showed considerable improvement in their knowledge about using computers/internet and basic digital literacy skills. Out of a 10-point marking, while 127 adolescents had scored only upto 3 marks in the pre-test, 113 scored more than 8 marks in the post test.



**Table 1: Pre and Post Test Assessment of Digital Literacy Sessions with Adolescents**

Marks	Pre-Test	Post-Test
Upto 3	127	1
4 to 6	90	32
7 to 8	24	98
Above 8	3	113

*"I attended the digital literacy session -foundation class. After attending it, I have a better vision about my future plan, I want to build my career in the computer field."*

**8th grade student, Waregaon, Sinnar**



Of the people who visited CYDA's Digital Service Centres for livelihood concerns, 36% used the internet for accessing agriculture related information, while 39% used it for finding job related information, and 25% used the internet for employment registration/processes.

Of the 300 women who engaged in entrepreneurship development through digital literacy, 60% used the training in some way in their various businesses including animal husbandry, dairy, daily essentials store (kirana), beauty parlour, flour mill, tailoring, etc.

*A resident of Marhal village who participated in the entrepreneurship development training for women shared that it changed her mindset. She was working as a construction labourer and is also engaged as a farmer in her village. After the training, she decided to initiate a tailoring business and undertook an online tailoring course. Thereafter she used social media to market and publicise about her business. She also made banners and interacted with fellow villagers about the initiation of her business. She earns around Rs. 5000 per month through tailoring and is happy that she is able to contribute an additional income for her family.*

In terms of digital literacy and use of banking services, the financial trainings not only improved the proportion of those using digital platforms for banking services (from 45% pre-intervention to 82% post-intervention), but also improved overall financial literacy.

**Table 2: Pre- and post-intervention improvement in financial literacy and use of digital banking**

Indicators		Pre-intervention	Post-intervention
<b>Use of Digital Platform for Financial Services</b>		45%	82%
<b>Overall Financial Literacy and Banking Usage</b>	Awareness about Banking Services	46%	82%
	Using Banking services	56%	92%
	<i>Note: Pre- and post-intervention survey included 11,225 households</i>		



In conclusion, CYDA's intervention acted as a platform through which villagers could learn and use digital technology for crucial aspects of their life, ranging from education, livelihood and finances.

**By Yogesh Nerpagar**  
Nashik Unit Head

6D

## No more heat strokes, unbearable cold shivers for the houseless



*Houseless persons are one of the most vulnerable sections of the city population facing several economic and social hardships. Their non-recognition by the State, particularly due to lack of identity cards or address proof, denies them the basic services required for rightful living. CYDA, through a series of interventions from 2004, has engaged in providing livelihood support, shelter, food provisions and access to identity/government cards for the houseless in Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations. CYDA's interventions led to improved living conditions for the houseless who were provided shelter, food provisions, livelihood support and access to identity/government cards. CYDA's interventions have also led to better recognition of houseless persons as a section of the city population whose basic needs require to be better understood and addressed.*

**Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

The lack of adequate housing is a major problem in cities. While many live in informal settlements or slums, the most vulnerable are pavement dwellers or the 'houseless' section of the city population. Poverty and houselessness are interrelated with economic factors such as unemployment and low wages. Houseless people do not have access to basic services such as water, sanitation, healthcare or education. Financial limitations cause many houseless people to struggle to meet their basic needs. Lack of identity proof or address means that houseless people cannot avail of any government schemes either.

A recent survey of 204 houseless persons by CYDA in underserved areas of Pune and Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporations found that 61% lived in improvised temporary shelter arrangements made of plastic, tin sheets, linen or bamboo, while the rest 39% lived without shelter, under bridges and on streets. Majority of those surveyed were intra-State migrants from other districts in Maharashtra, and 51% reported having lived without a proper shelter for more than ten years. 49% did not have an Aadhar card, 95% had no ration card and 85% did not have a voters card. 57% of the houseless were found to be daily wage workers or street vendors, while 38% were found to be unemployed and consequently dependent on begging.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

CYDA has engaged in several activities over the years to provide support to houseless persons. As a part of CYDA's youth-based intervention, Youth4Change several activities were organized to mobilize and empower youth in Pune (Refer **Case 2B** for details). The group of young people associated with CYDA under this initiative first encountered houselessness as a problem that could be addressed with the help of CYDA's intervention. The youth along with CYDA consequently started an initiative called Pune4Change in 2004. In 2010, a detailed survey of houseless people in Pune city was conducted. The Campaign for City Makers (Homeless) Caravan, a network with other organisations was formed to prioritize houselessness in the national agenda, especially during the time of the Census 2011 exercise. CYDA collaborated in enumeration of houseless people in Pune during the Census 2011. Consequently, it helped 100 houseless persons to make their identity cards and ration cards. These cards would provide access to much needed services including subsidised food provisions, health facilities and education, and also enable better housing and livelihood.

In 2019, CYDA in collaboration with Poona College of Arts, Science and Commerce, Ambedkar College, Work for Equality, Maher, Symbiosis and IIEBM students, participated in a global event 'The World's Big Sleep Out' on 7th December. Participants spent one night in public places and streets experiencing the situation of houseless people, to display solidarity, create awareness of the issue and to better understand their problems.

In 2020, CYDA supported the association Real Life Real People and the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation in starting a 'Sawali Niwara Kendra', a shelter for the houseless with a capacity of 105 persons, under the Deen Dayal Antyodaya Yojana of the National Urban Livelihoods Mission. With support from various donors, CYDA helped in providing beds, mattresses, blankets, water filters, kitchen utensils, handwashing stations, television and other facilities in the shelter. CYDA provided walkers and wheelchairs for the elderly residents of the shelter. CYDA also provided dry ration to the shelter.

Counseling and skill-based trainings were conducted to enable better livelihood opportunities and continued support was provided for income generation activities for the people at the shelter. For instance, a training on making and selling handmade diyas and agarbattis was provided to interested participants.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, CYDA engaged in providing food support to more than 1000 houseless persons by providing dry ration kits and assisting them in obtaining identity cards to avail of government facilities.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's interventions have led to better recognition of houseless persons as a section of the city population whose basic needs require to be understood and addressed. It has improved living conditions for the houseless reached under CYDA's interventions, through provision of access to identity/government cards, food provisions, livelihood support and shelter.



## Shelter to the Houseless: Case Stories from the Sawali Niwara Kendra

A 53-year-old man from Chinchwad village, Pune had to sell his house under adverse circumstances and lived alone for six years as a pavement dweller. He was addicted to alcohol and tobacco and rarely able to work. After finding a place to live in Sawali Niwara Kendra, CYDA provided him support to quit alcohol and smoking. While he has stopped alcohol consumption, he is still trying to quit smoking. Meanwhile, CYDA's skill based trainings provided him an opportunity to hone his artistic skills. He now works as a painter and also painted the Shelter's roof.

An 80-year-old woman, abandoned by her family was brought to the shelter in a very poor physical and mental state. CYDA provided regular counseling for improving her health and wellbeing. As compared to when she was brought to the shelter, now she is able to speak without stumbling, walk alone without support and maintain daily hygiene. She enlightens the atmosphere of the shelter with her singing and is forever ready to help other people in the shelter.



**By Shalmon Sable**

Youth Icon | Youth4Change

## Promoting eco-friendly menstrual wear



*Disposable sanitary napkins contain plastic and endocrine-disrupting chemicals considered harmful for health. Moreover improper disposal or incineration of sanitary waste causes pollution. Recognising the need for ensuring both improved health and environment sustainability, CYDA in 2021 aimed to assess the acceptability of reusable sanitary napkins among girls and women in Pune. The reusable sanitary napkins were locally produced through a women's group initiative and distributed to 100 participants. Majority of the participants showed high willingness for its use and also recommended it to others. CYDA's study has thus acted as a start point for a shift to sustainable and healthy menstrual wear. The findings from the study and such replications in other contexts can help in better framing and evaluation of menstrual health interventions.*

**Pune, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Disposable or one-use sanitary pads are most commonly used by women in India. The shift from using reusable cloth which is considered to increase the risk of infections, to sanitary napkins has however given rise to newer risks and consequences. According to the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-5 (2019-21), 65% women in India prefer using sanitary pads while only 2% are open to using reusable sanitary products such as menstrual cups or tampons<sup>i</sup>. A study by WaterAid India and Menstrual Hygiene Alliance India<sup>ii</sup> mentioned that disposable sanitary pads may take over 500 years to decompose, posing a big environmental challenge. In recent years, synthetic plastic materials have been used as liquid absorbents to improve the functionality and softness of sanitary pads. Sanitary pads contain higher phthalate content than that found in common commercial plastic products. Some of these plastic materials release volatile organic compounds and endocrine-disrupting chemicals. As a result, the safety of sanitary pads is becoming a global public health concern with growing suspicions that some substances in these products may adversely affect the health of women. Moreover mismanagement of sanitary waste leads to difficulty in handling for waste workers, pollution through incineration disposal, and clogging of drains and infection when disposed as a part of sewage.

Various organisations and individuals are now recognising the need to promote reusable or biodegradable sanitary napkins. For instance, in Alappuzha district, Kerala the Gram Panchayat in Muhamma in collaboration with Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and Environment (ATREE), Vembanad Kayal Samrekshana Samithi and Antrix Corporation Limited were the first to work towards attaining a 'synthetic sanitary pad free village'<sup>iii</sup>.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

In collaboration with the Rotary Sports Club Pune and Stone Soup Foundation, CYDA in 2021 sought to assess the acceptability of reusable menstrual wear among girls/women of 14 to 50 years in Pune. Such an assessment would help start a conversation towards better menstrual hygiene and health as well as gauge acceptability and use of alternatives to disposable sanitary pads, which can be scaled up in the future.

The reusable sanitary napkins were made by a unit from 10Stitch, through an initiative started by CYDA for engaging women in Yerawada, Pune in making masks during the pandemic. 10Stitch has since then made over 2 lakh masks and also expanded to upcycling products for sustainable fashion.

The reusable sanitary napkins were made from cotton and hosiery cotton with a liquid-proof layer of polyurethane laminate fabric. The product is chemical-free, and no plastic is used. These pads are washable and can be sun-dried before reuse, and last for two to three years. Five varieties of reusable sanitary napkins were made to suit different needs.

CYDA provided these reusable sanitary napkins to 100 girls/women selected through stratified sampling based on age and employment status. 64 girls/women belonged to the 14-25-year age group where impressionable change on use of sustainable menstrual wear would be long lasting. Out of the total sample, 49 participants were students, 30 were employed and 21 were unemployed or home-makers.

Consequently a questionnaire administered to the women who had used the reusable sanitary napkin (for one to eight months), showed high willingness for its use. Women from every age group found it more comfortable to wear the reusable pad as compared to the disposable pad irrespective of their profession. A majority of both students and workers found it convenient to change these pads with ease. Most participants agreed that these pads do not smell unlike disposable ones. 83% of the girls/women have recommended reusable sanitary napkins to their fellow bleeders.



## OUTCOMES

CYDA's study has acted as a start point for a shift to sustainable and healthy menstrual wear. The study provides valuable insight into acceptability of reusable sanitary napkins, for further scale up to a wider population. Although the study was carried out with 100 women, a snowballing effect is evident from the fact that majority of the sample reported recommending this to others. The manufacturing of the reusable sanitary napkins by a local community-based initiative of women, shows how such menstrual wear can be effectively produced at low-cost, at a localised level.

### Participants Speak: Benefits of Reusable Sanitary Napkins

*"On period days I did not want to go to school. But now after using this napkin I feel safe. It allows me free movement and I can also go to play. I have to use it for 5 to 6 hours since I come to school from a long distance. Even if I don't change this pad, it works. I participate in sports quite easily with it. Washing at home is convenient and it can be easily dried in the sun. There is no pollution. And it can be used again and again."*

**Participant, school-going student**

*"The sanitary napkins we have got are very good. We don't throw it in the garbage anymore. It saves my money, otherwise there is a high cost of sanitary napkins every month. On the first days of my period, I used to feel very afraid. But now it is not like that, now I don't feel afraid even during sports. Pollution is caused due to burning of sanitary napkins, by using this we can avoid harm to the environment."*

**Participant, school-going student**



*"I use these sanitary napkins and I like it very much. It is easy to wash and use and we can use it till 3 years"*

**Participant, employed person**



The findings from our study and such replications in other contexts can help in better framing and evaluation of menstrual health interventions.



**i:** *The Economic Times*. 28.05.2022. Approximately 44% of Karnataka women aged between 15-24 still use cloth during their menstruation cycle. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/new-updates/approximately-44-of-karnataka-women-aged-between-15-24-still-use-cloth-during-their-menstruation-cycle/articleshow/91840157.cms>

**ii:** *WaterAid India*. Improving menstrual health and hygiene in India. <https://www.wateraid.org/in/donate/improving-menstrual-health-and-hygiene-in-india>

**iii:** *Sajimon P*. 06.11.2020. Muhamma declared as first synthetic sanitary pad free village in Kerala. *The Times of India*. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/kozhikode/muhamma-declared-as-first-synthetic-sanitary-pad-free-village-in-kerala/articleshow/79086158.cms>

**By Jyotsna Bahirat**

Chief Operating Officer, YouthAid Foundation

## Transforming rural India's trash crisis into tech solutions



*Poor solid waste management (SWM) is a grave concern in India, adversely affecting the health and sanitation of residents, while increasing pollution in the environment. Effective management of waste is much cheaper and easier in rural areas, however waste management in villages has not received adequate attention. Recognising the need to provide an effective model for SWM in villages, CYDA planned and implemented a holistic waste management process in Visarwadi, Nandurbar in collaboration with a waste management organisation 'Trash Tech'. Visarwadi now has a composting unit for biodegradable waste, segregation and resale of non-biodegradable waste as well as a smokeless incinerator for biomedical waste. This initiative has greatly improved the overall environment of Visarwadi, and its success has led CYDA to implement similar integrated waste models in other locations.*

**Visarwadi, Nandurbar, Maharashtra**

## THE PROBLEM

Solid waste management is a major challenge in India due to increased waste generation per person over the years, with little or no proper waste recovery practices. While the SWM Rules mandate for effective measures to recover and recycle waste in India's cities, there is little attention on SWM in rural areas. This is in spite of the fact that managing waste in rural areas is much easier and cheaper than urban areas<sup>i</sup>. Solid waste is one of the major causes of pollution and its inadequate management is a cause for unsanitary environment in villages. As per a report of the Department of Drinking Water and Sanitation in collaboration with UNICEF, the quantity of waste generated is increasing in rural areas as a result of increased population, consumerism and commercial activities. Household waste from villages includes biodegradable items such as kitchen waste, waste from cattle sheds and agriculture activities, and non-biodegradable items such as plastic, metals, paper, cloth and biomedical wastes. It is estimated that 15,000 to 18,000 million litres of wastewater and 0.3 to 0.4 million metric tonnes of solid waste are generated each day in rural areas<sup>ii</sup>. The lack of adequate infrastructure, unavailability of sustainable technology and low awareness among people especially regarding segregation and management of non-biodegradable and bio-medical wastes leads to poor SWM in rural areas. For instance, although majority of waste generated in villages is biodegradable, due to lack of segregation, waste recovery is low.

A survey conducted by CYDA in Visarwadi village of Nandurbar district, Maharashtra found that of 1,315 households, 309 disposed their wet waste in the open due to lack of SWM facilities. Non-biodegradable waste such as plastic was burnt in the open or disposed of with biodegradable waste. The burning of waste leads to air pollution and also contributes to greenhouse gas emissions. In Visarwadi, open dumping of solid waste with the open flow of wastewater, mixing into natural water bodies was one of the main problems. No proper waste collection, segregation or recovery mechanisms were followed in the village.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognising the need to provide an effective example of SWM in villages, CYDA planned and implemented a holistic waste management process in Visarwadi, Nandurbar in collaboration with a waste management organisation 'Trash Tech' in 2020. Trash Tech employs a multifaceted approach to waste management that leverages cutting-edge technology utilizing inward and processed waste data to calculate the total output in terms of waste processed as well as the carbon mitigation carried out with it.



First, CYDA mobilised government departments and village leaders to support the project. Through house-to-house visits, It engaged in making residents aware of the need for SWM and provided information regarding the process of managing waste at the community level such as segregation and composting. To ensure segregation at source, two sets of garbage bins were provided to each household. Thereafter, existing sanitary workers in the village were provided training in collection, segregation and recovery.

In collaboration with Trash Tech, CYDA then set up a waste recovery plant in the village including facilities for secondary segregation, composting of biodegradable wastes and smokeless incineration of biomedical wastes. The plant was set up after assessing the daily load of waste generated in the village. The plant comprises a shed where waste collected from three battery operated vehicles gets unloaded and secondary segregation of the wastes, such as separating bio-medical waste, plastic, paper, glass etc. is done. Bio-degradable waste of around 300kg per day is handled at the plant and sent for composting in 2 vermicompost pits (decomposition with the help of earthworms) and 2 pits using NADEP technology (microbial decomposition)<sup>iii</sup>. The output manure or compost is packed and sold in the market. Around 200kg of non-biodegradable waste is segregated daily based on the material type (plastic, paper, cardboard, multilayered packaging, glass, metal, etc.) and is stored in a room reserved for the same, until it is sold to scrap dealers. Around 100kg per day of biomedical waste is burnt using a smokeless incineration system that emits no smoke or pollutants, thereby causing no harm to the people and environment in its surroundings. Under the program, daily data of waste collected, segregated and processed is recorded.

## OUTCOMES

CYDA's intervention provided an integrated waste management service to Visarwadi showcasing a sustainable model for SWM in villages. This led to improved collection of waste from households, high recovery of waste by converting bio-degradable waste into manure and selling non-biodegradable waste for further processing to scrap dealers. It provided employment to 10 people from the village. The project helped reduce the presence of littered garbage heaps and by effectively managing waste, improved the overall environment, sanitation and health of the village.

This model was well received by the villagers in Visarwadi leading to its replication by CYDA and Trash Tech in several other locations. CYDA has initiated a similar integrated waste management model with composting, incineration and processing of plastic waste in Shapar-Veraval in Rajkot, Gujarat. The model has also been replicated in urban slums of Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation where a plant is currently being set up and would be operational by 2024.

Refer **Case 4B** for more information on CYDA's related initiative on liquid waste and sanitation in Maharashtra.





**i:** Technological options for solid and liquid waste management in rural areas. 01.04.2015. Down to Earth. <http://www.indiaenvironmentportal.org.in/content/410306/technological-options-for-solid-and-liquid-waste-management-in-rural-areas/>

**ii:** Handbook on Scaling up Solid and Liquid Waste Management in Rural Areas. <https://swachhbharatmission.gov.in/SBMCMS/writereaddata/images/pdf/technical-notes-manuals/Scaling-up-SLWM-in-Rural-areas.pdf>

**iii:** <https://www.engineeringforchange.org/solutions/product/nadep-composting/>

**By Sourabh Suryawanshi**

Project Coordinator - SLWM Unit

## WASH Mitras making WASH Facilities in Schools Accessible, Equitable and Sustainable



*School hygiene and sanitation plays a crucial role in maintaining the overall wellbeing and health of children. In spite of several initiatives and schemes for water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) in India, CYDA found that Zilla Parishad (government) schools in Maharashtra faced a serious problem of poor operation and maintenance (O&M) of their WASH facilities. To address this problem CYDA engaged in training of community youth for offering O&M services to schools and other village-level institutions through a WASH Mitra application. This intervention not only translated into improved WASH facilities in schools but also provided employment in the WASH sector.*

**Nine districts in Maharashtra (Osmanabad, Aurangabad Gadchiroli, Nandurbar, Nashik, Parbhani, Pune, Satara, Hingoli)**

## THE PROBLEM

While WASH facilities have been set up in Zilla Parishad (government) schools in rural Maharashtra, many of the facilities are in a poor condition or not operational due to the absence of O&M facilities, lack of finance, material and skilled professionals, technology deficit and inadequate emphasis on maintenance. According to the government's five-star rating system to assess school's performance in WASH, 20,460 one star and 17,561 two-star Zilla Parishad schools in India did not have an operation and maintenance system. A UNICEF study found that 93% of schools surveyed in Maharashtra had no hand washing materials while toilets in 40% of the schools were unclean<sup>i</sup>. A Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar survey in 2016-17 also showed the lack of water supply in 70% schools, poor toilet facility in 44% schools, need for handwashing stations in 60% schools and need for a O&M protocol in 83% Zilla Parishad schools surveyed<sup>ii</sup>.

The lack of proper WASH facilities increases the risk of contracting diseases, such as diarrhoea among children. The need for WASH facilities has become even more prominent after to the COVID-19 pandemic. Government schemes like the Swachh Bharat Mission have focussed on constructing sanitation facilities, but inadequate attention has been paid to the O&M of WASH facilities at the community and school levels.

## CYDA'S INTERVENTION

Recognising the need for O&M facilities in Zilla Parishad schools, CYDA started an initiative in 2022 for a WASH Entrepreneurship Model referred to as WASH Mitra. The project aims at training and building local WASH entrepreneurs who are sensitive to the local context and can contribute towards providing O&M services such as renovation and retrofitting, electric and installation work, etc. to schools and other WASH facilities. WASH Mitra is a cost-effective, locally adaptive and sustainable means to not only promote entrepreneurship in rural areas but also ensure proper maintenance and functionality of WASH facilities in schools.

CYDA engaged in training interested candidates in various skills including plumbing, water filter installation/repair, masonry, carpentry, electrical, solar fitting and housekeeping services. The training for WASH Mitras was a 21-day residential training. A total of 81 WASH Mitras were trained as part of the project, divided into four batches. After their training, WASH Mitras were placed to perform on-call jobs through a WASH Mitra application developed by CYDA. In the application, schools had to register and request for WASH-related repair works required. Within a couple of days one of the WASH Mitras in the area

would visit the school, provide estimates for the work and after discussions with the respective school Principal would initiate and complete the required work accordingly. WASH Mitra application thus serves as a platform for a demand and supply network of trained and skilled WASH Mitras to address O&M work in government schools. Apart from schools, WASH Mitras also visited anganwadis, health facilities and gram panchayats for marketing and exploring more work opportunities in O&M.

## OUTCOMES

The WASH Mitra project provided an opportunity to young people in villages to engage in gainful self-employment. It also provided a platform for government schools to address O&M issues related to WASH facilities. Along with the WASH Mitras project, CYDA also provided support to schools for garnering finances to improve their WASH infrastructure, elaborated in **Case 4A**.

A survey of 45 WASH Mitras post CYDA's intervention showed 14,622 services completed in schools and other village institutions. Monthly income of WASH Mitras witnessed an increase from around Rs. 6000 earlier to now Rs.13,000. WASH Mitras also reported revisiting 56% of their clients, reflecting that their services were recognised, appreciated and sought for.

**Table 1: WASH Services completed by WASH Mitras**

Institution	Number of Services	Number of Students/Persons Benefitted
Schools	2,884	1,44,200
Health Facility	434	12,960
Anganwadi	1,152	23,040
Gram Panchayat	657	5,832
Private Work	9,495	43,200
<b>Total</b>	<b>14,622</b>	<b>2,29,032</b>



## **The Story of a WASH Mitra in Parbhani**

22-year-old Munja lived in a small village of Hishi, Shelu block, Parbhani district, Maharashtra. He worked as a farm labourer with his friends. He was trying to learn new skills but couldn't find a way to do so. He faced financial hardships and difficulty in making ends meet. One day, he found a WASH Mitra advertisement through a relative. He joined the training in 2022 in Pune and learnt plumbing, electrical, masonry, carpentry, water filter installation/repair and solar panel installation skills.

Thereafter he went back to his village and visited almost all the schools in the vicinity. He realized that the operation and maintenance of schools needed a lot of work. He took the initiative to visit Gram Panchayats and enlightened them about the significance of WASH. Later, the Zilla Parishad agreed and permitted Munja to carry out various O&M works in their schools. His work included assessing the condition of WASH facilities, identifying gaps in their O&M and developing plans to improve them. Most of the work he got was related to plumbing and fixing leakages in schools.

Munja encountered several challenges in his work, including a lack of funds and resources for WASH facilities in schools. However, he worked tirelessly to engage with school authorities and local government officials to mobilize resources and support for improving WASH facilities in schools.

Munja's efforts led to significant improvements in the operation and maintenance of WASH facilities in schools. Munja's dedication to the cause of improving WASH facilities in schools had a significant impact on the lives of students and teachers. The schools that he worked with saw a reduction in absenteeism due to waterborne diseases, an increase in student enrolment, and a positive impact on the overall health and wellbeing of the school community. Munja in turn also saw a rise in his daily income from Rs. 250 to around Rs. 540. He was thankful for now working with dignity and earning a good income. Munja's work as a WASH Mitra is a testament to his commitment to the cause of WASH. His efforts continue to inspire many others to take up similar work and contribute to improving WASH facilities in schools.



In this manner, CYDA's intervention enabled not only better WASH facilities but also provided employment in the WASH sector.



**i:** UNICEF. 2022. Report on "Clean India: Clean Schools". <https://www.unicef.org/india/what-we-do/clean-india-clean-schools>

**ii:** Swachh Vidyalaya Puraskar. (2016-17). <https://swachhvidyalayapuraskar.com/>

**By Amol Shewale**

Program Manager - WASH Unit



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## CENTRE FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT AND ACTIVITIES (CYDA)

**Head Office:** 16A, 2nd Floor, Atur House, Above Maratha Samrat Hotel,  
Ambedkar Road, Camp, Pune, 411001

 [cydaindia.org](http://cydaindia.org)  +91 87677 34511  [cydapune56@gmail.com](mailto:cydapune56@gmail.com)

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