इसलिए राह संघर्ष की हम चुनें

YUVA's Journey Over the Years

35 YEARS OF COMMITMENT TO SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

35 साल से सामाजिक परिवर्तन के लिये निरंतर कटीबद्ध

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Isliye Raah Sangharsh Ki Hum Chune translates as, Why We Choose the Path of Struggle

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Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) is a non-profit development organisation committed to enabling vulnerable groups to access their rights and address human rights violations. YUVA supports the formation of people's collectives that engage in the discourse on development, thereby ensuring self-determined and sustained collective action in communities. This work is complemented with advocacy and policy recommendations on issues.

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and the countless others whose
narratives have enriched the book.

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ABOUT THIS BOOK

On 30 August 2019, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) completes 35 years of facilitating the empowerment of the oppressed and the marginalised towards lives of dignity, security and peace. This book is a reflection of our journey and a means to share our experiences with friends, well-wishers and the community at large. Being an attempt to consolidate a largely oral history of the organisation, the book is an ongoing journey, shaped by the hands of multiple contributors and we are welcome to suggestions that will enrich the narrative.

The book offers you a narrative connecting millions of Indians living on the fringes of society, marginalised, oppressed and persecuted. You will read stories of empowerment—of women who have led the charge, of children who have reclaimed spaces, of youth who are fearless, of entire communities who fought for their rights. You will read tales of the city you live in, which you perhaps have been unaware of thus far.

Above all, the book hopes to engage you more closely with the goings on in your city, force you to ask questions and critically reflect on what is happening around you, and speak out and act for what is right.

Who is this book for and what does it offer?

This book is intended for a wide range of audiences, cutting across backgrounds, interests, and age groups.

- For development professionals and organisations seeking to engage with marginalised populations, this book offers a wealth of knowledge on how you can start out, develop strategy, engage with a host of stakeholders, scale your initiatives, influence policy and more.
- For students looking to learn about the sector, this could very well be the clarion call that drives you to pursue careers that are impactful. And if you are looking to work with us, consider this a ready reckoner too!
- And finally for old hands and well-wishers of YUVA, consider this a trip down memory lane, one that would not have been the same without each of your efforts to drive change.

What will you find in this book?

It wouldn't be right to talk about YUVA's work without going back to the very beginning. In the late 1970s, a group of students from Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, Mumbai, ventured into the informal settlements of Jogeshwari as a part of a college placement. The group, which included Minar Pimple (who eventually went on to found YUVA), was inspired to draw up a programme for underprivileged youth with the objective of addressing structural inequalities and responding to issues of the poor and the marginalised through a rights based approach. And so came about YUVA.

In **YUVA Through The Years**, you'll be able to trace our journey from the young group that sought to build youth leaders in Jogeshwari, to the organisation that we are today. We also address key shifts in our strategy and internal governance that have helped us create an organisation that is dynamic and resilient in the face of new challenges.

The chapters that follow have been ordered along the lines in which we started engaging with the community. Key initiatives that we have undertaken over the years have been highlighted in each of the chapters. We strongly believe that these interventions could essentially be an indication of the nature of roles that any development organisation could play in its role as a catalyst, enabler and advocate for addressing, protecting and promoting the human rights of marginalised groups.

Enabling People's Rights and Entitlements brings to you our endeavours and experiments (through community development, alternative modelling, civic participation), in enabling the actualisation of the right to basic services by poor and marginalised communities, both within the urban and rural contexts.

Training has been one of the key strategic thrusts at YUVA to guide work, and **Capacity Building for Social Transformation** elaborates on this as fundamental processes by which people could be empowered to bring changes in their own lives, within their own communities and in society at large. Over the years, we have designed and implemented a number of trainings to suit the needs of a diverse group of people in the urban and rural contexts, respectively. This stemmed from our belief that all communities had the capability to identify and resolve issues within their own communities, and our role was best demonstrated as facilitators. This framework of empowerment, as evolved from the practice of community organising, essentially implies a twin

process of learning and organising as a vehicle for people-centred and people-controlled development. Recognising that the best people to address local needs, in terms of both resources and rights, were the people from the community itself, YUVA finds itself in a constant process of building capacity of all stakeholders.

The announcement of the New Economic Policy in June 1991, triggered a rethinking process within YUVA and we recommitted ourselves to work with the most marginalised populations through awareness, political education and facilitating people's organisations to realise their rights. We also felt the need to develop approaches which could help in facilitating marginalised people's control over their resources and productive assets, to sustain their livelihoods in the open market. The chapters on **People's Organisations and People's Institutions** captures our conceptualisation of them and the trajectory of our work with a number of them.

Knowledge dissemination through **Research and Documentation** has always been a core component of our work. Our work in this respect was crafted on the need to co-create and disseminate a repository of knowledge that could shed light on the realities of the marginalised and vulnerable sections of society, empower these communities with knowledge on how they could secure their rights and drive evidence-based research aimed at formulating and influencing policy. In many instances, this has also guided our own practice and programmes on the field. This body of knowledge also serves to empower a range of diverse organisations and help build further collaborations to drive change.

In the chapter titled **Influencing Public Policy**, we share our experiences on facilitating marginalised groups in addressing their issues at a macro level. Our advocacy and policy work is guided by our direct experiences with the community and is carried out in partnership with people on the themes of housing and basic services rights, informal worker's rights, right to participate in local governance, child rights, youth rights and women's rights. The primary focus is for the recognition of those excluded from the fruits of development. Be it pavement dwellers or street vendors, street children or marginal farmers, diverse populations are often denied their rights. We view advocacy as a means to engage with parties across the spectrum, policy makers, other civil society organisations, and the population that would benefit from the enactment of specific policies.

Narrative Building marks a recent focus area to engage in the process of shifting dominant narratives on urbanisation and marginalisation in cities, thus finding deeper and more effective answers to the following questions: How can different groups in the city understand each other's perspective on the many transitions urban spaces have undergone, are experiencing, and are likely to encounter in the times ahead? How can we build better and more inclusive spaces for the future? We believe that, by critically questioning exclusionary development practices pursued and engaging in constructive dialogue with all stakeholders, we can work towards safeguarding diverse identities, give them space to flourish and co-create more just, secure and sustainable spaces for everyone.

The final chapter on **Organisational Sustainability** sheds light on how we have been able to stay resilient as an organisation. Developing leadership both within the organisation and in the communities that we work with has been a strong focus area for YUVA from the early days. The succession framework that we have been able to put in place, has ensured that the organisation has been able to carry out 'business as usual' and stay on its feet even when key people have transitioned out of the organisation or stepped away from formal leadership roles.

Without any further ado then, here's presenting our story ...

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YUVA THROUGH THE YEARS

In the late 1970s, a group of students of Nirmala Niketan College of Social Work, Mumbai, ventured into the *bastis* (informal settlements)[1] of Jogeshwari as a part of a college placement. Their work in the *bastis* inspired them to draw up a full-fledged programme for underprivileged youth; the chief objective being to develop a rights-based approach to address structural inequalities and respond to the issues of the most poor and marginalised. They believed that when the oppressed were made aware of these inequalities, they would come together to address them. Thus the programme aimed to develop young leadership among vulnerable populations who could steer the ship of their development, where social change would be born of their command.

A few years later, one of the students, 23-year-old Minar Pimple, banded together a crew of other 23–26-year-olds, to take up the programme in a formal manner. On 30 August 1984, Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) was formally registered as a voluntary development organisation supporting and empowering the oppressed and marginalised by primarily concentrating on their human rights. It was no small surprise that this young group's first port of call was to develop youth leadership in marginalised communities.

Since its inception, YUVA has operated as an organisation with governance as a strong focus. Its first Governing Board had a President, Secretary, Treasurer and four other members. In addition to being a member of the Board, Minar Pimple was also the first Executive Director of the organisation.

1 | Basti is the colloquial term for an informal settlement which derives from the Urdu word for 'settlement', serving as home for a large section of India's vast marginalised population. YUVA prefers the use of basti for its empowering and non-derogatory connotations. In the context of this document, basti and informal settlement have been used interchangeably, and 'slum' is used wherever it has been officially referred to as such.

1984–1985

Working with the community in Jogeshwari

In the formative years, YUVA's interventions were centred around Jogeshwari and Cross Maidan in Mumbai. In Jogeshwari, we sought to organise the community and build the capacity of the youth. Our work concentrated on channelising the energies of the youth and encouraging them to participate in the development of their community. It could not have been a more apt time, as 1985 was declared International Youth Year by the United Nations to focus attention on issues of concern relating to the youth.

In Cross Maidan, we primarily addressed issues of pavement dwellers with respect to evictions. We also started addressing other issues which tended to be more responsive in nature—from police harassment of the youth to the lack of schools for children living on the pavements and streets; from access to basic services to the establishment of legal identity (by facilitating access to ration cards, other identity documents, and driving enrolment of marginalised persons in electoral rolls).

> *"The key driver in setting up YUVA was the need to develop youth leadership. I have always strongly believed in the fact that the best people to manage issues being faced, are those who experience it themselves. Solutions and approaches come from those who have first-hand experience of the problems that need to be tackled."*
>
> **Minar Pimple**
> Founder - YUVA

Viewing Development through a Gender Lens

One of our first large meetings with women

Within a few months, our growing presence in the community was recognised by a group of women who approached YUVA in search of a way for them to get organised and involved. Taking this opportunity, YUVA began working on the strategic and practical gender needs of women in *bastis* and pavement communities that was based on the axiom that 'Personal is Political', i.e. any issue faced by a woman as an individual, was a collective issue.

YUVA's subsequent interventions for women fell within the framework of working with the most vulnerable sections of society. Gender discrimination represented one of the worst forms of violence of our times. Women were discriminated by patriarchal structures such as family, religion and other institutions sanctioning their disempowerment through control over their labour, mobility, fertility and sexuality. Women had unequal access to all resources—economic, political, social and cultural—and faced violation of their fundamental right to equality in all spheres of life.

We recognised that women were one of the most powerful agents for holistic change and the issues that affected them would have a direct bearing on the well-being of the community. It was to address this that we applied a gender lens to all of our programmes. We committed ourselves to creating a society that empowered women as equal partners and ensured the protection, promotion and fulfillment of their fundamental human rights.

1986–1990

In 1986, massive evictions and deportations of pavement dwellers in Mumbai forced us to expand the scope of our interventions. This period saw a realignment of our focus areas to include housing and habitation. YUVA initiated the formation of the city-level Committee for Right to Housing (CRH) and the National Campaign on Housing Rights (NCHR).

This change in the course of work reminded us that community development in isolated communities was inadequate for large-scale social change. So we formulated a model of integrated work on related human rights issues, which would comprise housing rights as also women's rights, youth and children's rights across the city of Mumbai. YUVA also constituted a Legal Resource Centre for policy work on women and law, labour rights and tenant rights, with a professional support team for research, documentation and media advocacy.

"When I came to Mumbai, I was taken to the bastis, and visited the pavement dwellers YUVA was working with. It was the monsoon season. I remember walking in knee-deep water, only it was sewage water. It was the first time I got really exposed to the extreme human indignity in Mumbai. I had known about this, but when you see it with your eyes it hits you very hard. I always give YUVA the credit of engaging me with that reality."

Gagan Sethi
Founder - Janvikas
Former President - YUVA Governing Board

1991–2000

PO–PI Strategy

The announcement of the New Economic Policy in June 1991 triggered a strategy rethinking process within YUVA. The post-liberalisation era had altered the ground reality for development organisations and the poor. For people to be able to lead a truly productive and decent life in the market-driven economy, realisation of rights had to be accompanied by access to tangible benefits. We felt that if rights were to hold any meaning for the poor, there should be a visible and clear improvement in economic terms, living conditions and nutrition standards. In other words, realisation of rights had to be accompanied by access to tangible benefits. While YUVA had thus far been working on rights, we had not been focused on assets. Post 1991, we *had* to think about assets.

Our analysis of the implications of the New Economic Policy led us towards a dual strategic approach of securing rights through People's Organisations, along with building assets of the poor through People's Institutions. This was labelled as the People's Organisation–People's Institution (PO–PI) strategy, with YUVA playing the role of a People Centred Collaborative Institution that would extend support with respect to strategising, skill building, and, to some extent, managing these POs and PIs. While POs were required to protect existing rights, expand existing rights, and create new rights, PIs were needed to protect existing assets, resources and livelihoods, enhance and create new assets. Building POs and PIs were viewed as complementary functions within the process of community development, and the PO–PI strategy helped us set a conceptual model to our work.

Core Values and Levels of Intervention

It was also during this phase that we developed five non-negotiable core values that would be the underlying principles of our work—Social Justice, Gender Justice, Secularism and Democracy, Honesty and Integrity, Environmental Sustainability.

We also realised that the process of social change had to be composite while seeking to deal with the root causes of inequity. We identified eleven levels of intervention which would ensure a composite, multi-pronged approach, and provide direction and focus to our work.

1. Action Organisation by facilitating the growth of people's organisations
2. Popular Education to drive awareness
3. Training and Conscientisation via intensive processes
4. Access for the Fulfillment of Basic Rights and Needs
5. Experiments towards Alternatives for sustainable and people-centred initiatives
6. Research and Policy aimed at formulating and influencing policy
7. Documentation and Information Dissemination to promote the right to information

8. Advocacy and Lobbying aimed at participatory governance.
9. Initiate and Strengthen Networks and Alliances for social transformation
10. Support and Consultancy Work aimed at capacity building of people's and grassroots groups
11. Solidarity Action nationally and internationally to highlight people's causes

Entry into Rural Areas

The opening up of the market further led to the understanding that the issue of poverty could not be tackled solely in urban areas alone. This led us to expand our worldview to include urban–rural linkages. The Latur earthquake in 1993 saw YUVA extend its response mechanism from man-made disasters to natural disasters as well.

By 1998, we also began working on issues related to transparent and participatory governance surrounding water and environment. We provided solidarity and support to the South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), which monitored India's water sector and acted as a bridge between civil society, research organisations, communities and the administration.

Two more sectors of work were also initiated—the social security and legal protection of the unorganised sector, as well as the strengthening of urban local governance through the implementation of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act in Maharashtra.

YUVA's work extended to rural parts of India post the Latur earthquake in 1993

Separation of Governance and Management

Until 1998, YUVA's Governing Board had been functioning as a 'Compliance Board', with the organisation being driven by the management. Accordingly, YUVA's governance included a General Body and an Executive Committee (or Governing Board), which also included members of the management playing Secretary, Treasurer and Member positions. During this time, broadly the General Body and Executive Committee agreed with the management's decisions and direction for the organisation. This was due in large part to the Founder–Executive Director

being a part of the management and guiding the organisation. The Executive Committee would evaluate the management's decisions and these were often met with approval.

A significant shift in the governance of YUVA occurred with a governance review workshop by Jeremy Hobbs (then Executive Director, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad, Australia) in May 1998. The workshop pointed out the importance of separating the roles of management and governance as a practice of good governance. Considering some of the staff also served on the Governing Board, there were concerns that this could be construed as a conflict of interest. This separation was also seen as prudent for development of the organisation into newer areas of work that required specific expertise and competency, and for strengthening the organisation from a sustainability point of view. The YUVA Board thus re-oriented itself from being a compliance-oriented board to becoming a performance-oriented one that would be active in the macro-management of the organisation.

In 1999, the Board backed Minar's decision to move out of his role as Executive Director in a phased manner, the purpose of which was to allow the organisation to move into its next level of growth.

This also drove us to examine the leadership of the organisation in a future-focused manner. We had seen cases where other founder-centric organisations like ours had folded operations when key members exited. To insure the organisation against any such risk, we instituted an effective succession framework in place, one that has ensured that the organisation stands strong even today, in the face of major transitions of people in key leadership roles as well as external challenges.

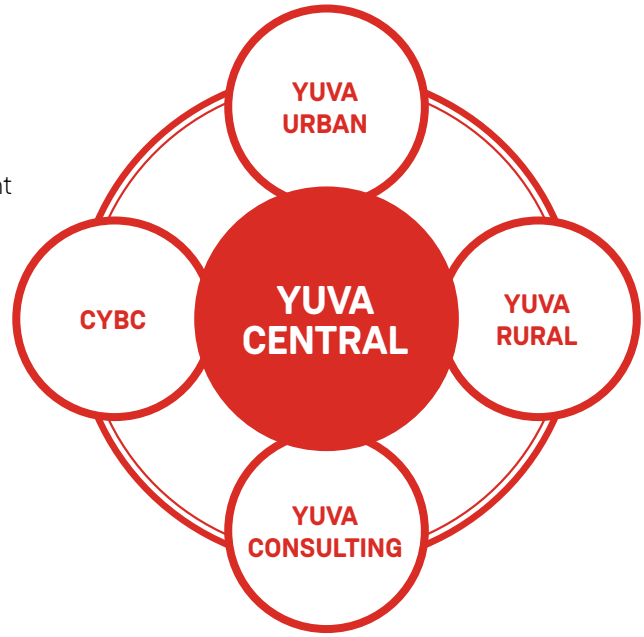
"I led YUVA for 20 years, from 1984–2004, with a very passionate team of leaders and activists. Many non-profits are founder-centric, but I always wanted to build an organisation which can carry on and become a centurion organisation, responding to newer challenges and defending human rights for years to come."

Minar Pimple
Founder - YUVA

2001–2005

As YUVA's geographical area and spectrum of activities expanded, we found the need to systematise our intervention processes. We strongly felt the need to bring greater depth in each of our areas of work. In light of this, YUVA decentralised its work, and restructured itself as different entities formed around 'core competencies'. We believed this would aid in taking the organisation to its next level of growth. Accordingly, YUVA was restructures into four entities, each of which were to have a separate legal identity, but tied together by common values and a shared legacy.

- **YUVA Urban** (later registered as YUVA Urban Initiatives) would look into issues around urbanisation and migration
- **YUVA Rural** (later registered as YUVA Rural Association) would work on rural development and natural resource management
- **YUVA Consulting** (later registered as YUVA Consulting) would provide professional consultancy services to civil society organisations, government agencies, and other stakeholders, rooted in the experience and knowledge gained by our work over the years; with an eye to strategising to meet future needs of the development sector and ecosystem
- **YUVA Centre** (which operationally continues under YUVA) would build a repository of knowledge and practice to build the capacity of civil society groups and all its actors to understand the continual changes in the socio-political environment, and design appropriate interventions at all levels



A fifth entity, **CIDCO-YUVA Building Centre (CYBC)**, was proposed as a partnership venture with City & Industrial Development Corporation of Maharashtra Limited (CIDCO) to provide a decentralised solution for construction and demolition waste management.

Governance Structure

This, accordingly, marked the second shift in the governance structure of YUVA, with each entity being separately registered and governed by Strategic Entity Boards. In this decentralised structure, the YUVA Governing Board, the Chairs Forum (comprising of Chairpersons of respective entity Boards) and entity Directors Forum served as spaces for programmatic synergy across entities. A Memorandum of Understanding was drawn up to bind YUVA Urban, YUVA Rural and YUVA Consulting with YUVA Centre. Vision and mission statements for each of the entities were drawn from the overarching vision and mission statement of YUVA. Core values, intervention framework and levels of intervention were to be shared across entities. The collective holding (also known as YUVA or operationally as YUVA Centre) continued to coordinate financial, administrative and personnel functions across the entities, till such time that the individual entities got the legal permissions required to function independently.

2006–2011

This phase saw a renewed emphasis on policy and practice change and model building, with many policy interventions ranging from commenting on policies, initiating networks and collective efforts, collaborating with government committees to prepare policies, etc. Examples of policies that we collectively worked on include the National Rehabilitation and Resettlement Policy 2007, National Water Policy 2012 and Land Acquisition Act 2013. We also campaigned extensively for the implementation of certain policies including the UN Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement 2007, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005, Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act 2008 and Maharashtra State Youth Policy, 2014. Model building was initiated with regard to implementation of the Area Sabha along with a campaign for a Community Participation Law. This period also witnessed the gradual expansion of YUVA's scope of work from the Mumbai region to various towns of Maharashtra, and other Indian states like Jharkhand, Orissa and West Bengal.

Governance Structure

The various entities of YUVA began functioning independently following their formal registration, and now operated on their own. This phase also focused on strengthening the YUVA Governing Body to build the strategic goals of the organisation for the future. While the initial committees had consisted of only social work professionals, YUVA began recruiting professionals from other areas after observing trends in the development sector, beyond the realm of social work. Professionals in management and academicians were brought in to give new perspective. This watershed moment led to the governance structure that is in place at YUVA today.

2012–2019

In 2012, YUVA Urban Initiatives and YUVA conducted an in-depth strategic planning process, which re-emphasised the earlier decision to work on three core areas: Poverty, Environment and Governance. As had been decided in YUVA's early days, the gender lens would be applied across all programmes.

POVERTY	ENVIRONMENT	GOVERNANCE
Children & Youth	South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers & People	Rights to the city
Livelihood	Convergence of Agricultural Interventions in Maharashtra	Campaign on Development Plan Process
Habitat & Housing		Promoting people's participation in Water Rights & Reforms

To build our understanding and experience in different urban context across the country, a strategic decision was made to expand our direct work to other cities. We set up a National Desk in Delhi to guide policy advocacy work.

YUVA's constant emphasis on engaging citizens in the decision-making processes led to the set up of Basic Service Facilitation Centres, Migration Centres and Child Resource Centres situated within communities. These centres created a space for people to participate, debate and decide on issues of urban governance and planning. Along with adults and young people, the involvement of children in the development process remained central to our work. Parallely, interventions towards prevention of child rights violations resulted in the strengthening of engagements with protection systems and policymakers.

A field camp for farmers organised as a part of CAIM

To strengthen work on governance, the Right to the City Campaign was initiated at the national level. In addition to this, our longstanding work with informal settlements and informal workers led us to intervene in the revision of Mumbai's Third Development Plan 2014–2034. Through numerous partnerships, this involvement eventually evolved into **Hamara Shehar Mumbai**, a people's campaign on urban planning and governance.

YUVA also engaged on campaigns on the right to water and sanitation in Mumbai. The **Pani Haq Samiti** facilitated by YUVA brought to focus fundamental rights of water and sanitation and a stand against water privatisation in informal settlements. We also partnered on the Right to Pee Campaign which advocated for free sanitation facilities for women across the city.

In the environment space, we turned our focus to issues of quality, equity and sustainability in relation to the development and management of natural resources, with respect to water and sustainable agriculture, through our association with SANDRP and Convergence of Agricultural Interventions in Maharashtra's (CAIM) Distressed District Programme.

Current Governance Structure

YUVA Urban Initiatives and YUVA Rural Association today function as independent entities. YUVA continues to partner closely with YUVA Urban Initiatives, while the operations and management of YUVA Consulting and CYBC rest with YUVA.

The Governing Board is completely separate from management; it has an agenda independent of management and works to give guidance to the organisation. From being a governing body that simply approved management decisions, it has become an active and strategic Governing Board with clear definitions of its responsibility. This evolution is in response to the need to plan for the sustainability and relevance of the organisation, and the need to have a sharp Governing Board.

The emphasis that YUVA has given to the separation of governance from management has provided the critical checks and balances for the Governing Board and the management to focus on the organisation from two independent standpoints. This has also helped us in maintaining boundaries with respect to strategic and operational decision-making.

2019 ONWARDS

In March 2019, we initiated another session of strategic planning, keeping in mind the changing socio-political context, to further streamline our work and build our programme strategy for the coming decade. We look forward to a sharper and incisive approach to work, within the framework of our foundational core values.

IN PICTURES: THE YUVA STORY


दादर टर्मिनस
DADAR TERMINUS

ENABLING PEOPLE'S RIGHTS AND ENTITLEMENTS

Article 11.1 of the United Nations International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (UN-ICESCR) recognises, 'the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions'.

YUVA's work, from its inception, was centred on securing improved conditions of living among people, along with the actualising of their social and political rights. Our work to protect and promote the rights of poor and marginalised communities, and enable access to basic and essential life services evolved with the changing economic and development paradigm of the country. The privatisation of basic services post liberalisation was seen as a threat to universal access.

The problems of basic services, as YUVA viewed it, was one of non-availability to settlements that were deemed illegal by law; discrimination on grounds of caste, region and religion; and lack of planning. While the first problem was unique to urban poor settlements, the latter two could be seen in rural areas as well.

This chapter brings to you our endeavours and experiments in enabling the actualisation of the right to basic services by poor and marginalised communities. What these examples also highlight is the thin line between service provision with a rights perspective and doled out charity; the difference lies in the approach, the underlying philosophy, the manner in which the services are administered, the extent to which affected populations determine the nature and quality of services, whether it respects their dignity, the extent to which they contribute to the programme and the efforts towards making the State realise its essential responsibility towards the realisation of basic rights.

SECURING PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO HOUSING

YUVA's understanding of habitat viewed housing not only as the right to shelter, but also as a right that was linked to social and economic development. This was consistent with the understanding of basic rights articulated in Article 11.1 of ICESCR rights, wherein the right to adequate housing was derived from the human right to an adequate standard of living.

In the mid 1980s, pavement dwellers in the city of Mumbai faced brutal evictions and deportation by the state government. In 1985, YUVA undertook a survey of pavement dwellers, during which the pavement community in Cross Maidan approached us to work with them. Willingly taking up the challenge to support empowerment of an urban poor group that was among the most marginalised, an open pavement school for children was started with this community, with the help of college student volunteers. Following the Supreme Court Judgement in August 1985 which gave further impetus for the eviction of pavement settlements and *bastis*, we began focusing our efforts on securing and protecting people's right to housing. This took our work to another level of networking and campaigning against evictions at the city-level and for housing as a fundamental right at the national level.

1989: Running a Legal Resource Centre for Rights Violations

In working on issues such as evictions, housing, settlements, basic amenities, violence against women, labour, tenancy and so on, involvement with the legal systems and knowledge of law became inevitable. Through direct engagement with communities, YUVA also came across several cases of injustice requiring litigation. To expand our contribution in these instances and fulfill needs arising from communities, a Legal Resource Centre was set up.

Workshop on housing rights organised by the Legal Resource Centre

In 1989, YUVA noticed that the Legal Resource Centre was overwhelmed by a huge number of tenant cases. With the striking down of the Maharashtra Vacant Lands Act (MVLA), 1975, by the Supreme Court in 1985, hundreds of tenants in different parts of Bombay were pulled to court by self-proclaimed *chawl* owners. The illegal *chawl* owners started demanding rent with arrears, threatening and in certain cases using physical violence and filing large number of suits in the court. Simultaneously, Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC) [now known as Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC)] was collecting service charges from the residents, making it difficult for the tenants to pay both the *chawl* owners and the BMC. In 1989–90, YUVA spent intense time and energy on this case with the sub-tenants of Janata Squatters Colony in Jogeshwari.

Due to increasing demand to utilise government land, and the lack of affordable housing in central and south Mumbai, the government moved people to the suburbs. Under various schemes for development, 1,957 families were moved and allotted open patches of land measuring 15–20 square feet within Janata Squatters Colony in Jogeshwari. The new settlers were granted a legally binding title deed known as Vacant Land Tenancy (VLT), by the BMC. Apart from having to pay the BMC a monthly rent of INR 3.25 (and an additional INR 16 per year as property tax), they were also bound by certain conditions. They were not allowed to expand their allotted areas, nor were they allowed to have sub-tenancies unless the tenancy rights were transferred directly to the BMC. These conditions were violated by the majority of VLT holders due to a combination of factors.

The influx of migrant labourers to Janata Squatters Colony was high at this time and the VLT holders started expanding their allotments to build and let out the tenements to these migrants. As the Colony was a *basti* and of little commercial value, there was a lack of enforcing the VLT conditions and the area was left unchecked until 1975 when Maharashtra Vacant Lands Act (MVLA) was passed. In 1976, a census was carried out in all Bombay *bastis* and photo-passes were given to *basti* dwellers on State land (this did not include Central government land), and compensation collected from them. Thus, from 1975–76, with the collection of the compensation and issuing of photo-passes, the *chawl* tenants stopped paying rent to the VLT holders/*chawl* owners. From this time onwards the relationship between the *chawl* owner and tenant, which previously had been non-confrontational, rapidly deteriorated.

After the revocation of the MVLA, both legal and illegal landlords in Bombay set about recovering their rent arrears from as far back as 1975. A further complication in the matter emerged when Janata Squatters Colony was declared an official 'slum' in 1976, under the Maharashtra Slum Improvement Board Act 1973. The Act obliged the government to provide basic amenities, in addition to improvement, repairs and upkeep of the area to protect the residents who were, in turn, expected to pay a service charge of INR 3 per month for these services/facilities, which was deducted from the compensation amount of the MVLA in the case of BMC land. The VLT holders refused on the misconstrued notion that they were being asked to pay compensation to the BMC, not a service charge. Consequently, they filed petitions in the High Court against the BMC, and the case was subsequently directed to the Deputy Municipal Commissioner (DMC) to address the issue.

In 1989, the clients of YUVA's Legal Resource Centre residing in Janata Squatters Colony expressed the need to form an organisation that would take up the cause of the tenants. Thus *Jogeshwari Rahiwashi Sanghatana* (Jogeshwari Residents Organisation) was formed, to serve as a platform to bring individual tenants' cases together to forge strength and plan a unified strategy. YUVA's role as a mediator between the tenants, the JRS, lawyers and the BMC, was useful as we were seen as relatively impartial.

YUVA then undertook a fact finding study. We analysed all the policy documents available with the BMC, which clearly indicated the VLT holders had violated the conditions of the VLT agreements of 1956. Having established the existence of violations, we recommended a 'Character Survey' which required plots to be measured and then compared to the original allotted sites of the area in order to assess the extent of violation. A socio-economic survey of Janata Squatters Colony was also undertaken jointly by JRS and YUVA and submitted to the BMC. The BMC officers and *chawl* owners carried out a similar Character Survey. Though the results were the same as the YUVA/JRS survey and therefore served to strengthen the tenants' case, it was an indication of the BMC's efforts to remain neutral.

An outcome of these efforts was a judgement by the DMC in favour of the tenants in 1992. Though the VLT holders/*chawl* owners appealed twice in the High Court against the judgement, they were unsuccessful and the judgement was upheld. The DMC proceeded to instruct the Project and Ward Officer to continue with building facilities, particularly the civic amenities in the area.

This case illustrated the importance of a nuanced response to processes of exploitation. While a positive judgement in favour of the most exploited emerged from this collaborative effort, its implementation was fraught with challenges. The DMC who could have converted the judgement into a legally binding statute was transferred due to internal restructuring within the BMC after only eight months of taking office. This impacted effective follow-through in the judgement's implementation. While tenants fighting cases in the Small Causes Courts could have used this document to prove that they need not pay rent to VLT holders, this proved more difficult than first envisaged, due to the bureaucratisation of systems and the inaccessibility of public information at the time. Attempts by YUVA and JRS to convert the DMC judgement into a legally binding act were unsuccessful for these reasons. The communal riots that broke out in the city in 1992, during which Jogeshwari was a hotbed of violence, forced YUVA and JRS to divert their attention to intervene in the calamitous situation.

Meanwhile, JRS as an evolving community organisation, wanted to play a more overt political role and contested local elections in February 1997. Although none of their candidates were voted in, it became apparent to other local political and non-political organisations in the area, that they wielded a significant amount of power. Outside parties tried to capitalise on JRS's public credibility within the community, resulting in difficult decisions having to be made by the organisation. JRS also had internal disputes over accountability of funds. These and other problems were not immediately resolved. As a consequence, with divided obligations between developing community based organisations and transparency and accountability to society at large, YUVA was obliged to end this working relationship in August 1997.

Reflections

Our first collaborative effort with the BMC on the tenancy issue in Janata Squatters Colony taught us the fragility of collaborations that are not properly institutionalised. This was apparent when unforeseen events quickly undermined the collaboration process; symptomatic of the 'fundamental drawbacks' of bureaucracy, politicisation, and the personalisation of the relationships between the collaborators.

1995: Converging interests for Land Sharing

In 1991, India announced its policies of liberalisation, initiated under the Structural Adjustment Programme[1]. Meanwhile, the other landmark development in the country was the ratification of the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts[2] (CAAs) in 1992, legalising decentralisation of governance to rural and urban levels respectively. In this dual macro context of growing market involvement in the provisioning of essential services on account of the SAP, and the opening up of spaces for direct people's participation through the CAAs, YUVA attempted to explore a model in which groups and communities, rather than individuals and companies, could organise and privatise their own resources. In light of this, we developed a demonstrative model for housing development using the Community Action Planning[3] methodology.

Sewadal Nagar, one of the largest *bastis* in the city of Nagpur, was situated in an area called Sakkardara on land next to a rundown religious site which included a temple and a large tank. During the very early stages of YUVA's work in Sakkardara, the residents were confronted with the threat of eviction. The area around the settlement had transformed into a middle and upper middle class locality, and the site of the *bastis* began to be seen as prime commodity. The residents of the adjacent flats and local businesses began lobbying for the removal of the *bastis*, complaining that the residents of the *bastis* were squatting in open view and that the ancient tank was being destroyed. The unstated reason for their annoyance was that the presence of the *bastis* was devaluing their property investments.

In 1995, the Sakkardara Beautification Committee (SBC) comprising three prominent residents and supported by businessmen, politicians and many other residents, began pressuring the Nagpur Improvement Trust (NIT) to clear the *bastis* and reinstate the tank. The NIT saw the potential for restoring the area—with its temple and large tank—in the name of public purpose and for making a considerable profit on the commercially viable land, particularly the land along Ridge Road. Despite notification of the major part of the *basti* in the 80s, the NIT had the power to evict the residents and provide alternative land for them in other parts of the city. The residents, for their part, did not want to be relocated.

YUVA and the *Sakkardara Zopadpatti Sudhar Samitee* monitored these developments and entered into a dialogue with other *bastis* in the same ward to garner support for the residents of the basti. A joint committee, *Sevabhavi Sangharsh Samitee (SSS)*, was formed to mobilise support and gather information for their case. A convention on the issues of housing and living status of the urban poor was organised at the ward level, which was also attended by a retired High Court Judge, a prominent environmentalist and supporters of the SBC. Together, the two organisations (SBC and SSS) decided to broaden the debate further to the city-level and constitute the *Nagpur Vikas Samiti (NVS)*, which had representation from all stakeholders—environmentalists, *basti* residents, local businesses, residents and politicians, and was chaired by a retired judge, who was held in high esteem by all parties.

1 | Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) is the term given to a set of 'free market' economic policy reforms imposed on developing countries by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a condition for receipt of loans.

2 | The 73rd and 74th Constitution Amendment Acts (74th CAA) issued in 1992 were a significant move towards strengthening democracy at the grassroot level through local bodies and was aimed at supplementing the inadequate Constitutional provisions for local self government.

3 | Community Action Planning (CAP) is a participatory process involving local communities in developing and implementing the local developmental agenda/plan. The key element of CAP is active, intense community-based processes aimed at identifying, addressing and resolving the issues and problems confronting the community. This approach motivates conflict-affected people to take the lead in the planning and implementation of reconstruction activities.

As stakeholders were encouraged to state their own perspective on issues, such as eviction, the environment, encroachment of hutments onto pavements, street vendors, etc. and hear the position of the other stakeholders, the tension started getting diffused, once people and faces replaced stances and ultimatums.

Reflections

Our work in Sewadal Nagar was an example of how the threat of eviction shifted to a resolution on land sharing. This was a significant departure from our usual approach to traditional community organising strategies that typically only addressed the welfare state as an institution for addressing the rights of the urban poor. Here, we converged the interests of all the stakeholders whilst ensuring that peoples' involvement remained prominent. The recognition of the role of both the state and the market helped to find new tools and mechanisms for addressing the conflict of interests. Hitherto unexplored alternatives like land sharing, generated interest from all parties.

1997: Efforts towards the Resettlement of Evicted Communities

In June 1997, at the height of the monsoon, 12,842 families were rendered homeless when the local authorities forcefully evicted them from Bhabrekar Nagar near Malad. Undertaken over a period of seven days, the evictions were carried out with a swift brutality that was unprecedented. Residents had no time to even collect or save their belongings, including important documents like ration cards, which served as the main form of identity for many of them.

Basic amenities in the community like electricity and water connections, even a municipal school and dispensary, had been accessed by the residents only after seeking approvals from the authority. So the residents, many of whom had been living in the area for over 20 years, were caught completely off guard when the very same authorities launched the eviction drive.

The backdrop to this was that the State government had, in the previous year, announced its Slum Redevelopment Scheme and declared its intention to use the land on which Bhabrekar Nagar was situated for 'social housing'. There were also instances of rumours being heard about the community, stating that the residents were primarily from outside the country, which was not actually the case. The reason for eviction could primarily be attributed to the sharp increase in real estate values which meant that developing the land for commercial purpose was a lucrative proposition.

While YUVA did not have a working presence in the area at the time, the media interest in the case drew us to the process. We surveyed the area and based on first impressions of large scale devastation, decided to intervene. The basis for intervention on behalf of the evicted persons pertained to the violation of housing and human rights, and we sought to rehabilitate the community.

Our first task was to set up information centres through which were shared details about existing laws pertaining to the case with the residents. This was followed by a simple census of the people in the community. Information was collected regarding the demographic profile of the people, nature and proofs of

residence, extent of damage and loss, and so on. Since Section 144 of the Indian Penal Code which prevented more than five people from assembling together had been enforced, we had to extract facts one person or family at a time which we later verified with the tehsildar.

The next crucial step was to address the issue of rehabilitation of those who had been affected. We realise that it would not suffice to look at it only as a local case, and that we needed to garner more support to pressure the State into addressing restitution for the community. We approached the Housing International Coalition (HIC) to carry out a fact-finding mission and prepared a public report which was eventually submitted to the Chief Minister. This revealed that a thriving community from different socio-economic backgrounds that had been living harmoniously was uprooted and destroyed without any provocation or reason. Following the fact-finding mission, in August 1997, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) ruled that the government must resettle families. The government duly allowed a resettlement site, located four kilometres from the original site, on a spot bordering a creek.

YUVA was appointed as the key implementing agency by the government for the resettlement. We worked with the Collector to prepare a list of those eligible for resettlement. To achieve the objective of rebuilding the community, it was crucial to start a rehabilitation and resettlement process that addressed all channels and levels of people—the government, the affected community, other organisations, and the media. This led to the formation of a People's Organisation called Bhabrekar Nagar Sangharsh Samiti (BNSS) which aimed to foster collective action and address overall development goals.

We prepared a comprehensive physical layout plan which included a model house, respecting cultural needs and the need for adequate open spaces, as well as factoring for incremental housing. This ensured land tenure and brought in basic services into the community at the new resettlement site. However, on account of the site being located at a spot bordering the creek, the rehabilitation process was stalled by Coastal Regulation Zone issues that are to date seeking environmental clearances. The BNSS continues to function today in the new settlement area, named New Bhabrekar Nagar, by the residents themselves.

Reflections

Our interventions were firmly rooted in the power of the people. Whether it was tapping into the resources of the affected community, mobilising other people's groups or engaging with the community in the resettlement process, there was high stakeholder participation from the onset. Making stakeholder participation an objective allowed for the entire community to remain motivated to address basic problems and negotiate with the authorities to ensure their access to basic services. The move to involve the NRC and the HRC gave credibility to the efforts made by the community in representing their views on the forced evictions. The documentation of the aftermath of the eviction made it possible to disseminate and cite relevant material while making crucial presentations about the case. The wide variety and eclectic nature of our approach to seek restitution for the community, followed by the state government's offer to rehabilitate the residents, was a powerful testament to our work with populations affected by evictions.

2015 Onwards: Anti Eviction Support Cell

From our experience working in informal settlements, we noticed that they were often cleared without any formal intimation or warning. As a result, vulnerable populations were left in deplorable conditions when evictions occurred, with women and children being the most affected. We set up the Anti-Eviction Support Cell (AESC) in 2015 to act as a helpline-based outreach for vulnerable persons and communities, connecting them to YUVA and our partners in various cities before, during, and after evictions. It was based on the United Nations' Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement and the human rights framework. The first of its kind in the country, and in collaboration with a wide range of organisations, the AESC helped to not only offer a response to evictions, but prevent them in the first place. As YUVA, we offer strategic guidance, training and capacity building to communities and organisations on how to handle forced evictions, and seek fair and just rehabilitation.

Once a call is received on the helpline number (98339 00200), the AESC team documents and forwards it to partner organisations and independent activists. Interventions often take the form of legal support, advocacy with representatives and commissions, and awareness building to help the community respond to evictions.

The AESC has intervened in many cases through the judiciary, supporting communities in Mumbai, Indore, Bhubaneshwar, Cuttack, Delhi, Puri, Patna, Ahmedabad and Ranchi.

In 2017–2018, we launched the Cell's website (www.antievictionsupport.org) to further document activities and their impact on associated issues such as livelihoods, adequate housing, childhoods, etc, and in turn, address the lacuna in mainstream reporting of evictions. In 2019, the AESC organised a nation-wide campaign (the Zero Eviction Caravan) on the Right to Adequate Housing, travelling to 25 cities over 55 days to initiate and promote dialogue among the people and strengthen strategies to resist forced evictions.

The Zero Eviction Caravan covered 25 cities over 55 days to rally nation-wide support to resist evictions

SERVICES TOWARDS SECURING ENTITLEMENTS

Without legal documentation (identity and residence proofs like the Aadhar Card, ration card and so on), the urban poor are denied the agency to claim any rights to the city or access basic services, social security schemes, health schemes of the government, and so on. This further entrenches inequality within cities. YUVA's work in this respect has been to enable people from marginalised communities secure identity proofs, in order to facilitate their access to basic services and democratic rights in an organised manner.

2005: '*Haq Se Lo...Shamil Ho*': Basic Services in Non-Notified Informal Settlements

In 2005–06, Mumbai faced its largest ever eviction drive of informal settlements, undertaken over a span of four months (November 2005–February 2006), rendering over 90,000 households homeless. The evictions were primarily of non-notified settlements which were declared non-notified by virtue of existence after the state-declared cut-off date of 1 January 1995 for rehabilitation.

This led YUVA to focus on non-notified settlements, starting with an intense anti-eviction campaign in partnership with urban poor groups (from the *bastis* themselves) and other non-profits and activist movements, to resist evictions. Following this, we organised the evicted communities in two municipal administrative wards of Mumbai (P-North and M wards) for their rehabilitation. The very status of illegality of these settlements denied

Securing entitlements allows people access basic services

them access to basic services from the state. Alongside the campaign, we facilitated the people's demand for basic documentary proofs and right of access to basic services, through a participatory entitlements campaign called *Haq se lo... shamil ho abhiyan* (participate and access your rights).

During the Parliament elections of 2009, over 1,000 people from these settlements were enrolled on the electoral list for a voter's identity card. Inclusion in the voter list, apart from being a means of entitling participation in the democratic functioning of the state, could also be used as the formal document upon which entitlements and other government benefits could be accessed.

In the years to follow, the focus of the campaign shifted towards access to the public distribution system, government schemes such as Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana and others, and participation in the Development Plan review process.

2012 Onwards: Basic Service Facilitation Centres

YUVA set up its first Basic Service Facilitation Centre (BSFC) in 2012 to address the needs of the poor in an organised manner. Through the BSFC, we have helped the urban poor (living in informal settlements, rehabilitation and resettlement sites, and the homeless) secure their legal documentation (identity proof), which in turn enables them to access basic services like health and education facilities, access to water, adequate roads and street lights, etc. We have tried to facilitate access to the public distribution system for the homeless. We have also facilitated the registration of informal workers towards social security, building financial inclusion, and accessing government schemes.

Using the BSFC as an anchor for organising communities, we have spread awareness among

Training in progress at the BSFC Centre in Guwahati

community members on their fundamental rights, laws, policies and schemes, and conducted sessions on leadership training, skill building and vocational courses for empowerment. We handhold the BSFC for a few years, following which the community is expected to take ownership and drive it forward. We currently facilitate nine BSFCs across Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Nagpur, Indore, Bhubaneswar and Guwahati.

The role of the BSFCs extends beyond facilitation of entitlements to partnering on campaigns initiated by local *basti* groups for various issues, supporting them in strategy development, organisation building and so on. For instance, in the case of water access in Mumbai or in-situ affordable housing options in Nagpur, the BSFC has played a central role in encouraging community groups' advocacy efforts.

Reflections

The BSFCs have turned out to be powerful mediums through which we have developed community networks to generate grassroots data on people who are otherwise rendered invisible within the city's discourse. Our experiences point to how critical facilitation support can be for a family struggling for identity and citizenship rights in the city. Several documents take a long time to be issued, particularly for the most marginalised groups like the homeless and single women headed households. Each success is worth celebrating as a step closer towards an inclusive city.

2012 Onwards: Migration Resource Centre

YUVA engages with seasonal and semi-permanent migrants through the Migration Resource Centre (MRC). We facilitate access to various services and training programmes for informal workers employed in different forms of labour, and organise health camps, counselling and legal aid facilities. We also work towards securing identity proofs, like Aadhaar Card, ration card, voter IDs and PAN cards, and facilitate the opening of bank accounts for these workers.

Registration for entitlements for construction workers at Thane

Informal workers also face great difficulty in taking care of their children during their hours of work. Keeping this in mind, we started in situ crèches and children's resource centres in six different migrant communities in Navi Mumbai from 2012 to 2015.

A common inconvenience faced by many informal workers has been the non-payment of their due wages. Recognising the right to a dignified livelihood, we conscientiously work to try and recover these unpaid wages. Since 2012, YUVA has helped recover wages to the tune of INR 82+ lakh.

Basic Services from a Child Rights Perspective

The adequate fulfilment of basic needs—shelter, health, education, recreation, protection, love and nutrition—is particularly important for children, whose physical, social, emotional, intellectual development as well as self confidence and identity, are closely linked to the environment in which they grow. Development workers have long perceived the issue of basic needs as a human right of children. This perspective finds expression in Human Rights Law, notably in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. YUVA's interventions in the area of basic services for children are rooted in this perspective.

While our general approach to work on issues of poverty and the poor, particularly in this first phase, has been a rights-based one—holding government accountability for the provision of services—the extreme vulnerability of this population group called for direct provision of services to address their basic needs of shelter, food, health etc.

1989: Social Transformation Through Education

In 1989, as part of the interventions in Jogeshwari, YUVA conducted an Urban Animator Training Programme (UATP), to help those from marginalised communities understand and address issues of poverty and deprivation. The four-month programme taught participants new skills that would enable them to make the appropriate changes in their lives as individuals, while emphasising the importance of mobilising the community to address common issues.

During the course of this programme, one of its participants, Laxmi Kumbhar, was approached by a few women of a *mahila mandal* to help retain a vacant piece of land that some anti-social elements intended to sell. Their suggestion was that if Laxmi could start a pre-school centre at the site, it would prevent the sale of the land. Laxmi responded enthusiastically and founded a *balwadi* (pre-school) with five children, where she served as an honorary teacher. When children from the *Vaidu Samaj*[4] who lived in the adjoining areas also started attending, it sparked protests from the parents and the students as well. They felt it was inappropriate for *Vaidu* children to attend classes with the other students, the former being a nomadic tribal community that lived in the fringes of the informal settlement in Jogeshwari.

In the face of this resistance, Laxmi's UATP training came to the forefront. Since the course had stressed on the benefits of adopting a collective effort while addressing a difficult community problem, she saw instantly that ostracising the *Vaidu* children would violate the basic spirit of working as a community. She distanced herself from the *balwadi*, which had

4 | The Vaidus are registered as a Nomadic Tribe and are said to have migrated originally from Hyderabad to settle in various parts of Maharashtra . At the time, the community was largely illiterate and subsisted in the city through unskilled labour. The women sold trinkets, while the men were involved in recycling metal into containers. Children too brought in additional income by begging.

by then been taken over by the government under the Integrated Child Development Services programme. Her sensitivity and commitment to the *Vaidu* community prompted us to support her wholeheartedly.

With resources and guidance from YUVA, a class began exclusively for the *Vaidu* children in a dilapidated and abandoned house. Later, the school had to be moved into a temple only to shut down within four months due to strong protests against the 'untouchable students'. However, emboldened by Laxmi's perseverance, the *Vaidu* children too did not give up. They cleared garbage on a barren piece of land nearby and moved the school there. The land was, in fact, used as a gambling den by local goons who soon started threatening Laxmi and the children. It was then that the larger *Vaidu* community also got involved.

Convincing the parents that this was a cause worth fighting for proved to be quite difficult initially. Personal interaction and frequent visits to their homes to get the parents to understand the importance of giving their children a better future, was called for. It was only when the *Vaidu* community felt a sense of involvement in the day-to-day survival of the school, that the real gains in this intervention became visible.

Laxmi Kumbhar with students from the Durgamata Gyan Mandir

The problem of the anti-social elements was tackled unitedly and for the first time, the community had a glimpse of what the process of empowerment entailed and what benefits could be reaped from it in the future. The parents were then motivated to involve the Caste Panchayat who agreed to part-finance the construction of a concrete room for the school. With more contributions from well-wishers, the school was constructed and *Durgamata Gyan Mandir* came into being with ten girls and four boys.

Education's Gain

Mother goes to work
Father went to village
All the housework I complete
And go to school
In the school I learned
To read and write
Hence this little poem
I can write
See, that education's gain

Sunita Swami Mulpule
12 years

The children's natural inclination for stories and singing was used liberally as a teaching aid. Going beyond the usual constraints of formal education and curriculum requirements, the children were also given lessons on nutrition, personal and environment hygiene and a sense of self and community.

As the children grew older, the school also evolved into a non-formal education centre for non-school going children, apart from providing support study classes for the school going children. Other teachers were also enlisted to help expand the work that Laxmi had initiated. Two from the first generation of learners also graduated, with the first one being a girl. With the approval of the *Vaidu* parents, the batches of the older children were initiated into a local, mainstream school run by the Bombay Municipal Corporation.

Cascading effects

Since some of the *Vaidu* children had been supporting their family incomes through begging, a few parents had initially complained that school disrupted their work schedules. The children, on the other hand, had begun observing that their classmates at school brought fresh cooked food from their homes, and so they started refusing to settle for leftovers or stale fare obtained through begging. As a result, for the first time, the *Vaidu* families began cooking food for their consumption. Today, the practice of child begging within the *Vaidu* community has been completely obliterated.

Many children were also successful in educating their families who then started attending parent-teacher meetings and signing in their own names. Many families within the *Vaidu* community also converted their *kutcha* homes into *pucca*[5] houses.

Today *Durgamata Gyan Mandir* is managed by the youth of the *Vaidu* community as a study centre, reading room and gymnasium. Children from the community have started going to mainstream schools. The first generation of educated youth from this community also formed a community development group called *Bhatke Vimukta Samaaj Samiti* (Committee of Nomadic Tribal Community) which focused on personality development activities with children and youth, creating awareness on problems of superstition and alcoholism, organising school enrolment drives, facilitating applications for documentary proofs such as caste certificate to access welfare schemes, etc.

Reflections

In the case of Laxmi's work with the children of the *Vaidu* community and the subsequent social transformation of the community, YUVA was merely an enabler. While we had trained and supported Laxmi in her efforts to work with a vulnerable group, the chain of events that followed--securing the right to education for the *Vaidu* children, the community coming together to address the issues of anti-social elements, and finally the actual socio-cultural transformation of the community, is a testimony to how a layered process of intervening with marginalised groups leads impact across various levels.

5 | The walls and/or roof of which are made of material such as unburnt bricks, bamboos, mud, grass, reeds, thatch, loosely packed stones, etc. are referred to as kutcha house. A pucca house is one which has walls and roof made of burnt bricks, stones (packed with lime or cement), cement concrete, timber, etc. From http://mospi.nic.in/sites/default/files/Statistical_year_book_india_chapters/HOUSING-WRITEUP_0.pdf

1990: Shelter for Street Children

It was in July 1986, when watching YUVA volunteers actively teaching children of pavement families at Cross Maidan, that two street children approached the volunteers to work with them too. The challenge was taken on very willingly, assuming that 'work with them' could only mean 'teach them'.

Our first response to the street children's request of working together was to provide education to them. It came as a revelation when we realised that education was last on their list of priorities. As we became closer to them, we learnt that protection from police harassment, helping friends who were drug-addicts, a night shelter and food figured prominently on their list of priorities, rather than education.

In 1989, the setting up of Fashion Street at Cross Maidan forced many of these children out, and they dispersed all across the city. With this, we began mapping the areas from Colaba to Bandra, searching for groups of street children. It was during the course of our work with the street children in Mahim that the idea of a shelter for street children was conceived. We visited an organisation called REDS in Bangalore that had been working with street children to understand what setting up a shelter would entail. We came back inspired and in June 1990 set up an open shelter for street children.

We rented an empty shop space close to YUVA's then office in Mahim for the shelter, and opened its doors to around 25 young boys. Since it was in a residential building, there were some resistance from the neighbours. At this point, most decisions regarding the shelter were taken by us, and this did not initially sit well with some of the boys, who on account of living on the streets, were used to a great deal of independence and autonomy.

Within the shelter itself, the rule of 'survival of the fittest' prevailed. The older children typically selected the best sleeping space, had the power to examine the lockers of the younger ones, took decisions on what films would be screened etc, which resulted in some of the children leaving the shelter. We even contemplated giving up on the shelter at this point.

Group Ration Card for Street Children

During the Bombay riots in December 1992 and January 1993, the boys' source of food was cut off for several days owing to the curfew imposed on the city. The enterprising qualities of street boys surfaced during this period. Some of the older boys borrowed a stove, collected funds and stock from neighbours and cooked for themselves and the younger children. Two of the older boys were later sent to train at a kitchen run by a health activist and in early 1993, a kitchen was assembled at the shelter.

When the kitchen started, provisions were bought from the open market which proved to be expensive. YUVA felt that acquiring a ration card for the children would not only help cut costs, but also be an official recognition of their existence, a validation of their rights as citizens. The importance of getting a ration card was discussed with the boys and after six months of persistent follow-up with the system, a group ration card was finally given for the 34 children who were then at the shelter in January 1994. Owing to the constant change in the residents of the shelter, a system was worked out to update the card every three months.

It was only over time that the boys got accustomed to the idea of coming to one place and spending the night, living with the same set of people and having a bath everyday. Decision-making within the shelter too became a bottom-up process, and the boys themselves then decided on the name for the shelter: *Ghar Ho To Aisa* (A home like this).

Ghar Ho To Aisa continued to operate as a 24-hour open shelter until 2004, after which it was closed down, as other non-government organisations, many of them almost exclusively concentrating on the needs of street children, were specialising in this work and addressing the needs of street children.

2008 Onwards: Running A Helpline For Children

While we had been associated with CHILDLINE India Foundation since its inception, YUVA Urban Initiatives began working under its Integrated Child Protection Scheme, as an implementation partner on its 24-hour toll-free helpline for children in distress from 2008. In the early years, data of calls received through YUVA-CHILDLINE showed that over 50 per cent of our interventions were health-related. This prompted us to carry out an in-depth study on the health issues of street children in Mumbai in 2009-10, and thereby advocate for policy provisions that would improve health services, specifically for this population of children.

By working closely with stakeholders like the Child Welfare Committee (CWC), police and railway authorities, and engaging with other non-government organisations working on child issues and services, we were able to rescue children from abusive and dangerous circumstances and provide emergency assistance in cases of missing and runaway children. We conducted outreach programmes to raise awareness in informal settlements about child rights and educate residents about how they can protect children. Open house sessions were conducted to identify issues and vulnerabilities experienced by street children.

In 2018, we partnered with All India Working Group for Rights of Children in Contact with Railways (AIWG-RCCR) and engaged with children at Kurla station and Lokmanya Tilak

Awareness campaign at Dadar Terminus on the occasion of World Day Against Child Labour 2019

Terminus for a study titled 'Life World and Agency of Children in Contact with Railways' to shed light on the heterogeneity of children in contact with railways and promote the need for additional modes of intervention, apart from the rescue-and-restore approach. The national study emphasised the need for participation of children in contact with railways in any policy decision being made about their lives.

The YUVA-CHILDLINE team presently attends to over 500+ emergency calls annually for direct and indirect interventions ranging from rescuing children from dangerous and abusive situations, providing assistance for medical and shelter needs, extending emotional support and counselling, offering referral support, and more.

2010 Onwards: Child Resource Centres

From our experience of working with rehabilitated populations, we realised that children were often greatly affected. Uprooted from familiar surroundings, there were more vulnerable to abuse and exploitation. There was a paucity of safe spaces, especially for girls. Spaces for studying, recreation and play for the children were often not taken into consideration.

YUVA established Child Resource Centres (CRCs) in rehabilitated settlements, as spaces that children could freely use to study, play, conduct meetings and discussions, build solidarity, highlight issues and actively work towards addressing them in the community. Some of the basic facilities and activities at the CRCs included a reading library, digital learning, educational games and sports for development. Using mediums such as movie screenings, training sessions and activities, children enhanced awareness about their rights and responsibilities on issues like water conservation, hygiene, gender equality, child trafficking, substance abuse, sexual abuse, the importance of education, and so on.

We observed that children who attended the CRC were more likely to attend school regularly, and be vocal about the exploitation of their peers. They also became better equipped to tackle their own problems.

Children engage in activities at the CRC in Lallubhai Compound

A safe haven for young girls

Sanjana, is a 11-year-old girl, whose family lives in the rehabilitation settlement in Lallubhai Compound, Mankhurd. With no open space to play and the constant threat of drunkards and drug addicts lurking downstairs, her family for the longest time insisted that she remain indoors at all hours of the day. She recalls her grandmother chastising her from a very young age, 'Don't go down. There are too many young boys there'.

When Sanjana chanced upon the Child Resource Centre (CRC) near her home, she convinced her grandmother to accompany her to see what it offered. For this young girl who had dropped out of school to look after her sister's daughter, the library was an immediate draw, a safe haven where she could reacquaint herself with reading.

She was also part of the first batch of children who participated in the Dance Movement Therapy sessions held at the CRC. While she looked at these sessions as a mere pastime previously, she has come to realise what a unique space it offers for girls like her whose lives are ridden with restrictions. She says, 'The CRC is a safe space for us. We can run around and move freely. And what's more, nobody shouts at us'.

BASIC SERVICES FROM A WOMEN'S RIGHTS PERSPECTIVE

During the course of our work on community issues, we realised that women were not only the most affected by community problems such as evictions or lack of amenities, but were also the ones who would take the lead roles in direct action. It became apparent that community issues could not be tackled without the central participation of women. Efforts were made through processes of capacity building and education to ensure that women were enabled to participate in decision-making at all levels from the family to the community and beyond.

2010–2011: Implementation Of The Protection Of Women From Domestic Violence Act 2005

YUVA had been working on issues of gender justice and gender equality, with a goal to empower women. Efforts were made through processes of capacity building and education to ensure that women were enabled to participate in decision-making at all levels from the family to the community and beyond.

With the issuance of the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act 2005 (PWDVA), we deemed it necessary to mobilise collective pressure to ensure that it could be implemented effectively. To this end, we participated in the state-wide campaign for effective implementation of the PWDVA, 2005. Our role in this network was one of information dissemination and advocacy with the state department and members of the legislative assembly.

YUVA also took on the responsibility of anchoring the Maharashtra chapter of the South Asian campaign on violence against women—'We Can End All Violence against Women'. The campaign recognised that violence against women was rooted in gender inequality and that whether in homes or outside, it reflected the power structures in society. The campaign dealt with conditions that systematically denied women their lives, health, rights, choices and power in the family. We engaged with close to 50,000 change-makers in this period—individuals who had changed their own attitudes towards women and would go on to spread the message of gender equality and non-violence amongst others. We also focused on 'deepening change' among these change makers by holding dialogues and workshops to broaden their perspective on the concept of violence and to sustain their role in the change process.

YUVA also took the lead in organising the regional consultations on PWDVA in Maharashtra, and held a public meeting in Vidarbha. These meetings were an opportunity for civil society groups working on women's rights across states to discuss, analyse and formulate concrete demands, action points and suggestions to hold the government accountable for implementation of the PWDVA.

As a result of the collective advocacy, in June 2010, the government declared that it would implement the High Court order to appoint full time Protection Officers, who had the power to liaison between victims of domestic violence and the system, across the state.

CONCLUSION

YUVA's 35 years of work on basic services rights can be strategically seen as two pronged:

1. identifying and understanding the experiences of injustice, marginalisation and exclusion, as an immediate response; and
2. developing alternatives for inclusion as a long-term response.

Both types of approaches are essential for a relevant and constructive contribution to the establishment of socio-economic, cultural and political justice.

Poverty and inequality cannot be addressed without addressing the issue of lack of adequate basic services. The adequate standard of living envisaged in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights cannot be fulfilled without the state being responsible for it. Therefore, it becomes critical for organisations working with marginalised populations to address issues of universal access to basic services through a mixed approach of establishing alternative means of providing services with a rights perspective, and by seeking resolutions from the State in partnership with marginalised groups.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

YUVA's role in enhancing people's capacities was a manifestation of our commitment to working alongside the poor within the human rights framework. As a result, from the early 1990s, Popular Education, and Training and Conscientisation formed two keys areas in our levels of intervention. The basis of these two interventions were the practice of adult education and Paulo Friere's work on conscientisation[1].

Training and capacity building programmes were always held under the various interventions to tap potential and build leaders.

1 | The term 'conscientisation' is a translation of the Portuguese term conscientização, which is also translated as 'consciousness raising' and 'critical consciousness'. The term was popularised by Brazilian educator, activist, and theorist Paulo Freire in his 1970 work Pedagogy of the Oppressed. More info: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286418640_Friere's_Theory_of_Conscientization

LOCATING YUVA's TRAINING PROGRAMMES WITHIN THE COMMUNITY ORGANISING FRAMEWORK

Over the years, YUVA designed and implemented a number of trainings to suit the needs of a diverse group of people in the urban and rural contexts. These programmes were viewed as an integral part of our work in communities, and stemmed from our belief that since members of any community understood their realities deeply, they had the best ability to identify and resolve issues within their own contexts. This belief implied that learning processes were just as valuable and should complement traditional empowerment-oriented organising processes. Hence, we stressed the need for a constant process of learning, unlearning and training as a driving force for people-centred and people-controlled development. All our work with organisation building and empowerment had training embedded as a core component.

YUVA approached training programmes from two lenses.

1. **At the individual level:** Here we viewed training from a rights-based, social transformation perspective. We believed that building the capacity of the most marginalised, be it on issues that they grappled with or on life skills, would equip them with the knowledge and skills to improve their quality of life, fight for their rights and develop livelihoods; all towards the end goal of social transformation.
2. **At the institutional level:** Enabling democratisation of the larger society necessitated capacity building of different groups of people including legislative authorities such as elected representatives; executive authorities such as the police and other government departments; the judiciary; the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organisations, community based organisations and trade unions. This would aid them in successfully engaging with marginalised communities and working towards addressing issues that affected these populations.

In the urban context, training programmes have been conducted for housing animators, young girls' groups, children living on the streets, and others. In the rural context, training programmes have attempted to train farmers in sustainable agricultural practices, youth on leadership and values, develop a cadre of counsellors and paralegals, etc.

YUVA CENTRE

In 2001, we established YUVA Centre in Kharghar, Navi Mumbai, as a space to facilitate collective learning both within and outside the organisation. Equipped with state-of-the-art infrastructure and residential facilities, the Centre was conceptualised to play the critical role of empowering individuals and organisations in facilitating human rights learning processes. The Centre also opened its doors to other non-governmental organisations, community-based organisations and other groups that seek to utilise the space for their own training programmes.

In its early days, the Centre was a composite of the Training Centre which was the learning space for imparting soft skills and the CIDCO–YUVA Building Centre (CYBC) which was the practical space imparting hard skills. Today, the Centre not only acts as a training centre, but also houses the Urban Resource Centre, which hosts video, photo and text archives that document urban developmental trajectories from the early 1980s, in an effort to disseminate historic and contemporary grassroots knowledge.

A photo exhibition at the YUVA Centre

TRAINING PROGRAMMES ORGANISED BY YUVA

We viewed training as a fundamental process for social transformation, by which people could be empowered to bring changes in their own lives, within their own communities and in society at large. From our experiences on the field, we realised that training played a key role in effecting a positive change across a broad spectrum of areas–from channeling the energies of youth for impactful pursuits and empowering vulnerable groups such as women and children to deal with issues that affected them, to improve livelihood opportunities for the marginalised and enabling greater democratisation in society. Some of the key types of training programmes that YUVA has so far carried out have been elucidated below.

Youth Engagement

YUVA was formed as a youth organisation, with a strong belief in the potential of youth to affect change. We engaged with youth from varied social milieu—students, dropouts, employed and unemployed youth. The first **Youth Animators Training Programme** was organised in 1986, and sought to channelise build the capacities of youth to take on the role of leaders and change agents in society.

Through the **Anubhav Shiksha Kendra (ASK)** programme, implemented since 1993, we provided youth with training and exposure on issues like gender and sexuality, development issues in rural India, leadership in villages and various health-related issues. We advocated for their participation in civic issues and sought to instil in them values of gender equality, social justice and democracy. Members of ASK voiced their opinions and views through a bi-monthly newsletter, *Maitree* and a quarterly newsletter, *Yuvatarang*, both of which were compiled by the youth themselves with the support of an non-governmental organisation, Abhivyakti Media for Development.

In 2015, members of ASK launched a campaign called *Hinsa Mukt Mumbai* to build awareness among youth on the issues of violence. Youth who have been through the ASK programme have participated in several campaigns such as campaigning against genetically modified

One of the early batches of trainees of the ASK programme

When a young woman drives change in the community

Asma Ansari is a 23-year-old from Ambujwadi, Malvani,Malad. She worked with YUVA as a consultant in Malvani, coordinating activities with Malvani Yuva Parishad. She has been a part of the ASK programme since 2018 and is currently the District Coordinator (Mumbai) of ASK where she oversees youth capacity building, via a range of planned sessions on life skills training, youth leadership, gender sensitisation and the like. She also presented youth group building process and engagement strategies to an international audience at the World Urban Forum, Kuala Lumpur in February 2018.

Asma says, *'I extensively engage with youth from marginalised communities to help set up youth groups in Mumbai. I have helped groom 78 youth leaders who are now taking up social issues in their respective communities. For instance, in Vile Parle, youth have taken up cleaning activities and taken the support of local authorities to claim spaces for play and expression.'*

organisms, for women's safety and security, adequate livelihoods, etc. Some of the youth who participated in the ASK programme also attended the **Youth Leadership Training Programme** which was designed to build a cadre of youth leaders among youth from marginalised communities.

The 2018 batch of the City Caravan

"It's important for today's youth to gain the right knowledge from the right source, become aware of social issues around them. I think of City Caravan as a platform to become aware of generally unspoken topics, get a sense of direction, and how to bring a change for the betterment of society."

Chhakutai
25 years - MSW Student

"We see, speak, and listen to so many people in our everyday lives, and we simply, involuntarily, accept and absorb it without any kind of introspection or verification of facts and figures. We should instead think critically, and analyse and then only, with proper judgement, accept or reject anything said by anyone. It was the best thing that I learnt from the programme."

Lochana Adivarekar
20 years - TISS Fellow

As an extension of the youth training programmes, we launched **City Caravan** in 2016–2017, a residential course held at the YUVA Centre to train youth on various themes concerning cities, the urbanisation process and the role of youth in co-creating inclusive cities. This also allowed them to build networks with other youth groups and civil society organisations that engaged on urbanisation. The experience of living away from home and interacting in a new environment proved empowering for many who came from marginalised settings with limited exposure.

Community Organisation

We realised at the onset that training would play a key role in organisation-building. We also observed that in any training programme for members of people's organisations, while each individual participant learnt differently, the context of that learning and its use was collective, and this strengthened the group.

This was evident from our work with **People's Organisations** such as the *Feriwalla Vikas Mahasangh* formed to further the rights of street vendors, or the Pavement Dwellers Citizens' Organisation which looked to fight unlawful eviction by the government. Through a continuous process of motivation, awareness-building and information sharing, facilitated by training, we could build confidence and restore dignity among members of these communities, who lived in mortal fear of the municipal authorities, police and other anti-social elements. Complemented by training on legal rights and laws, these groups were able to address issues that affected them in a holistic manner. We also viewed capability building of core members of both formal and informal groups as a critical element to ensure the growth and sustainability of these groups.

The **Housing Animators Training Programme** was an effort to protect and promote housing rights of the urban poor. It was organised among pavement dwellers in Mumbai and Nagpur to develop leadership skills for dealing with evictions, lack of basic services and other problems associated with living on pavements. The participants were actively involved in the movement for securing rights for pavement dwellers.

The **Community Video Unit** came from our effort to create more people-centric media that would resonate with the community. Youth from *bastis* were trained to create 'video magazines', which addressed issues such as evictions or water supply, that were of interest to the local community. These videos served as important tools in initiating dialogue in the community and with the local authorities, leading to community action. For instance, *Deepjyoti Mahila Mandal*, a local community-based organisation in Mumbai, took the lead in running a cleanliness campaign following the screening of a video magazine on garbage.

The making of a 'video magazine' by the Community Video Unit

Women's Empowerment

Our work with women, especially those from marginalised groups, was to build capacity among those who had been rendered assetless and voiceless, and enable them to regain control over their assets and fully participate in public affairs. What we realised was that women could be powerful agents of change, not only because issues such as evitions or lack of amenities uniquely affected them, but also because they were willing to come forward and take lead roles in direct action.

One of our first efforts to empower women was the **Women Animators Training Programme** which sought to build a cadre of women leaders who could help form and strengthen women's groups among the urban poor. The programme covered women-oriented topics such as their health needs, gender analysis, development and its impact, their legal rights, understanding of self and others, group dynamics and other issues related to community work. Women began to speak up on not only community issues, but also women-specific issues such as domestic violence, domestic work and other concerns. We were witness to numerous cases where these vocal and empowered women were ready to take leadership positions within their communities. Women animators in Dharavi started educating other women on the benefits of forming savings groups. In Ghatkopar, a group of women started following up with their local corporator on issues of drainage and water supply.

From 2000, we also worked on developing a cadre of **Barefoot Counsellors**. This was an effort to create a sustainable institutional

One of the early batches of the Women Animators Training Programme

mechanism at the grassroots to address issues of violence against women. Members were identified from *mahila mandals* and trained on the concepts, principles and models of counselling. We supported them in initiating counselling centres at the community level, through which women in crisis situations could have easy access to counselling.

These centres worked in coordination with the local police and *mahila mandals* to address issues of atrocities against women, ranging from bigamy, alcoholism, dowry demands, family disputes, etc. These counsellors represented the first point of contact for women in crisis and provided them a safe platform to share their problems. Having also received legal training, the counsellors could handle a majority of the cases that came to them independently, and reach out for our support and expertise for complex cases. A key impact of the work of the barefoot counsellors was that it not only brought visibility to the atrocities against women, but also broke the silence around them. Gradually, women started shedding their inhibitions about reporting on crimes and violence committed against them. This sent a message to the community, and resulted in a decrease in the number of incidents of violence against women.

YUVA considered 'Access to Justice' as an important element in development, and hence felt the need to carry out **Paralegal Training** to train a cadre of grassroots activists as 'Paralegals', who could, in turn, be in a position to bring all the legal provisions to the doorstep of marginalised and vulnerable communities. Via networks with local grassroot non-governmental organisations, YUVA initiated a process of training paralegals in the four districts of Madhya Pradesh and three districts of Maharashtra. These paralegals handled and

'We do intensive preparations for each case by collecting documentary evidence, holding discussions with all concerned, and interacting with local authorities. It is not for nothing that men in my locality are better behaved than before. I am ruthless!'

Jaitun Bi
50 years - Barefoot Counsellor
from 1999 batch

offered direction in a broad spectrum of cases related to alimony, child custody, rape and property rights, and ensured justice. Many poor families, rural students, women, and tribals also got support from them in filling and submitting application forms to access various government schemes.

Empowerment Of Vulnerable Children

The **Bal[2] Doctor Training Programme** was an experiment towards an alternative model of health care for vulnerable children living on the streets and in *bastis*. It was initiated in May 1997 to build awareness on issues of health, build capability among children to address basic and minor health issues on their own and provide referral services. Children were trained by resource persons from hospitals and other non-governmental organisations in basic first-aid and on treatment of common and minor illnesses. The basic premise was to build a system whereby basic medical help was easily available for children in their respective communities. Other organisations working with children in Mumbai too sent in their child representatives for the programme. In addition to building confidence in children by giving them responsibilities, this programme was effective in creating awareness on issues of health and hygiene among people by children themselves.

Street children being taught how to make a sling at the Bal Doctor Training Programme

Cases from the Bal Doctor Training Programme

Bal doctors from Ekta Mitra Mandal spotted a woman with a crying baby. On enquiring, they found that the 10-month-old baby was bleeding from the nose, and the mother did not know what to do. The young doctors rushed her to Sion hospital, where the baby was admitted to the neonatal intensive care unit for three days. They took turns to keep the mother company during this period. Unfortunately, the baby succumbed and it turned out to be a sorrowful moment for the *bal* doctors.

Ajay was a 17-year-old lone street youth. He worked as a porter on a station platform, but for a long time had been debilitated by his addiction to drugs and alcohol. On attending one of the *Bal* Doctor Training Programmes, he realised the damage he was doing to himself. Inspired by the programme, he started weaning himself off drugs, and even went on to educate other children like him on drug addiction and health issues.

2 | Bal is the Hindi term for child

Livelihoods Development

YUVA recognised that with many people in informal settlements, the lack of employable skills led to greater livelihoods concerns. We approached livelihoods through the lens of skill building, complemented with linkages with the market. In 2002, when women from Dharavi approached us with a request to start a catering service at the YUVA Centre, we arranged for their training (in cooking and baking). Three years from then, we aided in registering their catering service **Matrutva Seva Sahakari Sanstha (Matrutva Service Cooperative)** and to this day it continues to be a profit-making enterprise being run by the women themselves.

The **Youth Livelihoods Resource Centres** too came about through our interactions with youth members in informal settlements. We realised that for many of them, their immediate concerns were with respect to finding a job that could help support their families. We collaborated with various institutions and organisations to leverage government schemes to organise training programmes for youth. The focus was on developing employable skills such as computer literacy, retail training, tailoring, etc. This was further complemented by organising job fairs and career guidance workshops.

Deepening Democratisation

Enabling democratisation of the larger society necessitated capacity building of different sections of society including legislative authorities such as elected representatives; executive authorities such as the police and other government departments; the judiciary; the private sector and civil society, including non-governmental organisations, community based organisations and trade unions. This would aid them in successfully engaging with marginalised communities and work towards improving their standard of living. At an institutional level, YUVA built capacity on aspects such as financial management, organisational development as well as in building knowledge, skills and perspective on developmental issues.

Human rights training has been one of the key themes of programmes at the YUVA Centre. In 2003, YUVA collaborated with the South Asian Learning Institute for Human Rights Education (SALIHRE) programme with support from The People's Movement for Human Rights Education, to organise the first **Human Rights Educators Training Programme** at the YUVA Centre. The programme aimed to equip human rights educators with the skills and understanding

A moment from the Human Rights Educators Training Programme

to integrate knowledge in the fields of politics, economics, socio-psychology and cultural diversity in the context of human rights; and strategise the training and methodology required in promoting human rights education in various South Asian countries. It was attended by 31 human rights workers/educators from 14 different nations. Workshops were also organised on themes such as Dalit rights, and human rights violations propagated by the police. A national consultation of civil-society organisations on monitoring the Millennium Development Goals, with respect to achieving human rights, was also organised.

YUVA has also engaged with government functionaries such as the police and elected representatives. A workshop titled **Police and Human Rights** was organised for police personnel with the aim of building greater sensitivity on issues of violence against women and children and enable them to reflect on human rights violations within the police system itself. We also trained elected representatives, notably women Corporators and Panchayat representatives, to build greater awareness of their powers following the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts for democratic decentralisation.

Capacity Building at the ward level on the 74th CAA

Conclusion

Training is an important aspect of our social transformation work, serving a critical role across different levels of intervention. The YUVA Centre itself is a manifestation of our commitment to training, being an institutional expression of our need to deepen democratisation in society.

Our emphasis on training has, on the one hand, enabled us to identify and develop a cadre of leaders cutting across age, gender, social class, etc. among the marginalised communities that we work with. We have had the fortune of seeing many of these individuals become agents of change, striving to address and resolve issues affecting their communities. On the other hand, it has allowed us to engage with the larger population and to share our vision of social transformation for the marginalised with government authorities, other civil society organisations and individuals, who we believe will have their own part to play in securing equity and agency for the oppressed and marginalised.

THE PEOPLE'S ORGANISATION– PEOPLE'S INSTITUTION STRATEGY

YUVA's commitment to people's empowerment led to close engagements with local organisations since the beginning. We were focused on strengthening existing organisations to understand and respond effectively to the local development issues, and also encouraged new formations such as community action groups, groups of women, youth and children and built their capacities to engage in development.

Till 1990, YUVA had followed a project approach, where each project dealt with one aspect within the structural realities of the city. Through the course of our work with various organisational forms, we realised the limitations of the project approach and resolved to commit to long-term programmes built around major issues faced by the nation, rather than mere activities and projects. This also proved to be a shift from being merely responsive to issues, to being proactive.

The announcement of the New Economic Policy in June 1991 triggered a rethinking process within YUVA. We realised that it would result in a total qualitative shift in how civil society organisations engaged with the state and we also expected it to have adverse implications for the populations we worked with.

We analysed the experiences of other countries with the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP)[1]. While Latin American countries had undergone SAP in the 1970s, many South Asian countries including India's neighbour's Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka had undergone them in the 1980s. We realised that the experience of developing countries with SAP had brought about two challenges: 1) people were losing their existing assets such as land, shelter, and 2) people were losing their rights.

We reflected upon our strategy of working only on rights, and on analysing the experiences of struggles in different parts of the country, we realised the limitations of this approach. The post liberalisation era had altered the ground reality for development organisations and the poor. For people to be able to lead a truly productive and decent life in the market-driven economy, realisation of rights had to be accompanied by access to tangible benefits. While our work until then had been geared towards building capacity among the community to influence the State to actualise the rights of marginalised populations, we now also needed to look at how we could build resources and livelihoods among these populations, so that they would be able to mitigate the adverse impacts of liberalisation without becoming further marginalised. We felt that if rights were to hold any meaning for the poor, there should be a visible and clear improvement in economic terms, living conditions and nutrition standards. While YUVA had thus far been working on rights, we had not been focused on assets. Post 1991, we had to think about assets.

This led us towards a dual strategic approach of securing rights along with building assets of the poor. We realised that we would need to function as a People-Centred Collaborative Institution (PCCI) to ensure that we could continue to uphold people's rights, as well as empower them to survive in the face of new market realities. It was at this juncture that we developed what we termed as the **People's Organisation–People's Institution Strategy (PO--PI Strategy)** of intervention.

We believed that rights and assets were integral to the empowerment and long term well-being of marginalised people, and that POs and PIs would be vital mechanisms to enable people to negotiate with the state and market, the two overarching forces in the political economy. While POs were required to protect existing rights, expand existing rights, and create new rights, PIs were needed to protect existing assets, resources and livelihoods, enhance and create new assets. By developing POs, as we had been doing earlier, we would be able to continue our work on creating and defending rights; through PIs, we would be able to focus our efforts on creating and managing assets.

Building and developing POs and PIs were viewed as complementary functions within the process of community development, and we believed that the PO-PI strategy was a way of scaling up, which would sustain the change effort as people's ownership towards a process was built.

The PO-PI strategy also helped us better articulate the underlying reason behind our work thus far. While the New Economic Policy had forced us to make the shift, we were able to reorganise our work into a conceptual model that would not only guide our strategy, but could also be adapted by other organisations working with marginalised populations.

1 | Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAP) is the term given to a set of 'free market' economic policy reforms imposed on developing countries by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund as a condition for receipt of loans.

PEOPLE'S ORGANISATIONS

YUVA has considered building people's organisations (POs) as an important part of its work since the start. Over the years we developed, promoted and facilitated several POs around different rallying points and with different population groups. These POs represented a diverse mix of objectives, social composition, scope of operation, and made attempts to ensure the progressive realisation of human rights to various population groups such as women, children, youth and unorganised sectors.

We have attempted to share illustrative cases of a few of the POs supported by YUVA, where we go into some detail on their genesis, evolution and outcomes.

The Early Years: 1984–1990

In the initial years of our work, the focus was on local youth and women's groups. Capacity building programmes for skill, personality and leadership development formed a major part of our programme activity, where our role in relation to the groups was supportive in nature. As our field of contact expanded, we realised that to stay relevant and effective, we needed to work on people's issues.

People were organised across geographical area pockets around issues such as rationing, goondaism, police atrocities, tenants' issues, etc, resulting in the formation of organisational forms such as teachers' unions, domestic workers' groups, voters' forums, women's forums, tenants' organisations and more. These evolved out of the changing needs, issues and social situations, as well as from the development of our own consciousness about issues. As we envisaged it, these organisations would essentially work in the area of socio-political activism. They were a medium, an instrument for negotiation on people's issues in a democratic framework. They could work on a range of rights, from those such as housing and education that could be clearly defined and monitored, to those that were less straightforward but equally as important, such as rights to political participation and a violence-free community.

One of YUVA's first attempts at organising people around community programmes and issues was through the **area mandals and central committee**. The focus of work was to develop them to take on issues which were of concern to them. While the mandals and central committee were effective rallying points for POs during the first half of this period, they struggled to remain resilient for several reasons, including power struggles within the groups, people perceiving them as platforms to enter politics and their inability to address controversial issues. For instance, the mandals found it difficult to find resolutions when their own gender/caste bias was addressed, or in the case of tenants' issues, as both owners and tenants would often belong to the same mandal. Also, the geographical areas within which the mandals operated become a uniting factor for mobilising people, rather than issues.

Towards the latter half of the 1980s, we realised that it would be more effective to organise people around issues, rather than geographical areas. Within **issue-based organisations**, members could play changing roles, which removed the element of hierarchical relationships and the tussles for power that came along with it. As a result, we shifted focus to training people across geographical areas to address issues that concerned them. Since ad-hoc committees could be set up to look into specific tasks, the issue-based organisations proved to be more effective in addressing issues pertaining to housing, evictions and tenancy, goondaism, police harassment, women's empowerment, etc.

During the elections, we set up **voters' forums**, which were essentially citizen groups for political education. This emerged from YUVA's attempts to bring about an increased public discourse about politics. The voters' forums formed vigilance committees to ensure peaceful elections, and keep an eye out for booth rigging. They also took the initiative to invite representatives of political parties to public debates. These forums were successful experiments in mobilising and organising people around a specific event and issue.

We also engaged with women through **mahila and yuvati mandals**. Our experience revealed that in issue-based organisational work such as obtaining water, taps, repairs of toilets, police harassment, price rise, housing, etc. women tended to be more involved participants than men, as these issues affected them to a much greater degree. The women's attitude towards holding positions of leadership was more short-term issue or event based, rather than

on building the organisations or institutions for the long term. The women also rarely saw these activities as opportunities to move into local politics or engage in power struggles.

While some of these organisational forms were relevant for that time and space context, in the wake of changing realities some changed direction, leading to a continuous search for creative solutions to address evolving problem situations. As a result, we sought to create newer organisation forms that would factor for dynamism and fluidity.

YUVA's Role vis-à-vis People's Organisations

Since YUVA considered organisation building as one of its important areas of work, we felt the need to articulate our role very clearly, as follows:

1. To build capacity through training and workshops and particularly by building individual relationships with the core group and other members.
2. To provide opportunities for exchange programmes and exposure.
3. To extend support in building strategy.
4. To transfer skills in areas such as accounting, administration, activities etc.
5. To facilitate a process for developing a database within the organisation and also provide secondary data and relevant information regarding policies, government schemes and the like.
6. To subsidise material and service expenses while providing support towards raising funds and resources.
7. To maintain internal cohesion.

1991–1999: Pavement Dwellers Citizens' Organisation

Pavement dwellers represented one of the most vulnerable and marginalised sections among the urban poor, driven to such localities in search of better work prospects. While employment opportunities proliferated in cities such as Mumbai, no provision was envisaged for the housing of the marginalised. Pavement dwellers were typically engaged in a host of activities in the unorganised sector and a majority represented Schedule Castes, Scheduled Tribes (SCs/STs) and other marginalised communities. They lived on footpaths, near railway lines, under bridges and flyovers. Their homes were bamboo poles covered by gunnysacks, plastic and tin sheets. Unlike many *bastis* which were notified and therefore entitled to basic infrastructure and amenities, there was no such system for pavement dwellers. Many took illegal water and electricity connections from the nearby *bastis*, paying exorbitant rates. They also lived under the constant threat of eviction and were vulnerable to harassment from political parties, police and anti-social elements. The diverse backgrounds and the heterogeneous nature of the *bastis* at times also led to infighting, tensions and conflicts .

Genesis of the Pavement Dwellers Organisation

The Pavement Dwellers Citizens' Organisation (PDCO) was formed in 1991 in the wake of increased evictions of the pavement settlements by the Mumbai municipal authorities. A massive eviction drive in 1988 gave the impetus to move towards organised struggle. Under the guidance of YUVA, about 45 pavement *bastis* got together as an unregistered entity to fight for their rights and basic amenities. The objective of the PDCO was to fight the government's forceful eviction, to demand to be treated as rightful citizens by ensuring protection and for the provision of basic amenities in the *bastis* till they were rehabilitated.

YUVA's Support

During the initial years, YUVA facilitated the process of awareness building, regular meetings,

running the savings programme, organising capacity building and exposure visits, guiding rallies, protests, campaigns etc. A continuous process of motivation, awareness-building and information sharing was necessary to build confidence and restore dignity among the pavement dwellers, who lived in mortal fear of the municipal authorities, police and other anti-social elements. Training on legal rights, laws and advocacy work was combined with practical exposure to various government departments and municipal offices on how and who to interact with. This enabled the PDCO leaders and its members to independently approach municipal authorities to submit petitions and negotiate for services etc.

Outcome of Struggle by the PDCO

While many members of the PDCO got their ration cards, three settlements also managed to get drinking water facilities legally before a policy banning any such provision was introduced. With ongoing pressure from the PDCO, coupled with the official acknowledgement of pavement dwellers as part of the Government's Slum Redevelopment Scheme, evictions reduced in areas where the PDCO was most active. This resulted in a sense of security amongst the pavement dwellers.

The most encouraging and empowering outcome of the struggle was the passage of the state government notification in 1997 granting protection to settlements which were in existence before 1 January 1995. This was the result of over six years of relentless struggle by the PDCO in filing petitions, organising signature campaigns, protests, meeting political leaders, etc. even as they tried to protect their belongings and space against the onslaught of repeated evictions.

The PDCO successfully negotiated with Sulabh Souchalay (a privately-owned paid toilet facility established in many busy areas of the city) to issue a user pass for pavement dwellers on a monthly payment of INR 40 per household. In certain settlements, PDCO activists successfully tackled anti-social elements, such as drug peddlers, with community engagement.

Decline of the PDCO

PDCO reached its peak of success in 1997–1998 after the government notification in 1997, granting protection to settlements which were in existence before 1 January 1995. After 1998, there was a decline in the functioning of the PDCO, and the number of pavement *bastis* associated with PDCO came down to 10. While these *bastis* continued to have their local leaders, the central core group more or less became defunct as some of the leaders felt that the core objectives of the PDCO had been met with the issuing of the government notification. Moreover, with the focus of the government and other non-governmental organisations who began working with pavement dwellers shifting to rehabilitation, and YUVA stepping back as the rehabilitation approaches seemed short-sighted, and many members started associating with other entities to take forward their rehabilitation plans, as their demands to retain their settlements was not being heard.

Reflections

YUVA's experience with PDCO demonstrates the way in which we tried to facilitate the set up of a people's organisation. However, despite our confidence in the people's leadership that had developed, members remained insistent that our engagement continue. With our withdrawal from regular involvement, local dynamics and vested interests resurfaced too, and the group's participation suffered. As many of the members felt that with the government acknowledgment of pavement dwellers in the SRS, their organisation goals had been met, they did not feel the need to sustain the organisation further.

1995–1999: Stree Manch

The work with women as a specific target group gained momentum in the early 1990s as mahila mandals came forward and took action on basic amenity issues such as obtaining water taps, repair of toilets etc. This active participation of women was consolidated through two major initiatives: the Women Animators Training Programme (WATP) and the celebration of Stree Utsav on Women's Day. While the WATP was designed as a series of weekly sessions over several weeks and included a residential component in which women had the opportunity to move out from their homes and community and experience group living where they could unfold their inner feelings and gain strength from each other, the Stree Utsav was a festival of music, song, dance and slogan calling that brought in a strong feeling of solidarity of women coming together for the issues of women. These became regular programmes conducted annually over the next few years, which yielded a cadre of women activists who were ready to work at the city-level.

Women began to speak up on not only community issues, but also on women-specific issues such as domestic violence, domestic work and other concerns. Spontaneous demonstrations of women from across different informal settlements for the anti-alcoholism campaign and the domestic workers campaign were the first expressions of women's solidarity and marked the shift from basic amenity issues to women-specific issues. In the anti-alcoholism campaign, taking the example of the work done by women in Gadchiroli, women took up the challenge of making one ward an anti-liquor ward. Following the domestic workers campaign, a Government Regulation was issued which gave recognition to domestic workers as being part of the unorganised sector.

Genesis of Stree Manch

A unique aspect of the intervention strategies of YUVA during this period was the way in which it brought together Hindu and Muslim women during activities and programmes jointly conducted by them. This integration was later put to the test during the Hindu–Muslim riots that shook the city in December 1992 and January 1993, that ripped apart the communal amity in Jogeshwari permanently.

The women's solidarity was consolidated through the formation of an organisation of women: the Stree Manch, which had a separate identity from the community-based organisations and included both Hindu and Muslim women's groups from Jogeshwari East, pavement communities and other parts of the city. A mass contact drive was initiated across the city to develop Stree Manch into a community-based women's platform.

Stree Manch continued to celebrate Stree Utsav on International Women's Day. It expanded its scope by celebrating other traditional and religious women's festivals, giving them new meaning by bringing in women's issues and rights messages. The leadership of Stree Manch was with community women activists and YUVA's women's rights team played a supportive role.

Rationing Kruti Samiti

Stree Manch also took up the issue of rationing through the public distribution system (PDS), with difficulties in access affecting women most acutely. With the structural adjustment and liberalisation policies, the PDS had received a major subsidy cutback and the quota of food grains and other items and their cost was overhauled. The target system was introduced to focus on those defined as the 'neediest', leading to corrupt practices and leaving out a large section of the poor from benefitting. With the steep hike in prices it became difficult for poor households to purchase essential commodities from the open market.

A city-level network of community women's groups around the issue of rationing called the Rationing Kruti Samiti was formed. While the

Rationing Kruti Samiti was active at the city level, local level action was concentrated in the geographical areas of Ghatkopar, Dharavi and Jogeshwari. Small group community meetings, public meetings and training programmes were held on issues confronting women vis-à-vis the PDS so as to plan possible courses of action to deal with the shopkeepers and increase their accountability. The training programmes helped build a holistic understanding of the issue. Women surrounded shopkeepers, demanding regular food supplies at fair prices, and sent back spoilt grains. One shop was forced to close down temporarily when the women caught the shopkeeper adulterating provisions with sand and filed a police complaint against the shopkeeper.

Decline of Stree Manch

Stree Manch continued to work as a city-level forum for women for the greater part of the 1990s. However, issues cropped up with respect to leadership. This could be attributed to high turnover among members and internal dynamics of those in leadership positions. However, despite the decline, we recognised that Stree Manch as a PO had contributed significantly to the women's empowerment process.

A public meeting of Stree Manch at Dharavi

1998: Feriwalla Vikas Mahasangh

In Mumbai, the street vendors' community mostly included the newly displaced, migrants who came into the city in fresh and periodic influxes, and all those seeking to earn their livelihood in an intensely competitive and fractured job market. Having made their way into the city, these people were absorbed into the vast unorganised sector whose members engage in a variety of trades and skills.

However, though the city drew on their skills, it simultaneously refused to take cognisance of their existence in a manner befitting the framework of basic human rights. The unorganised sector as a whole and the vendors' community, in particular, lived on the fringes. Its members were routinely intimidated by the lower functionaries of the state, ignored by

the urban planners and widely regarded as a nuisance by the very people who found buying their wares to be an inexpensive and convenient option.

After liberalisation, population groups like vendors discovered that they had become even more marginalised in the new socio-economic order. Therefore, by the mid-90s, vendors across Mumbai had begun to feel the need for some concerted action that would draw attention to their needs. Contrary to the prevailing views in different sections of society, vendors had always perceived themselves to be an integral and useful part of the social order.

Genesis of the Feriwalla Vikas Mahasangh

The coming together of the vendors in a first bid to make themselves heard, took place at Amrut Nagar in the suburb of Ghatkopar. This was in response to a local Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) who planned to build a commercial complex illegally at the very site used by them. Realising that the failure to act would mean a total loss of livelihood, the vendors organised themselves and submitted a petition to the state government, the Municipal Corporation and the Collector's office in 1996. The vendors, supported by a people's organisation (Rashtriya Unnati Sanghatana) and YUVA, drove public awareness on their rights. Due to these efforts, further construction in the area was stopped. However, after the initial show of solidarity, a sense of fear gripped the vendors as they realised that they had taken a bold stance against a politically powerful person. It was due to this reason that despite the initial success, the movement against oppression and tyranny in this particular case came to a grinding halt.

Nevertheless, a significant new beginning had been made. Capitalising on this, a section of vendors began to realise the need to build consensus on day-to-day issues rather than merely launch a series of direct confrontations. These efforts saw the birth of the Siddhi Vinayak Bhaji Mandayi at Ghatkopar, a group formed by a small group of enthusiastic vendors. Its members comprised those who continued to feel quite confident after the intervention at Amrut Nagar, and had started taking a greater interest in the functioning of this new alliance.

Members of the Mumbai Hawkers Union at a rally in Sakinaka

Early Initiatives: Concentrating on Day-to-Day Issues

The Siddhi Vinayak Bhaji Mandayi started dealing with matters of routine relevance to the community. The collective discussed the issue of hafta (the practice of paying regular bribes). They talked about their rights and the injustice of having to pay off the police for carrying on with their legitimate livelihood activities. They approached the duty officer at the local police station who restricted the police constables from extorting money. The vendors then chose to take up the issues of confiscation of their goods and being fined for vending by municipal authorities. Reasoning that they were not indulging in any anti-social activity, the collective decided that they would form groups at the time of confiscation and prevent the municipal workers from taking away their belongings. This was done on six to seven occasions. The success of these early initiatives went a long way in building the group's confidence and faith in the power of collective action.

Vendors also stopped giving donation money to various local political groups in the name of religious or cultural occasions. Though subjected to threats, including the threat of eviction, they stood their ground. They stopped paying the additional monthly payment that was collected by those municipal staff who were engaged in cleaning the premises of the vending site. They explained that they were already paying legitimate taxes to the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM). At the same time, they launched efforts to prevent tax evasion among vendors, as this additionally went a long way in establishing the legitimacy of their livelihood activity.

The increasing scope of its concerns encouraged the collective to seek registration and obtain a legal identity. Thus the Feriwalla Vikas Mahasangh (FVM) was registered as a Trade Union on 15 October 1998 with 25 members, four of whom were social activists who were invited to be part of this union. The FVM began to expand its interaction with street vendors from other areas in Mumbai such as Dadar, Andheri and Kurla, and Malad.

A rally organised by the Mumbai Hawkers Union

Reaching out to the Wider Community

The new union focused its attention on city-level issues affecting vendors. It began by building an information base on the municipal schemes and policies for the creation of vending zones, a controversial issue in the city. It initiated a 'Right to Live, Right to Livelihood' campaign, to disseminate information about the proposed vendor schemes in eight administrative wards of the city. FVM found the scheme insensitive and inadequate as it sought to regroup the vendors in designated areas instead of having them operate at venues of their choice, hence overlooking the conveniences inherent in the practice for both the consumer as well as the vendor in relation to easy access (distance, time) and affordability. The scheme also banned 19 forms of vending activities on the street such as those of the cobbler, leaving them without an alternate plan.

FVM then began to make its presence felt at the national level. It contributed to the national level dialogue on vendors by participating in the programmes of the National Alliance of Street Vendors of India (NASVI). A delegation of FVM representatives met the National Second Labour Commission of the Government of India and presented its analysis of the impact of economic changes on the informal labour sector. FVM also outlined its recommendations in relation to a national policy for vendors which was acknowledged by the Commission.

After each successful milestone, the vendor groups and subsequently the FVM, expanded their scope of work. This earned them goodwill and support as well as granted legitimacy to their actions as perceived by society at large. For instance, by opposing the forcible collection of donations in the name of religion and culture by local political groups, the vendors were in fact striking out in an area that was of concern to all law abiding and peaceful citizens from all walks of life. Thus, from a group sharply focused on seeking immediate relief in the pursuit of their economic activities, the vendors gained legitimacy by raising wider issues of social concern.

1998: Mahila Vikas Parishad

A decade of urban interventions in the city of Mumbai had helped us understand that urban issues and problems could not be seen in isolation and that the issues of the urban poor were closely linked with that of the rural poor. In addition, policy level interventions necessitated a broader perspective which interventions in Mumbai alone could not provide. A programme to intensively work on rural issues was thus conceived and Vidarbha, one of the most marginalised regions in Maharashtra, was chosen as the area for work in 1994.

One of the first projects in this region was to enhance the participation of women in the development process. In 1996, YUVA Nagpur initiated the formation of the Vidarbha Lok Vikas Manch, a network of non-governmental organisations and community-based organisations working in Vidarbha. To tackle the lack of participation and representation of women in political decision making, we felt there was a need to actively reach out to women and call for their participation in Panchayati Raj Institutions. This gave rise to a state-wide campaign called Mahila Raj Satta Andolan, which was run in partnership with Resource and Support Centre for Development (RSCD), a state-level collective of non-governmental organisations working in five regions of Maharashtra, where we took on the responsibility of facilitating the campaign in Vidarbha through trainings, networking and supporting campaign actions. Following the campaign, women started being elected as sarpanches. A Government Resolution was issued to ensure that in areas where there was a woman sarpanch, a no-confidence motion could not be passed.

The idea of a federation of mahila mandals came through discussions with these women and other leaders of the mandals. What stood out from these discussions was that the concerns of rural marginalised women got little to no visibility, and were rarely recognised by mainstream women's movements. In 1997, a large public meeting was organised for women from across five districts of Vidarbha. At this meeting, it was decided that a federation needed to be formed and the leaders of the federation would carry the voice and give visibility to the rights of poor marginalised women. This process led to the emergence of the Mahila Vikas Parishad (MVP).

Members of MVP were instrumental in building awareness in villages regarding issues related to the status of women, gender equality, social discrimination and violence against women. They formed pressure groups and organised advocacy campaigns to help women get entitlements towards access to land, adequate homes and other physical assets and recognition by having bank accounts, ration cards etc. They also helped women benefit under various government schemes such as Indira Awas Yojana, Shravan Bal Yojana, Sanjay Gandhi Niradhar Yojana, etc. The MVP also promoted livelihood activities through small businesses such as tailoring shops, kirana (grocery) stores, beauty parlours and the like.

By coordinating with the police, judiciary and other government departments to enable protection of women from violence and to provide them with required security, they helped solve cases lodged by women in distress. This work also contributed towards implementing the provisions under the Protection of Women against Domestic Violence Act (PWDVA). By building the capacity of women on various economic and political issues, there was an uptick in the number of women who stood for local elections, with the elected representatives then serving to further amplify the MVP programme. The cadre of barefoot counsellors and paralegals that had been trained, also took up various development issues at an independent level.

Over the years, MVP has evolved to become a force of strength, especially with respect to addressing issues of women in distress. The total strength of the MVP today stands at over 40,000 members.

Events organised by the Mahila Vikas Parishad saw hundreds of women from the community congregate

2001 Onwards: Shehar Vikas Manch (SVM)

Shehar Vikas Manch[10] (City Development Forum) is a people's organisation formally established in 2004, comprising of a collective of community-based organisations to spearhead people's collective struggles towards land tenure security and other urban development issues. While the Mumbai chapter of the SVM closed in 2008, the Nagpur chapter continues to be a strong entity with people-led approaches to change. YUVA and SVM have actively supported communities in Nagpur in their fight for access to basic rights, entitlements and land tenure security.

From the 1980s, marginalised populations living in *bastis* in Nagpur were denied access to basic services (water, electricity supply, healthcare facilities, quality roads, etc), and lacked tenure security. In the absence of adequate habitats, generations experienced deprivations constituting gross human rights violations. In 1997, YUVA launched the Nivara Haq Abhiyan (Campaign for the Right to Housing) in Nagpur and began facilitating the set up of community based organisations (CBOs) in Nagpur's *bastis*. These efforts coalesced in the form of the SVM in 2004. Over the years, YUVA and SVM have worked together on multiple campaigns and advocacy efforts to facilitate the provision of tenure security through land titles. Given the pressure of these sustained and focused interventions, the Government of Maharashtra issued a series of Government Resolutions, with the latest one on 3 January 2017 extending land tenure to all *bastis* on State government land in Nagpur and across other cities of Maharashtra except Mumbai, Pune, Pimpri Chinchwad and Thane. These GRs, when implemented effectively, can impact 3,088,481 people living in *bastis* across the state of Maharashtra.

With the movement's organic growth and membership, it has adapted advocacy strategies to respond to changing political climates, keeping the people's demands at the centre of all interventions. Media engagement has focused on how public support can be built on the question of adequate housing, with data-driven commentary on people's housing and land rights. To ensure public support and commitment, the goals of the movement have been clearly communicated from the start and the power of participatory, democratic and inclusive action has been stressed. Public meetings, discussions and information sharing sessions have been organised at crucial times, and people's ideas and opinions have been given space, to drive the movement forward with collective efforts.

While the people's movement has achieved significant results so far, the dream of tenure security for every resident of a *basti* is still to be realised, given the slow pace of implementation in distributing land titles. However, the people's movement in the city remains strong and there is optimism that sustained efforts will yield further results. The dream of tenure secure settlements means living free from the threat of forced evictions, the ability to access loans for housing up gradation, a better quality of life and a more equal urban future.

Morcha by SVM to CM's Office, Nagpur for the implementation of GR's for land rights in November 2016

1 | https://medium.com/@yuvaonline/advocating-for-land-tenure-rights-b974d48dea42

2002 Onwards: Bal Adhikar Sangharsh Sangathan

Bal Adhikar Sangharsh Sangathan (BASS), a children's collective working on community-based child rights issues, was set up almost two decades ago, facilitated by YUVA in communities where interventions are with children. The group is collectively owned and run by the children themselves. Over the years, generations of young ones across the city have joined hands to fight for and claim their rights. Children's participation in this group has been a rewarding and empowering experience for most of them who have seldom had a platform to voice their concerns.

BASS comprises of children from marginalised families, drawn from different parts of the city. Most of the children reside either in informal settlements (Ambujwadi, Malwani), on the street (in Dadar, Matunga, etc), or in rehabilitation and resettlement sites (such as Lallubhai Compound, Mankhurd), locations marked by inadequate living standards. Children grow up in cramped and unsafe surroundings, lacking spaces for study, play, leisure, or even privacy. Children are often voiceless and vulnerable in these surroundings, unable to articulate their concerns, and their physical, mental and emotional well-being is affected in the absence of adequate homes. In these trying circumstances, the BASS collective hopes to empower children, helping them find a voice to articulate their needs and fights for their rights, in turn inspiring other children to join hands and drive change.

The key objectives of BASS are:

- Building on the children's own understanding of child rights and creating awareness among other children about their rights.
- Understanding and networking with government and non-government systems/ entities/individuals to work towards the shared goal of realisation of child rights and the setting up of child-friendly cities.
- Representing children's opinion on different policies directly or indirectly affecting them and acting as a pressure group to lobby on behalf of children.
- Highlighting instances of child rights violation in the city, and taking action wherever possible.

Early days of BASS

Over the years, BASS has developed three generations of child leaders, encouraging the formation of children's groups from socially marginalised communities. BASS groups meet regularly in communities, highlighting issues faced and developing solidarity to actively work on issues being faced. The collective operates on a democratic principle, driven by a Constitution they have drafted together which outlines their objectives, rules and regulations. Group leaders are chosen by the ballot process, and their manifesto guides the group's functioning. The group takes charge of organising different events in the community, mobilising the children's support and encouraging their participation.

As per the Maharashtra Government Resolution of 10 June 2014, it is mandatory for Child Protection Committees (CPCs) to be formed at the electoral ward-level to work as a prevention and response team on cases of child rights violations. YUVA played a leading role in facilitating the setup of CPCs, ensuring that the government mandated 11-member composition of the body was followed, including the presence of two child representatives (a boy and a girl between the ages of 12 and 18 years) in the committee. Local BASS groups worked with the YUVA team, helping pressurise authorities so that due processes were followed on time, and engaging in awareness initiatives.

Over 20 BASS groups have been formed in various communities across Mumbai since 2002. Young leaders of BASS are now trying to build a city-level BASS network as they believe that asserting their rights would go a long way to address issues like child safety, health and hygiene, that affect communities in informal settlements across the city.

Police address BASS members at a meeting

Children as agents of change[2]

Lallubhai Compound in Mankhurd is a rehabilitation and resettlement colony in Mumbai's M-East ward. Though rampant drug abuse, sexual harassment, high drop-out rates among children and other safety concerns were common, residents reeling under dire poverty were too caught up in the struggle for day-to-day sustenance to actually address these issues for the long term.

> *"Earlier, when we used to see the Municipal Commissioner, we would run away in fear. But after joining BASS, the fear has vanished. We can actually face him and talk to him about our problems."*
>
> **Prem Tambe**
> 13 years - BASS member

In 2015, YUVA set up a Child Resource Centre (CRC) in Lallubhai Compound to address issues of child rights and safety. The CRC was the first step towards creating a safe space for children in the community to participate in recreational and social activities. Child members of the CRC came together to form BASS to take charge of issues that affected their lives.

Over the years, children of BASS developed rapport with diverse stakeholders to highlight problems faced and find ways to address them. For instance, the children approached the Mankhurd police station to complain about catcalling and drug abuse by youth in the locality. The police supported them by patrolling the area on a regular basis.

As BASS began its groundwork in spreading awareness among children and parents, crime rates decreased and drug problems received attention. Adult opinion in the community also started changing as children showed improvement in studies and behaviour. Parents who had been initially reluctant to allow their children to become a part of BASS, started engaging and participating in events organised by BASS.

2014 Onwards: Malvani Yuva Parishad

The Malvani Yuva Parishad (MYP) is a youth group set up in 2014. The collective focuses on the assertion of young people's citizenship with self-determination and collective action. MYP's activities are focused on building youth capacities (via critical reflection, questioning and purposive action) to encourage their collectivisation and active engagement towards social transformation.

Perhaps the most transformative impact of the group has been the way it has been able to shape up the life of its members. The development of individual identities, along with the growth of the identity of the youth group, has been an important prerogative. Different kinds of interventions have been taken up to empower individuals and develop their personhood. Alongside, the development of the culture of the group and its alignment to a set of core values has been prioritised over the years, to ensure

2 | This information has been adapted from an article first published in Citizen Matters, an online civic media website supported by Oorvani Foundation.

"I joined Malvani Yuva Parishad (MYP) in late 2017. I saw the collective celebrating Shivaji Jayanti in the basti and sharing information about the festival and relevant social issues. I found that very interesting as I was anyway interested in social work but was not aware how to go about it. I went to my first MYP meeting and noticed how everyone at the group was learning new things through various different mediums. I noticed how the activities organised were imparting qualities such as leadership, self-confidence and empathy and I found all this very motivating. I was convinced I wanted to work with the group actively, and so I joined.

We have run multiple campaigns over the years, be it to drive awareness or further work on a range of issues. One campaign that I felt very connected to was on ration card registration. We worked with the community and the ration officers and helped resolve many registration challenges, access to ration, and more. We have now developed a smooth relationship with the officers and this has led to faster resolution of related issues faced by residents.

Seeing how the people in the basti approach me for help, my parents feel proud about the work I do. In the future I hope to take the name of MYP to a bigger stage and help the youth in becoming better leaders by motivating them and providing them direction. And honestly, more people that join us, the merrier. I'd like to just let any new members know that if they get any opportunity, they should grab it and pursue it freely without any inhibitions."

Aasif Mohammad Ansari
MYP member

that the group remains a sustainable entity.

The youth group has actively tried to encourage other youth in the community, especially girls, to explore livelihood opportunities and make it more accessible for them. YUVA has partnered on a few such courses organised in the community. Each course has been a means to introduce the youth to value-based concepts in addition to the skills imparted, using innovative games and activities to talk about gender, identity, leadership skills, etc.

By encouraging economic empowerment, the collective has been able to tackle the problem of early marriages of girls to some extent. MYP's exposure to workshops, interactive sessions, training, etc has also offered platforms to the youth to develop critical urban perspectives and express themselves in front of a wider audience. While two youth have attended international workshops so far and placed their ideas in front of the global community, three have been a part of national conferences, and eight have represented their group at the state-level.

Since its formation, MYP has performed over 600 street plays focusing on diverse topics such as women's harassment, community issues, road safety, forced evictions and more. The collective has also been involved in driving civic engagement to create awareness about the electoral process and voting rights. Members of the MYP have also submitted letters to the local municipal office to call for action on issues affecting the community. MYP was one of the youth groups that actively participated in the Claiming Spaces campaign that began in 2017.

Securing safe drinking water in Ambujwadi

One of the issues faced by people who lived in the informal settlement in Ambujwadi was access to clean and safe water. Residents of the *basti* had to purchase water from private sources, paying as much as INR 20–25 for a 40-litre can of water. The residents felt that the water supplied was unclean and stank, and was one of the underlying causes for many diseases in the community.

In early 2016, members of the MYP, facilitated by YUVA and students from TISS, captured the daily struggles faced by the community with respect to water in a film, 'Paani Ka Sangharsh'[3]. In 2017, after almost two years of efforts under the aegis of Ghar Bachao Ghar Banao[4], the BMC finally recognised the rights of the people and conceded to supplying 20,000 litres of water, available to the community at INR 7 for a 40-litre can.

Members of MYP staging a street play

3 | https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DYem8H4MZkg&list=PL1VLec7jLD_bdCm1YbysCNuuptKUgC5Px&index=4&fbclid=IwAR2C93MdGPlwZN6czDPMp7EbwHiz05qJL6yJifSFNJqZ93hP8jltr_rZECo

4 | http://www.gbgbandolan.org/uncategorized/update-ambujwadi-gets-water-from-bmc-after-20-years-of-wait-while-water-mafias-in-the-area-create-obstruction/

Evolving Analysis of Our PO Work

Inception of POs

The inception of many POs was the result of a spontaneous coming together by those affected by the state and local government's apathy. In some cases, the apathy manifested itself in the form of a crisis situation for the communities, which laid the foundation for people to collectivise to address these issues. The PDCO is an example of how people collectivised to address a crisis situation.

Some POs were formed as groups with similar interests and vision. People realised the importance of forming a critical mass in order to make a dent on the policy front. The Shehar Vikas Manch was formed to act as a pressure group that could influence decision making and policy to ensure that the rights of the urban poor were protected. The Mahila Vikas Parishad (MVP) was formed as various groups working on issues of women's empowerment and development felt the need to form a collective.

Repertoires of PO Action

The repertoires[5] of action of POs consisted primarily of expressive tactics such as public assemblies, rallies, petition marches. They also used educational tactics such as campaigns and street theatre. YUVA's work with POs has included providing guidance and technical support to the POs so that they could use institutional tactics such as lobbying and litigation, and refrain from employing violence.

Institutional tactics required a certain level of preparedness at the level of the PO. Members of POs needed to have a certain level of literacy, information and awareness regarding rules and procedures, and the ability to analyse and frame their issues in a manner which would be considered as legitimate by the institutions of governance. For members of a PO to be capacitated to use institutional tactics, a certain level of hand holding was required at the onset. For instance, in the case of the Pavement Dwellers Citizens' Organisation (PDCO), YUVA made efforts towards building the capacity of PDCO members, especially its core group, by organising training on legal rights, laws and advocacy work combined with practical exposure on how and whom to interact with in various government departments and municipal offices. This enabled the PDCO leaders to independently approach municipal authorities to submit petitions and negotiate for services.

Categorisation of POs

POs could be categorised into two—issue-based POs and POs with a broad political agenda. Issue-based POs developed and employed frames which were reflective of certain issues or themes usually specific to a particular population group. Their action orientation was also in relation to certain specific issues affecting specific population groups. The PDCO was an example of an issue-based PO which focused on specific issues of pavement dwellers. POs with a broad political agenda developed and employed frames which were reflective of a broader political perspective. They predominantly focused their attention on changing socio-political structures and hence their work was likely to cut across various population groups. The Shehar Vikas Manch in Nagpur was a PO with a broad political level agenda.

Leadership of the PO

YUVA was concerned that for some of the POs, the lead role in terms of direction and initiatives was being played by YUVA's staff and not by the key members of the POs themselves. We wanted our staff to play a catalytic or facilitating role and not a central role, as we were cognisant that staff dependent processes would not sustain.

5 | The notion of repertoire was introduced into the study of collective action in 1977 by Tilly. In one of his earliest writings on repertoire, Tilly describes repertoire of action as consisting of 'various forms of activities' that are used by challenging groups in a given historical period. In his later writings, Tilly describes repertoire as 'whole set of means' that a group has available for use in making claims and to which its members turn consistently; 'a limited set of routines' that are learned, shared, and acted out through a deliberate process of choice; and as 'established ways' in which pairs of actors make and receive claims.

For some of the POs, YUVA was concerned about how it could engage old and new leadership of POs in a synergistic manner. We experienced challenges doing this in the cases of Stree Manch and MVP as the old leadership felt insecure and capacity had to be built for those looking to take over.

YUVA was witness to the co-option of some of the PO leaders by political parties. Since political parties provided a platform whereby the leadership of POs could establish themselves and benefit from the social and political status which came with such an association, many people who were actively involved in PO work joined political parties.

In rural POs, we noticed a disconnect between the rhetoric of leadership and the practice of leadership. Though the leaders were trained on the values and principles of participation and democracy, in practice in some POs leaders were dominating.

Sustainability of the PO

YUVA was concerned about the sustainability of POs. We believed that it was important for the POs to raise their own funds so that their work and political autonomy could be maintained. We saw that some POs and community-based organisations withered away when the financial support from YUVA stopped. Also, sustaining the involvement of members in POs was not always possible due to livelihood concerns of the members.

We looked at the aspect of sustainability from an organic and strategic viewpoint and questioned the importance that we gave to sustaining and capacitating it, emphasising that it was not necessary for a PO to be kept alive. We surmised that our role was to merely facilitate the POs and then leave it to the members of the PO to make the decision about carrying on operations. We also realised that in some cases, PO would cease to function after it had met its objectives.

For instance, in the case of the Jogeshwari Rahwasi Sanghatan formed by the residents of Jogeshwari to raise many issues such as housing, lack of roads, communal tensions, gender issues etc, YUVA facilitated the PO for a while and then withdrew from the role. The PO continued working and then broke up into factions. This was a natural process, and the factions would possibly come together under the banner of one organisation at a later stage if required. The disruption of the functioning of a PO could not be termed a weakness; due credit had to be given to the context and the triggers which led to the formation and closure of the PO, and whether it had met its strategic goals. While we had initially viewed the disintegration of the PDCO as a weakness, since it had not taken up other emerging needs of pavement dwellers, we could not undervalue the fact that the PDCO had to some extent met its strategic goals.

The following incident mentioned in our Annual Report 1999-2000 highlights the risks.

"One evening, Sitaram, a member of Prerna group belonging to the Community Resource Centre was arrested for no valid reason by the police. Repeated efforts by him to question the police on the reason for his arrest fell on deaf ears and he was beaten up ruthlessly. Several groups from the community staged a dharna in front of the police station demanding his release. The police had to relent to the pressure and release him. Yet another dharna was staged to have the concerned police officer suspended, following which an FIR was filed and an enquiry was initiated.

Risks Involved in PO Work

There are risks involved in PO work. Expressive tactics of POs are looked upon by suspicion by the state apparatus. There have been instances where the police have detained PO members and ordered inquiries. This harassment demoralised the PO members, since they did not have other support structures apart from YUVA.

Difficulties in Mobilising Poorest of the Poor

In some instances, we were aware that we could not organise those who were the poorest of the poor or the most deprived. Pavement populations were very difficult to organise, being extremely deprived and tenuous in existence. Very often, if no immediate threat of eviction existed, housing gained low priority due to other issues of survival. The cultural and social background of the nomadic tribes, a large category of whom were pavement dwellers, also posed a challenge. While the leadership of the pavement dwellers organisation were slightly better off, the broader membership was from the most deprived sections.

Contributions of PO Work to the Process of Social Change

The outcome of the work of POs are multi-dimensional as they can be analysed at three levels. Changes have occurred at the level of the individual PO member, at the level of the community, and at the macro social structure.

a) **Outcomes at the individual level** included an expansion of friendship networks and personal transformation among members. This may be due to them undergoing a re-socialisation process, and could take several forms such as an increase in confidence or a broadening of perspective.

Sulochana Bhagwan Kamble a resident of Koliwada, Dharavi, and a member of Stree Manch, expressed the benefits which she has experienced in the following words,

"By participating in such events of Stree Manch, I realised my potential and built my strength and confidence. I am no longer afraid of the police and can work with them or even stand up against them"

b) **Outcomes at the community level** have been in terms of the revitalisation of the community, enhanced feeling of solidarity, and transformation of community consciousness, which may be manifested in efforts to struggle for the rights due to the community.

Sulochana Bhagwan Kamble expressed the outcomes at community level in the following words,

"Stree Manch has brought us women together on issues of social concern such as rationing, inflation, violence on women"

The melavas (women's meets) held by Stree Manch brought together women from the community together, building solidarity and generating awareness on women's issues, while at the same time offering the space for expressing collective joy and having fun. In many of the communities, members lobbied with the elected representatives for basic services like water, toilet and drainage in the community.

c) Outcomes at the macro level or at the level of larger national structures are difficult to assess because of the large number of variables likely to influence such changes.

The Asanghatit Shramik Parishad was formed to protect the rights of the organised sector and promote policy and planning alternatives on the issues of livelihood, right to urban space and social security. It was effective in representing the interests of street vendors and organised vendors at state and national forums including the Planning Commission, and was probably one of the factors that helped get the Social Security Act passed, following which it stopped functioning. In this case, the question remains if it could have stayed active to ensure implementation of the policy as well.

Conclusion

Over the years, YUVA has built a variety of people's organisations around different rallying points and with different population groups. POs have made attempts to ensure the progressive realisation of human rights to various population groups such as women, children, youth, unorganised sector workers and more.

The approach adopted emphasises the protection and promotion of human rights. YUVA considers that the task of building ideologically strong, politically oriented and sustained people's organisations one of the most critical tasks that lie ahead of non-governmental organisations as it is only the formation of federations and alliances that can challenge the market forces.

PEOPLE'S INSTITUTIONS

The launch of the New Economic Policy in 1991 saw YUVA analyse emerging scenarios through reflections in a series of study circles. It was clear that the policies of closures, voluntary retirement and retrenchment would push labour into greater informalisation and invisibility. In a country that was still largely rural, the impacts on rural development were also foreboding. It would promote an extractive policy of the rural natural resource base for an industrialisation that could be globally competitive. Agriculture would also become commercialised to meet global demand, and this would lead to alienation of the rural inhabitants from their land and natural resource base, deepening rural poverty and forcing migration to urban centres for better economic prospects.

In this context, the doctrine of the indivisibility and interconnectedness of rights—for the dignified existence and development of every man, woman, child and youth, called for a livelihoods approach that was sustainable, one 'which can cope with and recover from stress and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, and provide sustainable livelihood opportunities for the next generation; and which contributes net benefits to other livelihoods at the local and global levels and in the short and long-term[1]'.

1 | Excerpt from Chambers, Robert and Conway, R. Gordon (1991): "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21 st Century", IDS Discussion Paper 296

For YUVA, there was a perceived need to develop approaches which helped people to sustain their livelihoods in the open market. In practice for YUVA, this called for integration of the concept of micro (people's) institutions within its organisation building nature of work, otherwise known as the People's Institution (PI) approach. The rationale was two-fold:

A. **The need for rootedness:** The danger of becoming only an ideologically driven organisation, could lead to an alienation from the day-to-day survival struggles of people. PIs were an attempt to sustain our work with people's organisations.

B. **The need for people's control over their own resources:** In the context of increasing privatisation and consequent marginalisation of the socio-economically and politically weak, PIs were an attempt at developing alternatives where people and communities could organise to privatise their own resources so that they could protect themselves and benefit from the changes brought about by a globalised, liberalised economy.

Few forms of PIs that we had in mind were credit and consumer cooperatives, market cooperatives, housing cooperatives and community resource centres. In short, PIs, would be engaged in coming together to protect, control and add value to existing assets or create new assets, resources and livelihoods.

This chapter shares our endeavours in facilitating poor people's control over and enhancement of their resources and productive assets, both in the rural and urban contexts. In the urban context, our focus was on developing the cooperative approach as an alternative model for credit access and income generation activities for the marginalised from the mainstream market. In the rural context, our focus has been on promoting sustainable livelihoods through natural resource management.

The Cooperative Approach To Economic Empowerment

YUVA believed that the cooperative approach to sustainable livelihoods would not only improve the lives of the people, but also help to make a significant contribution to the economy of the State itself. Through the means of a cooperative and the pooling of resources, small entrepreneurs could optimise their strengths, while overcoming their weaknesses. In this way, they could gain control over production and create capital, which could be used collectively. A cooperative would be successful when individual members learned to overcome their inherent self-centred behaviour and promoted their trade as a collective. Cooperatives functioned on the basis of cooperative principles, which stress that the critical success factors for the cooperatives include education, training, information, which involves engaging the minds of members, elected leaders, managers and employees to comprehend fully the complexity and richness of cooperative thought and make them undertake actions for cooperative success.

1994 Onwards: Self Help Groups and Credit Cooperatives

Urban *bastis* were viewed by YUVA as the informal settlements of workers. Women had historically been kept out of the market and had limited, if any, access to means of production

even as their labour was exploited in the market and at home. Women were also the ones who were most affected by community problems such as evictions or lack of amenities, and the ones who took on the leading role in dealing with these problems, through direct action or confrontation. Hence, YUVA conceptualised its micro-credit programme around women, for their economic empowerment and to develop capital for the improvement of the informal settlements of workers.

For YUVA, the micro-credit programme was meant to serve a two-fold purpose:

1. do away with exploitative money-lenders, and
2. empower women to develop own assets, proactively contribute to economic decision making at the household, get engaged in income generation activities, and in community development.

The interventions were based out of Dharavi in Mumbai (started around 1994) and Shanti Nagar and Sewadal Nagar in Nagpur (started in 1997). Self Help Groups (SHGs) were formed. These were meant to serve the dual purpose of savings and credit and also function as spaces where women could discuss issues of concern and seek guidance from their peers. However, since SHGs were not formally registered bodies, it put limits on access to credit, and this defeated the primary purpose of SHGs, which was to link women with mainstream micro-finance institutions.

In 1999, YUVA began to consider its micro-credit strategy as a separate core programme. An exposure visit with SEWA Bank of Gujarat in that year broadened our understanding of what community finance could accomplish, resulting in a new community planning process to develop a strategy for the future direction of the project. The intention was to establish an apex structure that would bring the SHG membership under one roof, mobilising resources from across the community, and greatly increasing the programme's impact. A formal body was required to issue secured loans and be allowed to pursue legal action with wilful defaulters.

After considering several options, YUVA decided upon a cooperative banking structure, that had its base in the women's SHGs. To this end, our next focus was on confederating SHGs into *basti* committees or SHG federations of 10 neighbouring SHGs with similar income characteristics. The purpose was to pool SHG resources and facilitate and coordinate SHG interaction and inter-group lending. In 2001, the first credit cooperative society, Akansha Credit Cooperative, was formed in Dharavi, registered with the District Registrar of Cooperatives. Two other cooperative Societies were also formed—

Seminar on women's empowerment through credit cooperative held at Nagpur in November 2000

Krantikari Mahila Bachat Gat Sahkari Pat Sanstha in Shanti Nagar in 2003 and Savitribai Phule Mahila Bachat Gat Sahkari Pat Sanstha in Sewadal Nagar in 2006. The societies had a one-member-one vote structure.

The individual credit cooperative societies were registered at the community level and were legally restricted within the geography of the community in terms of membership outreach.

The daily functioning was being managed by the Executive Committee themselves.

YUVA continued to provide managerial support in the form of capacity building, linking with government schemes, developing savings and loan products and statutory audits for a few years. Today, all three cooperatives function as independent entities, with all operations being managed by the members themselves.

2002 Onwards: Service Cooperatives

In 2002, several women from Dharavi decided to come together and start a catering service under the banner Matrutva Caterers. They approached YUVA with a request to run a canteen at the YUVA Centre in Kharghar. In ready response, we arranged for their training (6-month course in cooking and 15-day course in baking). Following this, the women ran the canteen at YUVA Centre, Kharghar for three years. During this time, we supported them through financial management training and marketing. In 2005, we helped register Matrutva Caterers as Matrutva Seva Sahakari Sanstha. Apart from the canteen in Kharghar, which is operational to this day, Matrutva Cooperative also ran a canteen at the Mahim Nature Park for a few years.

While the experience with Matrutva was a positive one, another service cooperative with bamboo artisans failed to sustain itself. Chaitanya Bamboo Cooperative was an income generation activity initiated with the young girls of a bamboo weaving community. Hailing from the southern state of Karnataka, this community had set up their residence in pavement and informal settlements in Parel-Bhoiwada, Mumbai, several decades ago. In 1997, the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) started evicting the hutments to redevelop the area. We supported the community in their fight against the evictions at that time.

Citizens queue up to have a meal prepared by members of Matrutva Service Cooperative

Training in progress for members of the Chaitanya Service Cooperative

We soon realised that livelihood was a serious concern of the community. Many of the men had lost their jobs with the textile mills that closed down. As a result, they were dependent on their traditional trade of bamboo basket weaving (particularly fish baskets) for their income. However, with the entry of plastic baskets and other substitutes in the market, the demand for bamboo baskets had declined. Seeing this, YUVA arranged for the training of a group of young girls (ranging between 16–24 years) with the Industrial Design Centre (IDC) of the Indian Institute of Technology. They were trained in new production technologies for bamboo craft products. IDC then supported the setting up of the production unit and the group was registered as a service cooperative under the brand name Chaitanya in 2005.

However, within three years of its formation, the cooperative had to be liquidated, since there was only one member remaining. The reasons were twofold; one, many of the younger women tended to move away from the settlement once they got married, and two, the older women who were part of the cooperative were set in their ways and resisted picking up the new skills and techniques they were taught.

Two workers' cooperatives, one with women waste pickers and the other with informal construction workers, were also attempted, but did not prove successful. Both these cooperatives consisted of people from extremely poor backgrounds, who struggled to make ends meet. We observed that with such populations it was difficult to build a sustained interest, primarily since they spent most of their energies on day-to-day sustenance.

The construction cooperative was registered and operated as a contract service for the naka kamgars (daily wage workers offering services such as plumbing, painting, etc. that are required in repair and construction projects, where the workers wait at designated street corners or nakas to be hired by contractors who need their services). However, this business model was found to be unviable by the members and it was discontinued. Few of the members of the cooperative continued to run as private businesses.

Our experience of working with services cooperatives shed light on why there were challenges in sustaining them in the urban context. We realised that the long term sustenance of such institutions hinged greatly on being able to identify the right leadership that could manage and develop the institution. In some cases, individuals from outside the community had to be bought in to manage

their cooperative, where the relationship between the manager and the members was that of a superior-subordinate, and this did not sit well with the members. Focus also had to be accorded to leadership and capacity development of the cooperative members.

Working in the cooperative called for significant investment on the part of the members, with respect to time. With many of the members struggling for day-to-day sustenance, they were hesitant to expend additional energy on the cooperative itself.

Natural Resource Management to Economically Empower The Rural Poor

The Government of India ushered in the Green Revolution in the mid-1960s to avert an impending food crisis in the country. The crux of the Green Revolution strategy was to boost agricultural yields (particularly of food grain) through hybrid seeds and synthetic fertilisers and pesticides. This however, over the decades, led to organic matter depletion and soil degradation, reducing soil fertility and productivity. Countering this called for the management of the fast degrading natural resources of land, water, biodiversity, genetic resources, biomass resources, forests, livestock and fisheries. As a result, YUVA decided to look at a natural resources management approach, which would aid in protecting the livelihood rights of the rural poor, in a manner that was environmentally and socially sustainable.

In the early years of YUVA's rural programme, interventions were carried out through a network of small-and-medium sized non-

Balkrishna Renke's Ten Guntha Experiment

Balkrishna Renke, a leader of the de-notified and nomadic tribes (DNT) community, had purchased a plot of barren land in 1990. He rebuilt the topsoil and greenery through a variety of measures such as watershed development, soil conservation, silviculture and tree plantation. This provided the much needed biomass and microclimate for the Ten Guntha Experiment which started in 1998. During this time, YUVA extended some financial support to Mr Renke to carry out the experiment.

Each guntha was laid out for different kinds of cropping. Space was also allotted for the preparation of compost using biomass, and for fuel production and a farmhouse. Small implements like pickaxes, spades and sickles were used instead of heavy machinery like tractors and threshers. Live fencing was created around the plot to protect it from animals, while also providing fuel wood, fodder, vegetables and fruits from creepers and medicinal plants.

While neighbouring farmers had been suspicious about the success of this experiment, after seeing the crops and the yield (especially of high value crops), they developed an interest in the method themselves. Within three years of the experiment, approximately 40 farmers from the region had been motivated to practice organic farming.

governmental organisations and community-based organisations in the Vidarbha region. It was during this phase that we experimented with alternative livelihoods-oriented agriculture, based on organic farming techniques[2]. The model adopted was the Ten Guntha Experiment[3] propounded by agriculture expert, Prof. S. A Dabholkar, and demonstrated by Balkrishna Renke. The hypothesis of this experiment was that 'ten guntha, or one-fourth of an acre of land was sufficient to produce the food requirements of one household, ideally consisting of three adults and two children'[4]. The rationale for YUVA's involvement was the need for a 'sustainable livelihoods' approach in the context of the macro-economic growth-oriented development approach that was being pushed for in the country.

The experiment was based on the 'Low External Input for Sustainable Agriculture (LEISA) technique'. Small plots being amenable for cultivation by the poor, the experiment threw up possibilities for designing different modular small-plot cultivation schemes for varying socio-economic and eco-systemic parameters. Also, modular design could facilitate cooperative cultivation for a group of households. They could barter or collectively market the surplus. This could provide a means to shield their produce from the vagaries of the market and exploitation by middlemen.

2002–2012: Integrated Natural Sustainable Agriculture Programme

The success and learnings from Mr Renke's Ten Guntha Experiment encouraged YUVA to develop a 10-year sustainable agriculture programme for the Vidarbha region called Integrated Natural Sustainable Agriculture Programme (INSAP). INSAP was initiated in 2002 in five districts of Vidarbha region. It aimed to bring a positive change in the socio-economic condition of the farmers and the environment, and improve the quality of life of the farmers in the Vidarbha region by promoting sustainable agricultural practices.

INSAP invited farmers to voluntarily transition to farming techniques 'based on principles of low-cost or free resources, local availability, self-reliance, environment protection and sustainability'. The context for this intervention was what the mono-cropping culture of cotton cultivation over a period of two decades had done to the land. The excessive amounts of chemical fertilisers, chemical pesticides and expensive seeds sold by corporations for high yield (particularly Bt Cotton), over time had reduced fertility and productivity of the soil. Central government policies that depressed cotton prices in a globalised market context, high input costs and low access to credit had also escalated indebtedness of the farmers, causing a crisis of farmers' suicides. Other means of employment were also bleak due to the lack of infrastructure and industrialisation in the region.

The ten years of the programme was implemented in three main phases: The first phase of two years looked into the study and establishment of traditional practices supporting sustainable agriculture, thus evolving an alternative model. Education was the main focus in this phase. The second phase of the next five years focused on consolidation, replication and lateral spread of the concept and practice. In the third phase, self-reliant mechanisms took over the process and this was marked by our withdrawal of direct interventions. Over the course of ten years, we had intervened in 619 villages across 24 talukas, benefitting 2,00,000 families directly, and 6,00,000 families indirectly.

2 | Organic farming techniques promote the use of bio-fertilisers and pesticides (largely produced from local resources), non-transgenic seeds, soil-building crop rotations, integration of crops and livestock, low-cost systems to recharge and conserve water (wells, bunds), etc. The main objective of this type of farming is to increase population of microorganism and biological activity in soil, thus improving soil fertility. Being part of a natural cycle, it increases the elements, organic matter, water, oxygen and biological activity which influence plant growth.

3 | Guntha is a unit used to measure the area of land in India. 1 Guntha = 121 sq. yards = 101.17 sq. mtrs = 2.5 cents. 40 Gunthas = 1 acre

4 | YUVA (2001), 'A Handful of Water and Fistful of Land: The Solapur Experiment for Creating the Basis for Sustainable Rural Livelihoods through Organic Farming Techniques'

INSAP's Success in Abating Farmers' Suicides

Farmer suicides were a common phenomenon in the Vidarbha region. What YUVA noticed was that farmers who were living in similar geological and climatic conditions as others, but were a part of the INSAP programme, were not driven to commit suicide.

We approached economist Raghav Narsalay to identify the factors that empowered farmers. A sample survey was conducted with 90 farmers—almost equal numbers of farmers practising sustainable agriculture (30), farmers who had transitioned from conventional to sustainable agriculture, either fully or partially (27), and farmers practising only conventional agriculture (28).

- 81 per cent acknowledged that sustainable farming had put them in a position to address the problem of farmer-debt. Of these, over 90 per cent opined that sustainable farming on account of its ability to reduce expenditure on input costs (seeds, fertilizers, and pesticides) reduced cost of cultivation.
- Almost all farmers who had migrated to sustainable farming opined that they felt more at peace after adopting these techniques:
  - Since sustainable farming techniques helped the farmer in generating inputs such as seeds, bio-pesticides, compost fertilisers with resources available at home and within households of other farmers, it made them less dependent on local vendors for fertilizers and seeds
  - According to 55 per cent respondents, they had been able to cultivate a dominant part of their diet without the use of insecticides and fertilisers, thereby reducing their consumption of 'chemicalised food'.
- The process of sustainable farming built camaraderie amongst farmer households thereby allowing them to share their concerns and problems. This social web of relations helped them be more open and improved their mental health.
- For around 32 per cent of the farmers who migrated to sustainable farming or adopted some of the techniques, the ecological benefits such as improvement in the quality of the soil, the rejuvenation of the symbiotic relationship between various species in nature. etc were critical factors in facilitating this migration.
- A resounding 88 per cent of farmers who adopted sustainable farming techniques wanted to continue farming not because they did not have other alternatives, but because they regained their confidence to farm. On the other hand, around 67 per cent of respondents who practised conventional farming thought of farming as a highly indebted initiative and did not mind considering doing away with it should any other alternative be provided.
- More than 90 per cent of respondents who practised sustainable farming techniques wanted to create a strong network of 'extension workers' who could

share relevant information on pest attacks and the like with farmers practicing and also provide them with good quality local seeds and bio-pesticides.

- Around 26 per cent of the farmers practising conventional agriculture clearly voiced that the thought of committing suicide had occured to them on account of the debilitating economic conditions that resulted from high-cost conventional farming. 17 per cent of respondents were ambivalent and implied that they were uncertain if they could be able to sustain as farmers if they continued to practice conventional farming.

We analysed that the nervous responses of those farmers practising conventional agriculture was expected when more than 85 per cent of the respondents had highlighted that a confluence of increasing costs associated with conventional agriculture, price instability for agricultural produce in the domestic market and poor credit support were key factors in pushing farmers to suicide in the Vidarbha region.

- Untitled study by Raghav Narsalay (2007)

At least 50,000 of these families started practising sustainable agriculture over 3,60,000 acres of land.

YUVA continues to support work on sustainable agriculture practises and YUVA's rural arm presently works with farmers in Akola, Vardha and Nashik as part of the Village Social Transformation Foundation Programme.

2003–2007: Promoting Natural Resource-Based Livelihood Options for Poverty Alleviation in Tribal Belts

Between 2003 and 2007, YUVA implemented a natural resource-based livelihoods programme under the Poorest Areas Civil Societies (PACS) Programme in 50 villages of Betul district in Madhya Pradesh. The programme aimed to develop a sustainable livelihood generating structure for the below poverty line (BPL) households in the villages based on the local resources and available skills. The primary goal of this project was to reach out to at least 50 per cent of the BPL households in the selected villages and bring at least 40 per cent of them above the poverty line by the end of the project period.

Betul district was predominantly rural with about 85 per cent of the population living in villages. About 40 per cent of the population was tribal and 10 per cent came under scheduled castes. Agriculture—the most important source of income for the district—was mainly subsistent in nature. Landless labour was also prevalent. While more than 40 per cent of the geographical area of the district was under forests, the collection of forest produce did not generate sufficient income owing to various reasons including the lack of collection rights, degradation of the forests, absence of markets, low prices and unavailability of processing and storing facilities with the collectors. Low industrialisation and therefore employment opportunities, compelled most villagers to migrate to other towns and cities.

At the time of the physical and socio-economic mapping of each village, we selected one Village Animator from each village to support us in rolling out the project. The work started with the formation of micro-credit SHGs comprising of 10 men or women. The SHGs were encouraged to take up livelihood generation activities, either as a collective, such as a purchase and sale unit (of

agriculture and non-timber forest products); an agriculture allied unit (such as dairy, poultry, goat farming, etc), forest and agriculture processing unit and irrigation unit; or as individuals after undergoing some skill training. Awareness of their rights to development, tribal rights to their natural resource base for responsible livelihood activities, sustainable livelihoods, business opportunity mapping, were some of the exercises undertaken with the micro-credit groups. Once a clear interest was expressed to start an economic activity, the micro-credit groups made a part investment from their own savings and the remaining start-up investment was made through a grant from YUVA. Farmers within the targeted group who wanted to continue with their farming, were trained on sustainable agriculture techniques.

The activity with the widest impact was the micro-credit intervention. At the beginning of the project, only two SHGs were reported to have provided credit to the villagers. Money lenders were the single largest source of credit for the villagers and about 40 per cent of the credit requirements were met by them. By the end of the project period, 100 per cent of the population in the 50 villages were covered under micro-credit groups through 100+ SHGs. We had successfully introduced the concept of thrift and self help in these remote tribal villages, with the groups setting aside almost INR 15,00,000 in savings. Access to credit at low rates of interest through the SHGs, almost eliminated the villagers' dependence on money lenders. A marked social impact of this intervention was also in seeing women step out of their houses to take up income generating activities.

The second initiative that we developed quite successfully was the Purchase and Sale Cooperative Units (PSCU). A purchase and sale unit purchased agricultural and forest products from within and outside the village, preserved the goods till the market offered a higher price and solds the goods at such a time. The remoteness of the villages, which made the markets either inaccessible or difficult to access, made the PSCUs a desirable proposition. As a result, there was a great response to these units that offered a price only slightly lower than the market price, which was compensated by the transportation cost saved, that the individual farmers and Non-Timber Forest Produce (NTFP) collectors had to bear earlier. These units also curtailed distress sales.

Beyond the tangible economic benefits of this project intervention, the evaluation also showed that YUVA had built capacity among the villagers, empowering them to fight for their individual and collective rights. The Village Animators in particular proved to be great assets for the villagers, and owing to their exposure and knowledge, were looked up to as well informed persons capable of guiding people to take right decisions. In several cases, animators had enabled the village to raise a voice against exploitation.

2004–2007: Sustainable Agriculture Practices in Drought-Prone, Desert Conditions

Organic farming also proved to be a sustainable agricultural practice in drought-prone, desert conditions. Following post-earthquake rehabilitation work in Rapar taluka (Kutch, Gujarat) in 2004, YUVA initiated an organic farming intervention with the small-scale and marginal farmers.

While nearly 60 per cent of the population in Kutch district were engaged in agriculture and allied activities, in Rapar taluka of the district, this percentage was significantly lower on account on the non-availability of water (both surface and groundwater). Another bottleneck of farming in Rapar was the low level of fertility and high salinity of the soil. The excessive and indiscriminate use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides had hampered soil health, and insects too had developed resistance against pesticides. Additionally there was extensive use of High

Yielding Variety (HYV) seeds of the Green Revolution, which required high-input farming, as a result of which it excluded small scale farmers.

It was in this context that YUVA developed its intervention with the small and marginal farmers across 50 villages of two talukas (Rapar and Bachau).

Initially getting farmers to shift from chemical agriculture to sustainable agriculture was not easy; they feared loss of production and productivity in the process. Eventually, farmers started experimenting on small plots of land ranging from one to five acres, adopting organic farming techniques that were suited to specific soil and water conditions. Our observation in the early stages of converting to organic farming was that there was no significant loss in production, particularly in the case of millets and pulses—the crops most grown in Rapar taluka. While there was a minimal five per cent reduction in the yield of wheat and cotton, this was offset by the increased price (almost 10 to 30 per cent higher) that farmers could command for organic wheat and cotton.

Owing to the aridity of the region and high salinity of the soil, techniques for conservation of soil and water were developed after studying the soil and land patterns. A cadre of village engineers were also developed through appropriate training to design water conserving structures such as farm bunds, wells and check dams, as well as adopt soil conserving mechanisms.

With a view to expand the movement for sustainable agriculture in the region, a cadre of voluntary Sustainable Agriculture Promoters (one from each of the 50 villages) were also trained to propagate sustainable agriculture practices in their village. Krushi Samitis (farmers committees) were also formed in each of the villages to negotiate appropriate prices with the market and market agencies.

Reflections

For small and marginal farmers, a high yield with low net returns makes the agricultural operation quite meaningless. Though the organic agriculture model may marginally reduce yield in the initial years, it provides a premium in net returns, while the yield increases over time, as soil fertility improves. This makes organic agriculture a sustainable livelihood enhancement alternative for these farmers in drought-prone conditions.

Drought proofing in Rapar

2012: Convergence of Agricultural Interventions in Maharashtra

In 2012, Convergence of Agricultural Interventions in Maharashtra's Distressed District Programme (CAIM)[5] appointed YUVA as the implementing agency of the project for 25 villages of Barishtakli tehsil, Akola district, and 32 villages of Deoli tehsil, Wardha district. The programme focused on the development of resilient agricultural production, access to additional on-farm and off-farm livelihoods, sustainable and empowered communities, allowing households to face production and market risks without falling back into poverty and distress. YUVA used a composite approach to the programme[6].

We empowered communities by building the capacity of people through the promotion of SHGs (for savings and access to credit), joint liability groups (for loans and business investments), and farmer producer groups and companies to strengthen market linkages and farmers' collective bargaining power. Village Development Committees (VDC) in each village ensured people-led decision making, with 50 per cent women represented in CAIMeach committee. We also facilitated the convergence of existing government schemes for the benefit of the farmers.

Training for members of the Village Development Committee

Taking up additional livelihood activities like this poultry unit helped farmers supplement their income

We worked with farmers to improve access to water and increase ground water levels through well recharging, construction of cement nala bunds and desilting, which enabled farmers to store and utilise water for irrigation. This improved water availability in dry months, replenished groundwater levels and also resulted in an increase in the crop yield and income of farmers.

To supplement the income of farmers and enhance their food security, we also encouraged farmers to take up additional livelihood activities such as dairy, poultry and goat farming and seed production. Small Product Agricultural Resource Centres (SPARC) were set up to act as agricultural equipment banks to lend machines and tools to farmers who needed them on a rental basis. While farmer members of SPARC

5 | CAIM was initiated by the Maharashtra Government with the support of the International Fund for Agricultural Development. The programme aimed to address the issue of agrarian distress in the Vidarbha region in Akola, Amravati, Buldhana, Wardha, Washim and Yavatmal, and intended to contribute towards the development of resilient production, sustainable and diversified household incomes, and on-farm/off-farm livelihoods, thereby enabling farmers to face production and market-related risks without falling back into poverty and distress.

6 | http://yuvaindia.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/03/Enabling-Holistic-Village-Transformation.pdf

could access the equipment at a nominal fee, they also received additional income from the profits made from renting out equipment.

We also worked with farmers to integrate organic farming with traditional practices. Small farmers who adopted these practices were able to produce greater agricultural output while using fewer resources, thereby increasing crop yields and reducing water and soil pollution. The practice of inter-cropping, integrated nutrient and pest management, and other strategies was also adopted to significantly reduce costs and risks. Net profits increased from INR 12,500 to INR 21,000 per acre.

We facilitated the formation of a Producer Company after training 496 Producer Groups (consisting of 15–20 farmers each), which mobilised farmers and negotiated on their behalf. It also promoted processing and value-addition of agriculture and allied products, which enabled farmers to get fair prices for their produce and reduced their vulnerability to production and market risks.

Conclusion

YUVA's interventions aim to contribute to the long-term welfare of farmers, and we anticipate our interventions will continue given their lasting approach to positive change. YUVA's people's institution building and livelihood development work is an effort in this direction.

However for YUVA, a modelling and institution building intervention along with our rights-based organising and confrontation work (in which our strength lies), has been a challenge to harmonise, as both these kinds of interventions require different disciplines and orientation to work. Along with technical astuteness (business development, management, etc.) and creativity, perseverance and nurturance are some key elements in livelihoods development work.

Our experimentation in the area of people's institution building is still maturing. Though we have experienced a few failures along the way, the steady development of work in the areas of organic farming and micro-credit has been encouraging.

The challenge before YUVA is to move towards greater politicisation, and at the same time address the day to day struggles of the people. Going forward as well, YUVA sees itself continuing to play the role of a People-centred Collaborating Institution, that gives strategic inputs and forms critical partnerships, to create, protect and develop rights and assets for the marginalised.

RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION

Right from the early days of YUVA's work with the community, we realised that it was important to create a body of knowledge that would serve to chronicle our work and guide our actions going forward. We believed that consciously documenting, reflecting on, sharing and integrating knowledge and insights gained from our work in the field, would help us improve our practice. And while YUVA would drive this effort of creating and disseminating knowledge through research and publication, we also realised that the community that we worked with, had a great part to play in contributing to and co-creating this body of knowledge.

From a programmatic viewpoint, we attempted to align this effort with our capacity building and social transformation work and/or feed into our advocacy work. It also helped identify and refine our thematic focus areas and identify service delivery areas. We also believed that evidence-based knowledge creation would have a strong part to play in influencing policy making that was inclusive and equitable.

Our work in respect to this was crafted on a belief to address the following:

- To produce and disseminate a repository of knowledge to better understand the realities of the marginalised and vulnerable sections of society
- To ensure that social change in the interest of the have-nots was set in motion
- To empower marginalised communities with the knowledge on how they could go about securing their rights
- To conduct research aimed at formulating and influencing policy
- To empower civil society organisations and government bodies to vision for the future, to work with marginalised communities and implement policies

RESEARCH

YUVA categorised its research into social research and policy research. While social research aimed to build knowledge about the needs and issues of the vulnerable groups in cities and villages, our policy research aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of policies as well as trends in resource allocation in meeting the developmental needs of marginalised and vulnerable sections of society.

Example of Social Research

1. Socio-economic Study of Pavement Dwellers: The main objective of the study was to find out the paying capacity of the pavement dwellers in pavement communities where YUVA worked.

2. Research on Human Rights and the Pardhi Tribe: YUVA Centre was engaged in researching the human rights violations against the Pardhi community, a nomadic tribal community that faced discrimination and harassment as a consequence of being classified as 'criminal tribes' during the British rule in India.

3. Study on Women's Experiences of Violence in Forced Evictions (2002): This study was part of an international research project initiated by the Centre for Housing Rights and Evictions (COHRE) to study the experiences of violence that women faced in forced evictions and to draw attention to its significance as a critical concern of women's human rights. It also highlighted the roles played by women in rebuilding their homes and communities in the formal and informal resettlement processes.

Examples of Policy Research

1. Structural Analysis of Budgets: This study focused on the developmental trends and needs of cities based on an analysis of policies and financial allocation for urban development

2. Study of Local Area Development Funds: This study analysed the expenditure made by Corporators across Mumbai city

3. Study on Water Delivery System of Mumbai City (1999): This study attempted to document and examine various aspects of the responsibility of the municipal authority to supply water for domestic, commercial and industrial purposes. The three precepts of equity, sustainability and quality were applied to the assessment of the water delivery system in the city, and it highlighted the cause of groups within the city who were forced to engage in an ongoing exertion to obtain this most fundamental of facilities. The study identified its most critical purpose, which was to inform and effect the changes in policy and practice essential to greater efficiency and equity in the management of the resource.

The coherence between research and our social transformation and advocacy work has been illustrated with examples on our research on the health issues and rehabilitation of street children, the study on rehabilitation sites for the urban poor and the Parliamentary Watch Reports.

We also tried our hand at applied research through our efforts to recycle construction waste at a pilot plant set up as part of the CIDCO-YUVA Building Centre.

1998–2000: Survey On Shelter And Rehabilitation Available For Street Girls

In 1998–2000, we carried out a survey to understand the nature and services for shelter and rehabilitation available for street girls in Mumbai. This was the result of us considering setting up a short-stay home at the YUVA Centre for street girls and women in situations of violence. We believed that this survey could provide us with information that could help determine what facilities we could offer in the context of the needs and services of this population.

42 institutions across the city were covered under the survey. What emerged as a pressing need from the survey was that of a long-term rehabilitation programme that would help the young girls stand on their own feet, rather than a short-stay shelter. Following a consultative meeting of different organisations working with street girls, where the findings of the study were shared, we decided that we would concentrate on developing a programme that would support motivated individuals transition to being self-reliant and independent.

Self defence classes for street girls

Usage of the study to identify and refine thematic focus areas

The Rehabilitation Training Programme (RTP) for street girls was conceptualised on the basis of the findings from this survey. It was developed as a comprehensive life skills programme that would help street groups residing either on the streets or in institutions achieve psycho-emotive, economic and housing related rehabilitation. This was in the form of weekend residential camps which contributed to the girls interacting in a different environment from what they were used to. We also attempted to reunite some of the girls with their families; after due counselling and carrying out of proper checks and meetings with their families, we repatriated them back to their homes.

2007–2008: Research on Health Issues Of Street Children

YUVA's interventions with street children repeatedly highlighted their vulnerability and that poor health was a chronic problem among street children. The (health) issues of street children did not typically get highlighted as they did not constitute a vote bank or get represented directly or even indirectly by their parents, as they were at most times, unavailable.

A research study was carried out in 2007–2008 on the health issues of street children. We conducted a study with 128 children living on the streets, railway stations, and shelters to understand the social support available to such children. Subsequent to the study, consultations were held with representatives of street children, non-governmental organisations working with street children, and doctors and students of Preventive and Social Medicine departments of four tertiary hospitals in Mumbai. Based on the study findings and the insights garnered from the consultation, YUVA developed a set of comprehensive guidelines for street children's access to the public health system. Some of the key aspects which the guidelines emphasised upon were the reservation of hospital beds for street children, admission on their own right (without being accompanied by an adult), sensitisation of health workers via a code of conduct.

Usage of research findings for evidence-based advocacy and for public education

a. Based on the research findings, a set of comprehensive guidelines for street children's access to the public health system were developed and were submitted to the Municipal Council of Greater Mumbai so that it could develop and adopt a Health Policy for Street Children.

b. Three handbooks on health access issues of street children were printed for three stakeholder groups: health system personnel, non-governmental organisations, and the general public.

c. Health workers in six hospitals of Mumbai were sensitised to the health concerns of street children. Following this, KEM Hospital also proposed to draft a protocol for access to their services by street children.

d. The findings also formed the basis of networking with like-minded non-governmental organisations. During this period, YUVA was playing the secretariat role for Bal Swashthya Abhiyan, which had drafted a charter of demands on children's health that included the health demands of children living on the streets. This charter of demands was incorporated in the Health Manifesto prepared by the Jan Swasthya Abhiyan for the Maharashtra State Assembly Elections in 2009.

1999–2007: Research at the Cidco–Yuva Building Centre

The CIDCO–YUVA Building Centre (CYBC) was a unique joint venture established in 1999, between the City Industrial Development Corporation Limited (CIDCO) of Navi Mumbai and YUVA, as part of the Building Centres Movement promoted by Housing and Urban Development Corporation Limited (HUDCO). Although this was conceived as an independent entity with its own management structure, YUVA's efforts in this direction were geared to prove this concept and demonstrate the feasibility of this environmentally-friendly approach.

The mandate of the CYBC was to propagate environment friendly building methods, focusing specifically on recycling. As part of its objectives, we had envisioned that the CYBC would be:

- A technology transfer centre in the field of housing, building and development for information-sharing on cost effective and environment-friendly building materials and technologies.
- A skill upgradation and training centre for construction workers in various trades.
- A manufacturing and distribution outlet of cost effective and environmentally friendly building materials.
- A source for getting trained construction workforce to serve the needs of housing, building and other development activities.

At this time, the city of Mumbai generated on average 2,300 tons of construction waste every day. The city was ill-equipped to deal with this staggering quantity of waste which posed a threat by polluting the environment, blocking water drains and destroying mangroves. Though the MCGM had issued the Demolition and Desilting Waste (Management and Disposal) guidelines in 2005, there was little enforcement at the field level. Debris ended up in dumping groups where it was mixed with other waste, rendering it unfit for recycling.

It was then that we decided to explore what we could do to address the issue of construction waste, and looked to recycling debris to create various types of building materials at a pilot plant. We customised machinery to convert debris into high quality construction material. Debris sourced from construction sites was broken down into particles, 30-40 millimetres in diameter. The particles were then powdered down by a pulverising machine. Special screens enabled the machine to ground the particles to desired levels of fineness. A dust controller section in the machine filtered out unwanted light materials like wood particles and other sundry organic items. Cement and water were then added to this, following which it was moulded.

Recycled debris is processed and moulded intro building material at the CYBC

Five years into the project, we had created six different materials including bricks, blocks, interlocking pavers and sand that could be used in construction. By 2010, we started concentrating our efforts in creating awareness about the pilot plant and forging new partnerships, but were faced with several challenges.

- Though the material was competitively priced, the increase in cement prices had an impact on the manufacturing cost.
- While two community centres in Rapar, Gujarat, and one in Mumbai had used the recycled debris in construction, builders were apprehensive about using it, as it was yet to be certified by the Central Building Research Institute.
- The pilot plant could convert only one ton of debris daily. For us to reach economies of scale, it was necessary to set up a plant that could process at least 50 tons of debris, and this required significant investment.
- Also considering that we were looking to solve a waste management issue for the city, we expected support from the government, in terms of funds and space for the site. While several municipal authorities visited the site and appreciated our efforts, they suggested that we rope in private players to take the initiative forward.

Eventually, on account of being unable to secure adequate support for the project, it was rendered unviable.

2008: Investigation on Rehabilitation Sites for the Urban Poor

In 2008, YUVA in partnership with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) and Dignity International, carried out an investigation into the human impacts of two mega transport infrastructure projects—Mumbai Urban Transport Project (MUTP) and Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project (MUIP)—and one river-front development project (Mithi River Development Project) from the point of view of rehabilitation of those being displaced under these projects. These three projects were to collectively displace approximately 2,15,000 households. Respondents included 1,206 households from six rehabilitation site, 382 households from notified (for displacement and rehabilitation) areas and 100 households from four transit sites. The study sought to locate displacement and rehabilitation and resettlement in the wider context of the trajectory of growth pursued in Mumbai and its impact on affected populations.

The findings raised issues about liveability in most of the rehabilitation sites—quality of construction, quality of waste disposal system required for vertical housing structures, access to education and health facilities, etc. What also came to light was that while there had been considerable asset generation, the sustainability of the assets so created was suspect as the process had caused considerable disruptions in the life and networks of people.

Usage of the study to identify and refine thematic focus areas

As a follow-up to this investigation, YUVA started working with the people living in the rehabilitation sites of M-ward. The primary focus was on training people for the formation and management of housing cooperatives as an institutional space for the better management of their assets. The analysis from the study helped us expand on interventions in rehabilitation and resettlement sites (we also began working in Vashi Naka MMRDA colony) and effectively engage with different population groups.

2014: Parliamentary Watch Reports

Since 2014, YUVA also started analysing questions raised in the Parliament with respect to urban development schemes that affected the populations that we were working with.

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government had announced several urban schemes with the aim to provide affordable housing and basic services, such as Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana–Urban [PMAY(U)], Smart Cities Mission (SCM), Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban [SBM(U)], Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Urban Livelihoods Mission (DAY–NULM) and the Heritage City Development and Augmentation Yojana (HRIDAY).

As the schemes underwent the implementation cycle, YUVA released periodic Parliamentary Watch Reports that reviewed and analysed parliamentary discussions on urban issues and schemes in each session. The reports presented a clear picture of the status of implementation of the schemes with regards to physical and financial progress made, and among the major findings were the following:

a. There was gross under-utilisation of funds under each of the schemes

b. Despite the schemes being implemented for the marginalised, there were major gaps:

   i. While one of the DAY–NULM components mentions 'Shelter for Urban Homeless', there is a huge gap between the number of urban homeless and the capacity of shelters available in the country.

   ii. With respect to the issue of unemployment, while data showed that over 10 lakh people had been trained since 2014, only a little over 33,000 had been placed. This cast a light on the efficacy and actual impact of the scheme.

Usage of research findings for evidence-based advocacy and for public education

The Parliamentary Watch Reports served as a means to not only identify gaps in the implementation of government schemes, but also hold the government accountable for its commitments and actions on policies and other issues of public interest. Our on-ground interventions kept us cognisant of realities prevalent, and we aligned findings from the

> *'I congratulate Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action for bringing out the Parliamentary Watch Report 2017 that highlights the status of implementation of urban schemes. The report presents these schemes by linking one to the other—housing, basic services and livelihood and the issues of informal labour. There is an interconnectedness between these schemes. Poverty alleviation programs cannot be analysed in isolation without addressing the issues of housing and informality of labour. This report gives a comprehensive picture of the Parliamentary discussions on urban issues which is a commendable initiative.'"*
>
> **Late Rajindar Sachar**
> Chief Justice (Retd.),
> High Court of Delhi and UN Special Rapporteur on Housing (Ex.)
> Excerpt from the foreword to YUVA's Parliamentary Watch Report 2017

field with observations from the reports to ask tougher questions and demand for people's rights. Data from YUVA's Parliamentary Watch Reports were also cited by Ministers in Parliament in the opposition (Sanjay Singh from the Aam Aadmi Party cited data during the Question Hour of the Monsoon Session 2018), for better policy decisioning and implementation. Over the years, the reports have proved to be a valuable repository of updated information on urban schemes.

Documentation

YUVA looked to knowledge dissemination through publication and media as a means to promote people-centred information, perspective and knowledge, towards the following objectives.

- Popular education: Our periodicals, manuals, handbooks, resource books, etc. served the function of popular education for different population groups
- Evidence for advocacy to influence policy: Our study reports provided evidence for advocacy aimed at policy change
- Awareness creation: By documenting our innovations and processes of empowerment, we aimed to encourage other organisations and individuals to adapt them in their course of work
- Institutional memory: Our publications also served the purpose of creating institutional memory.

1990 Onwards: Publications

Over the years, we have generated a wide range of publications in the form of periodicals, manuals, handbooks, study and workshop reports, case studies and more. Some examples of our publications are cited below.

Poems by Street Children and Youth (1990) was a compilation of poems written by the children and youth who had made the Ghar Ho Toh Aisa Shelter in Mahim their home. Their poems depicted their emotional state, struggles with harassment, substance abuse, alienation and loneliness, stigma and labelling they faced.

Leave Alcohol

Come my father, let's go home
Don't drink alcohol and don't fall on the road
Come my father, let's go home
Mother has been waiting for you, let's go home
I am falling at your feet and folding my hands
Come father, let's go home
We are in debt because of this alcoholism
There is no home to stay and we are here on roads
There is nothing to eat and we have become beggars
Give up my father, please give up this addiction

Swami Vankappa Mulkandi - 13 years
From Poems by Street Children and Youth

Gender Assault was a book that explored the critical relationship between gender and forced eviction in *basti* and pavement communities of Mumbai. Through the narratives of women, it built empirical evidence for the conclusion that women were affected in a particular way by virtue of the physical and social implications of their gender, and the violence they experienced in evictions was not only physical but also psychological and structural.

Anubhav was a monthly journal that we published between 1998 and 2001, in Marathi and English. Each issue of the journal focused on thematic topics such as India and Multilateral Development Banks (April 1998), Dalit Issues and Perspectives (April 1998), Voluntary Organisations: The Efforts and Challenges (December 1998), The Need for the Right to Information (February 1999).

Copies of Anubhav, the monthly periodical, addressed a range of themes

Taking the Lead: Children's Participation for Better Cities (2002) was a booklet that detailed all that went into the Rang-Tarang Bal Adhikar Mela, a festival to celebrate child rights. It came to fruition as an opportunity for children to interact with key adult figures in the field of child rights; to learn about their rights, discuss their experience, and have their opinions heard by people and policy makers with the power to affect their lives. An important outcome of Rang-Tarang was the Children's Charter of Demands which captured the opinions and demands of children concerning the right to education, housing, health, and basic services, as well as thoughts on their idea of a 'Child Friendly City'. This was also one of the contributing factors for the setting up of Bal Adhikar Sangharsh Samiti (BASS), a children's collective that would work on community-based child rights issues.

Children from the community participate in an event organised as part of the Rang-Tarang mela

Examining Urban Governance in Maharashtra (2010) was a three-city case study report which we prepared for Maharashtra Social Watch. This was the first step towards a process of monitoring the health and performance of institutions of governance in the State. The report reviewed the current practices, structures and styles of implementation of urban self-governance. It also identified the areas where the implementation was lacking and the barriers due to the prevalent legislations and attitudes of the people holding positions of power.

Facilitation Children's Participation in the Urban (2018) was a toolkit for practitioners working directly or indirectly with children and children's groups to better understand the implications of urbanisation on the growth and development of children from marginalised communities, the child participation landscape and how efforts can be taken to promote initiatives in this space.

2006–11: Community Video Unit

YUVA was cognisant of the fact that information could be used to empower and inspire communities. Our media unit, involved in an ongoing process of gauging the community's needs and designing materials that were effective, produced various forms of media which could be used as part of the process to educate, strengthen solidarity and promote community action.

In response to the need for a more people-centric media, a media that would be the voice of the people themselves, which talked about their issues and was produced by them, YUVA developed the Community Video Unit, also called Hamari Awaaz (our voice). This was media of the people, for the people, by the people, which aimed at building awareness and perspectives about local issues using videos as a tool.

Youth from *bastis* were trained to create 'video magazines'. These magazines addressed subjects that were of interest to the local community. Footage was obtained for these videos by interviewing people on issues that affected them, and these videos were then played at community gatherings. Some of the themes that were covered through these video magazines included effects of displacement of the poor, water and sanitation, Right to Information, etc.

The videos produced by the CVU served as an important tool in initiating dialogue in the community and with the local authorities. Avishkar Yuva Manch and Deepjyoti Mahila Mandal two local community-based organisations took the lead in organising a cleanliness campaign following the screening of a video magazine on garbage. Following the screening of the video magazine on water, people in Jogeshwari became aware about the issue of privatisation of water. They then actively participated in the campaign against the privatisation of water.

The CVU broadcasts a video at a community gathering.

2018 Onwards: Urban Resource Centre

The Urban Resource Centre (URC) was a significant step taken towards knowledge consolidation and dissemination. Launched in March 2018, the URC hosts multimedia resources documenting urban developmental trajectories from the early 1980s. Its content bank is generated from our engagements since 1984, complemented by stories continually generated from our existing work. In this way, the material is always being added to, modified and updated, so that the collection widens with time. The resources aim to record the lives and livelihoods of individuals and communities, especially the marginalised who are often directly impacted by developmental agendas, yet whose voice is often unheard.

An important goal for the URC is to find ways in which collaborative environments can be set up, so that communities can engage with the knowledge that is created alongside academic and other mainstream discursive forums. 80 per cent of our photo and video archives are currently digitised, and the text archive digitisation is underway. The aim is to provide informative resources that can serve communities, students, teachers, schools, colleges, universities and a range of other stakeholders interested in widening their knowledge of urban development.

An event at the Urban Resource Centre

INFLUENCING PUBLIC POLICY

YUVA's endeavours to influence public policy are rooted and informed by its field experiences and research. The human rights perspective, enshrined in the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other related Conventions, form the basis of YUVA's policy interventions. Our policy work is guided by our direct experiences with the community and is carried out in partnership with people on the themes of housing and basic services rights, informal worker's rights, right to participate in local governance, child rights, youth rights and women's rights. Our repertoire of policy action includes people's mobilisation, campaigning, advocacy and lobbying, network and alliance building and legal action, situated with the framework of the Constitution of India. With respect to network and alliance building, our strategy was to initiate new networks for policy advocacy, and work with and strengthen existing networks. The challenges we face in our work with communities informs both research questions and advocacy asks.

The primary focus of YUVA's advocacy work was for the recognition of those excluded from the fruits of development. Many are denied entitlements on the basis of the state's definition of what is legal, like in the case of pavement dwellers or street vendors, while others lose out on account of their inherent vulnerabilities, like in the case of street children or marginal farmers. We view advocacy as a means to engage with parties across the spectrum, policy makers, other civil society organisations (CSOs), and the population that would benefit (or not) from the enactment of specific policies.

This chapter brings to you a few illustrative cases of our public policy work.

1985: Campaign for Housing as a Fundamental Right

In 1981, the Chief Minister of Maharashtra, initiated a mass eviction drive of about 1,00,000 pavement dwellers in Bombay to deport them to their places of origin. In August 1985, the Supreme Court passed its judgement stating that eviction of pavement dwellers would lead to the deprivation of their livelihood and ultimately their life, and they were therefore eligible for rehabilitation. However, the Court also ordered that pavement dwellers be evicted after the monsoon season for the purpose of their resettlement which was to be given highest priority by the Bombay Municipal Corporation (BMC). This, in the analysis of civil society groups working with urban poor populations, empowered the BMC to evict *bastis* and pavement settlements which soon proved to be the case.

At YUVA we decided that immediate intervention was needed to stall evictions and the idea of collective action with other like-minded voluntary organisations in the city such as the Bandra East Community Centre and the Slum Rehabilitation Society (SRS) emerged. Accordingly, the Committee on the Right to Housing (CRH) was formed in a meeting convened by YUVA to resist, monitor and create alternatives for evictions. YUVA took on the responsibility of coordinating the CRH for the next five years.

Although the judgement seemed to protect pavement dwellers from eviction on grounds of their right to livelihood, in fact, the real threat of (and actual incidents of) evictions increased substantially following the announcement of the judgement. The immediate work of CRH therefore focussed on an anti-eviction response, through mass education and awareness via popular mediums, such as, posters, handouts, slides, street plays, etc., as well as a memoranda and postcard campaign signed by about 7,000 concerned citizens demanding that the BMC halt the evictions and instead consider rehabilitation. Within two years, the work of CRH graduated from anti-eviction mobilisation and strategising to demanding that housing be recognised as a fundamental right in the Constitution of India.

Reflections

The CRH was our first effort at building networks with like-minded groups to galvanise collective strength for our demands against an act of injustice by the State. The network also helped prevent the diffusion of any energies through the duplication of efforts.

To capitalise on 1987 being declared as the International Year of Shelter for the Homeless, CRH associated itself with National Campaign for Housing Rights (NCHR), a movement that was emerging from the experiences of injustice being meted out in different states. Underlying our action was the belief that the role of the government was not one of providing 'welfare' or mere 'facilitation', but as a guarantor of rights. That the right to housing must be guaranteed alongside the right to health, safe environment and livelihood was the core demand of the NCHR. A process was initiated by the campaign for a People's Bill for Housing Rights and the draft Bill was completed in 1992 after six years of national discussion.

Although passage of a constitutional amendment was not achieved, NCHR accomplished many important outcomes aimed at establishing the right to housing. As a result of the momentum it created across the country, the issue of housing became part of the national and political discourse. For YUVA, NCHR became a platform for the articulation of all its experiences on evictions and basic amenities, in the process of drafting this Bill. For a few years,

Residents pick up their belongings after a demolition in Mahim in 1995

YUVA also took the responsibility of managing the campaign's secretariat functions.

Our involvement in the national campaign served as a springboard for us to step into the global housing rights arena. We became members of the Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR) and the Habitat International Coalition (HIC). We were also able to contribute to the international discourse on housing rights and cross-pollinate ideas between countries on this shared problem of evictions and denial of habitat rights. Through this process, we learned the effectiveness of collective action (to put an immediate moratorium to an act of injustice), strategic alliance building (for policy intervention) and solidarity building, to bring attention to the issues that needed to be addressed.

For YUVA, connections made at the national and international level were to come to good use in its future campaigns. HIC became a strategic partner on fact-finding missions on human rights violations after the communal riots in Bombay (1992) and Gujarat (2002); for the campaign for rehabilitation of Bhabrekar Nagar evictees; and in recent times, in our work with *basti* and pavement communities facing development-induced evictions and displacement as part of the country's urban renewal process.

Fast paced urbanisation driven by global capital movements has made land a premium. Securing land for housing the poor in a dignified and sustainable manner that supports livelihood needs is the contestation, and this is what we seek to do with our advocacy efforts.

1992: Campaign for Shelter for Street Children

Early into YUVA's work with children living on the streets, we learnt that shelter was their most pressing need—a place where they could at least sleep, keep their belongings (meagre as they were) safe, and rest when ill. That was how '*Ghar Ho To Aisa*', the open shelter for street boys came into being.

Some of the older boys in the shelter started assuming responsibilities as night attendants for the day-to-day running of a shelter, volunteering to take the younger ones to the hospital, or engaging with the police when needed. At the weekly meeting with the youth, the clear need for a separate platform for the older boys, a group distinct from the children's one, came to be expressed. This group would function separately from a non-governmental organisation and would serve as a forum for the older boys to express themselves and articulate their concerns. Thus a group called Udaan (flight) was formed, along with street youth associated with another non-governmental organisation, Vatsalya.

To call attention to the need for a shelter, a facility that the boys regarded as their primary need, Udaan held a one-day hunger fast on the eve of Children's Day on 13 November in 1992. The purpose was to draw the attention of the bureaucrats and the general public to their homeless situation. Mobilising other children, they mooted a proposal to demand the provision of shelters by the BMC, to be run by Udaan, with support from non-governmental organisations. After two years of negotiations (with support from us as a partner organisation), in 1994 the BMC allotted spaces under some of its overhead bridges to be used as shelters for street children.

Reflections

The experience of actualising shelter rights for street children through the efforts of the street children's collective, reinforced our belief in the importance of expressions and experiences of children forming the basis of children's advocacy work.

Street children playing

1994–2000: Campaign for the Implementation of Constitution (74th Amendment) Act, 1992

Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) or Municipalities were for the first time recognised as the third tier of governance in cities with the passage of the Constitution (74th Amendment) Act (or 74th CAA in short) in 1992. It was viewed as a significant move towards strengthening the local democracy in the country. The mechanism to ensure accountability and institutionalise decentralisation through Ward Committees was critical for a vibrant democracy.

A national seminar was organised in 1994 jointly by YUVA and VANI, New Delhi, with non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs), academicians, etc to look into the process of implementation. As YUVA, we agreed to initiate the campaign process in Maharashtra, with support from the National Foundation for India, to make Ward Committees functional so that local governance could become more participatory. We sought to work directly in Mumbai, Nagpur and Pune Municipal Corporations, and through strategic partners in Nashik, Aurangabad and Chiplun. The campaign strategically focussed on information gathering and dissemination, and formation of administrative ward-level forums or city-level forums to monitor the implementation of the 74th CAA.

Information was collected through meetings with key government actors, and city consultations were held with state representatives (elected and bureaucratic), NGOs, CBOs, academic institutions etc. In order to increase visibility and effectiveness of the campaign, NGO/CBO forums were formed at the administrative ward level. The forums were to monitor the performance of the Ward Committees, prioritise local issues, design programmes and strategies and recommend to their Wards Committees. As per the provision made under the Maharashtra conformity legislation of the 74th CAA, the Forum was also to recommend the three stipulated members for nomination to the Ward Committees. Accordingly, in Mumbai, NGO/CBO Forums were formed in four Administrative Wards (K-East, M-East, M-West and H-West). A city forum was also formed in Nagpur. A bi-monthly periodical on municipal affairs called Nagarsatta was published in Marathi to disseminate information.

One of the key provisions of the 74th CAA was the mandatory reservation for weaker sections of SC/ST and women representatives in municipalities. While this was being implemented by the State Election Commission in the municipalities where elections took place, we noticed that a large number of inexperienced people were being elected in the process. Accordingly, we also organised two training programmes with women councillors from few of the municipalities in the state.

For the setting up of Ward Committees, intense legislative lobbying was undertaken. We realised that the political and bureaucratic will to set-up Ward Committees was lacking as they viewed the decentralisation as a cutback on their powers. As a result, the articulation of norms for selection of NGO/CBO representatives in the Committees was neglected. YUVA, in consultation with other NGOs and CBOs also submitted a set of draft norms for consideration by the state, but to no avail. Finally, in 1998 a Writ Petition was filed in the Bombay High Court to give direction that Ward Committees be set-up in Maharashtra and that the state codify specific norms for the selection of NGOs and CBOs in these Committees. This resulted in a High Court directive in 1999 to effect the same.

Nevertheless, implementation of Ward Committees in Maharashtra was largely politically co-opted. A study on the working of Ward Committees in which YUVA participated showed that in most cases the NGO/CBO nominations enjoyed the patronage of the political parties that were in the majority of

Conference organised by YUVA on the decentralisation of governance in January 1997

the respective Wards Committees. Hence, the campaign towards deepening decentralisation—upholding the spirit of the 74th CAA—continued in the form of YUVA's model building exercise of Area Sabhas as an institutional space for direct participation of all voters in an electoral ward.

1997: Campaign For Informal Worker Rights

The crux of YUVA's work with the urban poor of Mumbai from its inception in 1984, has been working with issues of informality and insecurity within the livelihood and habitat thematics. Post the 1991 New Economic Policy the increasing informalisation of labour was obvious.

National Policy on Street Vendors

When the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) sought to undertake a census survey of street vendors in the city in 1997, we readily agreed to implement it in partnership with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS). The survey was commissioned as a result of the Supreme Court prescribing certain guidelines in 1985 to regulate street vending in the city.

Our focus over the next three to four years was to organise and partner with collectives of street vendors, domestic workers, rag/waste pickers, construction and migrant workers, cobblers and home-based workers towards a federation of informal sector workers in the cities of Mumbai, Nagpur and the Vasai-Virar region. Street vendors were organised under Feriwalla Vikas Mahasangh (Street Vendors Development Federation), which registered itself as a trade union in 1998, and informal workers from other sectors were organised under the banner Asanghatit Shramik Parishad (Unorganised Labourers Union).

Following years of struggle by vendors for recognition and protection of their activities across the country, in 2001, the Ministry of Urban Development set-up a taskforce to frame policy guidelines on street vending. The National Hawkers Federation (NHF) along with other state and national level street vendor organisations (such as NASVI) consistently contributed to the policy framing discourse, and the General

Street scenes captured during the street vendors survey

Secretary of NHF was a member of the Ministry Taskforce for the policy.

After three years of formal dialogue and consultations with various stakeholders across the country, the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors was issued in 2004, followed by a revised National Policy as part of The Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Bill in 2009. Through this Policy, urban vending for the first time was recognised as 'not only a source of employment, but also as a provider of "affordable" services to the majority of the urban population'.

Following the passage of the Street Vendors Policy, 2004, NHF focused on pushing for its implementation through State legislations. We strategically partnered with NHF and organised it's chapter in Maharashtra under the banner Maharashtra Hawkers Forum. YUVA's role in NHF was to provide research inputs, strategic support and solidarity in various campaigns and positionings. We also facilitated workshops with street vendor organisations in other states to help prepare advocacy and monitoring action plans. In 2005, YUVA had also proposed a model for the integration of street vendors in the Development Plan of Vasai-Virar city through a demonstration in Nalasopara. The learnings from this model exercise fed into our presentations on planning based on the concept of natural markets, which were submitted before the Ministry Taskforce that was preparing the bill. The special integration of street vending through proposals submitted by civic authorities under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission, was also being advocated for.

YUVA, as a core committee member of NHF, also provided inputs on organisation building for the core group members of the Federation and strategising for advocacy at the national level for changes within the policy for greater inclusiveness. In 2009–10, we were one of the organisations that collaborated with NHF to review the various forms in which the National Policy was being implemented across the country, with a view to make recommendations based on the challenges and successes revealed by the empirical evidence. The Status Report covered 9 states and 12 cities. Similar reports

were produced by YUVA in partnership with NHF throughout the decade, including comparison of Rules across the country, the status of implementation of the Act, and so on.

Social Security Now

In 2006, a national campaign to demand social security for informal sector workers was launched under the banner Social Security Now (SSN). YUVA was a part of a group of 14 network organisations that came together and formed this consortium to pursue the right to social security, to campaign for awareness, to forge alliance with trade unions, people's movements and other organisations and to put pressure on the government to pass a comprehensive social security law. We invested energies in taking the campaign message to informal worker organisations and trade unions in Maharashtra. The Maharashtra Asanghatit Shramik Parishad (Unorganised Labourers Union) also took shape at this time, to bring in informal workers from other districts of the state. Our focus was expanding outreach of the organisation in Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Nagpur, Satara and Sangli, with the help of dedicated activists in these cities, while also providing capacity strengthening inputs to the leadership of the state Federation.

The pressure exerted on government through this nation-wide campaign contributed to the passing of the Unorganised Workers Social Security Act in 2008. Lobbying strategies used were delegations, signature campaigns and letters to Members of State Legislative Assembly and Parliament. Communication mediums like posters, stickers, campaign song and video were used to mobilise masses and popular support. As YUVA, we provided advocacy and secretariat support, and convened the committee for strategising parliamentary advocacy tactics within the Network.

After the passage of the revised comprehensive policy as well as the Model Street Vendors Bill 2009, the street vendors' organisations intensified their efforts towards advocating for the formulation of state specific guidelines and policy for implementation of the same at the local level. In Mumbai, which has the largest population of street vendors, the draft guidelines prepared by MCGM, still excluded over half the street vendors in the city. Plans to bring in foreign direct investment in the retail sector were also a threat to street vending. All this called for concerted efforts for the protection of vendors' rights to a dignified livelihood.

Meanwhile, the Social Security Act was passed in 2008; though a key milestone in the protection of unorganised workers, it had many gaps. It completely missed the category of migrant workers and livelihood security was not seen as a core component of social security. Finally, it failed to recognise over 90 per cent of informal workers by restricting it to those below the poverty line.

Accordingly, the renewed focus through the SSN campaign was for a universal coverage of social security to all people living or working in the country as a basic right, the comprehensive definition of social security, financial allocation of 6 per cent of GDP and no privatisation of social security benefits, which were addressed in a letter to the Prime Minister submitted in September 2010. Simultaneously, in Maharashtra, our focus shifted to securing entitlements for informal workers, by working on implementation of sector specific policies pertaining to construction workers, domestic workers and street vendors. The setting up of welfare boards under the Building and Other Construction Workers Welfare Cess Act, 2008 and Domestic Workers Welfare Board Act, 2008, and town vending committees under the National Street Vendors Policy and Model Act, 2009, we believe were crucial for this.

2006: Campaign for Universal Access to Water for Urban Households

In 2005, it was announced that the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM) was planning a 'Water Distribution Improvement Project (WDIP)' in K-East administrative ward. A few news reports indicated that the plans were for privatisation of the water distribution system as a pilot test in this ward, which generated the highest revenue to the MCGM's Hydraulic Department and was one of the few profit making wards in the city, owing to the presence of a number of large commercial establishments, including the airport, several 5-star hotels, manufacturing and IT industries. Significantly, this ward was the most populous ward in the city and home to a sizeable population that lived in informal settlements.

In March 2006, YUVA called a meeting of non-governmental organisations and activists to share information and in this meeting, a collective called Mumbai Paani was formed to collect and analyse information and strategically intervene. A study of the water distribution systems in the ward was launched in K-East funded by the World Bank. Messrs Castalia Strategic Advisors, a French consultancy firm was appointed to do the study through a contract signed between the World Bank and Castalia, leaving MCGM out of the contract. A series of three stakeholder consultations were organised as part of the study. Preparations within Mumbai Paani were to participate in the first Stakeholder Consultation. Several personnel within the hydraulic engineers department were against the privatisation plans and shared data with us.

In the first stakeholder consultation held in May 2006, MCGM denied any plans for privatisation. However, the terms of the contract between the World Bank and Castalia stated that 'MCGM envisages to award a "Water Distribution Improvement Contract" to a "Professional Operator" to demonstrate, in a selected pilot area, that it is possible to achieve an improved water supply service[1]'. Mumbai Paani raised a host of questions, based on analysis of the Terms of Reference and expressed dissent to the privatisation plans, demanding that water supply and management be retained in the public domain and any steps for improvement must be with a view to strengthening municipal machinery.

Soon after this consultation, YUVA launched an awareness campaign in K-East ward under the banner Paani Haq Abhiyan (Water Rights Campaign). Information was collected about the project through the Right to Information (RTI) Act and was presented to the people through area meetings.

In June 2007, Castalia presented the preliminary findings and recommendations at the second stakeholder consultation. The recommendation was for MCGM to 'let out its distribution on lease or contractual basis to private contractors. It had also suggested that BMC focus its attention on plugging water leakages, pilferage and specific consumer complaints'. Mumbai Paani and community leaders of Paani Haq Abhiyan challenged the data, such as, 'unaccounted for water' and 'rate of leakages', particularly its simplistic benchmarking against world-class cities without factoring demographic, socio-economic and political contexts in which water was supplied. A demand was also made to look at options for providing water for all. This demand was based on the March 1996 circular issued by the Maharashtra Urban Development Department (UDD) to all Municipal Corporations in the State preventing informal settlements that had developed after the government cut-off date of 1 January 1995 from accessing municipal water supply. The circular specifically stated that water supply to any illegal constructions would

1 | Excerpt from WTO: Agriculture at the Mercy of Rich Nations' Focus on the Global South, India, Jafri H. Afsar, 2005

not be approved. In keeping with this circular, the MCGM prohibited regularised water connections to people living in 'unauthorised slums'.

From this time, till the third stakeholder consultation in November 2007, Mumbai Paani and representatives from the K-East Paani Haq Abhiyan met with the Councillors of the Ward and the Municipal Commissioner of MCGM, making the same demands – (1) legal water connection to all, and (2) strengthening of municipal water services. At this consultation, MCGM announced the scrapping of the pilot project and launching of a city-wide water distribution improvement mission branded 'Sujal Mumbai Abhiyan'. The programme proposed the following: (1) zonal contracting of leakage repairing and prevention, (2) provision of water to post-1995 *bastis* through pre-paid meters, (3) telescopic tariff, (4) water audit, (5) devolution of sanctioning authority.

Following this consultation, Mumbai Paani demanded the supply of water to post-1995 *bastis* through stand-post connections fitted with regular meters and not prepaid meters. This demand was based on the adverse experiences of prepaid water meters in other countries, like in the case of people in Natal, South Africa where the inability to recharge the prepaid cards forced the people to access unsafe water sources leading to an outbreak of cholera.

We scaled up the campaign to demand universal access to urban water for household consumption. The political and administrative opposition to providing legal water connections was vehement on the grounds of proliferation of *bastis*. A rapid survey was carried out in 109 *bastis* spread across 16 administrative wards of the city to assess the water supply situation. Paani Haq Samiti (Water Rights Committee), a city-wide civil society collective, held public hearings, mass mobilisations and demonstrations and press conferences during strategic moments, such as World Water Day and civic government elections.

A public hearing at the YUVA Centre

Challenging the Maharashtra UDD circular, a PIL was filed by Pani Haq Samiti in October 2011. The final judgment made in December 2014 was a historic one; the bench presided by Justice Abhay Oak and Justice A S Gadkari stated that whether homes were deemed 'legal' or 'illegal', to uphold Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, it was the responsibility of the government to provide water to all. Reenforcing the intrinsic relationship between water and life, the judgment established that the right to water was as fundamental as the right to life. As interim relief, the court ordered that the MCGM formulate a policy for providing piped water supply to the occupants of post 2000 settlements. While this was a win, challenges towards accessing water persisted. Since then, YUVA in partnership with Pani Haq Samiti, has been instrumental in advocating for implementation of the judgement by enabling applications for water connections, negotiating with various levels of governance, and we have seen many successful cases of water connections being provided to settlements that have been denied water for decades.

2011 Onwards: Yuva National Desk

Internal reflections highlighted the capacity of YUVA to work at the national level and a strategic decision was taken to consolidate this role. A separate team was created in Delhi to anchor the linking of ground experience to macro level policy work and campaigns. The 'National Desk' as it was called would participate in national networks, produce research and analysis on policies, while supporting training and leadership development programs and workshops at the national and sub-national level.

Partnerships are a core area of focus for YUVA's national level work, and collaborations with unions and other organisations have been built on issues of informality of housing and labour. Specifically, advocacy for implementation of the Street Vendors Act has been strong, as has been the initiation and initial anchoring of a Right to the City Campaign.

Networking with elected parliamentarians is also a critical area of work, where advocacy asks are shared with Members of Parliament (MP) as well as with Parliamentary Standing Committees. The Desk analyses proceedings of every session of Parliament from the lens of urban housing and informal labour, and these Parliamentary Watch Reports are useful tools for groups across the country in sharpening their advocacy. Our direct basti-level interventions in the cities of Indore, Bhubaneshwar and Guwahati are also anchored by the National Desk.

2011–2017: Mumbai Development Plan 2014–2034

The Development Plan (DP) of Mumbai (2014–2034) is a blueprint of the city's development plan. However, during the phase of formulation, it was kept out of the public debate and so it was not representative of a larger public imagination. In this context, multiple organisations came together to emphasise the need for a collective planning that would amount in an inclusive and participatory DP. The campaign, that came to be known as the Hamara Shehar Mumbai Abhiyaan (Our City Mumbai Campaign), demystified the so-called technical process of urban planning through grassroots participation and the creation of a collective vision for a more inclusive and just Mumbai. Over 60 organisations were part of the campaign with YUVA acting as the campaign secretariat.

Women from the community voice their views at an event organised as part of the Hamara Sheher Mumbai Abhiyan campaign.

The preparation of Mumbai's third DP (2014–34) was unique for its participatory process spanning more than three years, one that was driven by a people's campaign as well as by the MCGM. According to the MRTP Act, 1966 that mandated the preparation of the DP every 20 years, there was provision for 'public suggestions and objections' after the proposed land-use plan had been drafted. For the first time, the MCGM went beyond the legal mandate to include various levels of consultations. In total, 42 consultations/meetings with the public and elected representatives were held. This was noteworthy because in a city where the realty sector was constantly given opportunity to participate and pursue its interests, citizens were for the first time given a chance to articulate their interests in an election year. Notably, the most marginalised (informal sector workers, those living in *bastis*) who had till now been left out of the DP and usually had few formal avenues for participation, could assert themselves, integrating into a larger campaign to participate in the DP process.

Following the announcement of the DP's preparation in 2011, citizen groups that had been active individually came together collectively under the banner Hamara Shehar Vikas Niyojan Abhiyan Mumbai to sustain the process of public participation and democratisation in urban planning and governance. The first public meeting regarding the DP was initiated following the opening up of the existing land-use (ELU) maps for public verification. Previously, sensitive information on the quantum and nature of land use distributed throughout the city had never been opened up for debate. It generated public debate and correction of land that had been erroneously marked as under a certain use, while also reinforcing what would not be considered within the DP (for example, *bastis* would remain as dense brown patches with no amenities marked).

Later in the year, the MCGM organised a series of 14 thematic consultations in partnership with various city organisations. These helped develop knowledge on important issues—even issues like housing in *bastis*, excluded from detailed mapping in the DP, were given space to be discussed based on the demands of campaign groups. This was followed by ward-level public consultations across Mumbai's 24 administrative wards. Demands and discussions at the ward level highlighted stark socio-spatial disparities between and within areas in the city. Notably, wards with high *basti* populations, focused on basic needs including schools and health facilities, while economically better-off wards spent inordinate amounts of time discussing parking and roads. The most substantial participation was seen at the ward level, highlighting the ward as the focus of participation with ward officials and councillors mediating this process.

Citizen groups acquired planning literacy from participatory thematic consultations and learnt to reposition their needs within the DP's framework. For instance, the demands of auto and taxi unions for parking and restrooms were articulated through the suggestion of common multi-use depots. Various groups who had perhaps not heard of the DP before or who had not used it as an instrument of claim-making started making demands on the DP such as spaces for naka workers, waste pickers or Adivasis living in Adivasi padas. Local groups also challenged planning standards and norms that were commonly deployed by planning experts that they felt were not appropriate to their needs. For instance, *basti* communities were firm on their demand to be mapped with existing amenities and thereby be recognised as living/working spaces where large populations with their own set of needs resided.

The draft DP (2014–34) was released on 25 February 2015. In response, a wave of protests erupted from political parties, citizen groups, including our campaign. The protests focused on numerous errors and omissions in the DP as well as fundamental differences in the approach and values adopted. Repeated media coverage and networking by different groups

using the internet and social media ensured substantial visibility regarding the draft DP's unpopularity. On 21 April, even before the period for suggestions and objections ended on 25 April, the state government employed Section 154 of the MRTP Act to override the MCGM and announce that the draft DP would be junked and a revised plan would be prepared by the MCGM within four months.

The protests against the draft DP also laid bare deep schisms between groups in the city with competing claims. The conflict between street vendors and elite resident welfare associations (RWA) was one that was exceedingly visible. When the draft DP was released, the proposed vendors' policy with vending zones and vending pitches gained attention. While RWAs and civil society groups in upwardly mobile areas protested against the provision of vending zones around their homes, vendors too protested against the random marking of vendor zones.

Overall, the process of participation spanning more than three years served as a platform for unheard voices, for shedding light on spaces that were normally invisible, and as a source of data for understanding and planning for the city from the point of view of ordinary people and their needs. The Hamara Shehar Mumbai campaign managed to force the MCGM to open up, albeit to a small degree, the DP revision process and invite wider public consultations. It was quite effective as an intermediary institution that facilitated a participatory process down to the ward level using the preparation of the DP as an opportunity. Addressing multiple issues and the needs of multiple groups presented the opportunity to understand the structural limitations and inequities in the current planning process in Mumbai and move towards suggesting alternatives.

Thus, Mumbai set a precedent for inclusive and people-centric planning by setting an example that could be followed by people's collectives in other urban centres. The campaign negotiated a crucial space for marginalised groups of the city to articulate their needs in the discussion on urban planning. Therefore, this intervention allowed YUVA to re-imagine planning to be indivisible from participatory governance, and instead as a tool for equitable distribution of land and other urban resources.

Through our learnings from this experience, we aimed to expand the leveraging of urban plans as a tool to facilitate equitable urban development to other groups and activists working in cities. In 2016, YUVA convened a meeting with Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) and partner organisations towards training civil society members on urban plans. After this, in partnership with IIHS, we undertook capacity building and research on the urban plans of Ranchi, Bhubaneswar and Indore. These efforts have been aimed towards ensuring that planning is no longer a mere technocratic process, but one that responds to the needs of people through land reservations in city plans.

2017: Claiming Spaces Campaign

Children's right to an adequate home comprises of not just the four walls of a home, but the environment they grow up in, and the basic amenities and facilities made available to them. Within this framework, the right to play is an inalienable requirement as accorded within Article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. No discussion on the right to housing is complete if the right to play is not addressed, as the latter helps children and young people (CYP) explore and interact with their surroundings, helping in their physical, mental and social development.

However, children in informal settlements and resettlement sites are vulnerable and exposed to a host of dangers. There is little space for play within the confines of a small house where family members are crammed together. Play in spaces outdoors exposes children to more threats—bullying, exposure to hazardous

substances, fear of accidents and so on. Parents prefer, therefore, that children remain home but are unable to offer them any alternate play opportunities. This stunts the child's growth, adversely affecting their health and well-being.

Against these circumstances, CYP collectives across the city of Mumbai led a powerful moment to claim their rights. In Jogeshwari, west Mumbai, there were six grounds for play at one time. As real-estate activities expanded, one space after another was wiped out till only the Ismail Yusuf College ground was left. When it was up for redevelopment, the CYP protested by organising a long march in 2016 all the way to the local administrator's office in Jogeshwari. Different sports groups, local organisations and networks extended their support. As CYP associated with this resistance in larger numbers, they also articulated their demands for other requirements, such as a meeting space, library, community centres, gymnasium, and these were gradually set up in the community in due course. The persevering efforts of CYP paid off, when the administrator accepted their demands to leave this space free for their use. This was a huge confidence boost for all the people associated with this movement. Currently, over 500 of them regularly play on these grounds.

The Malwani ground in Block III, Malad was rampantly used by drug abusers and was not a safe space for children. The open ground in the area was dirty, with garbage piled high. After CYP helped clean this area, they were beaten up by the drug abusers for trying to claim this space. However, they were undeterred and lodged complaints with the police, who demonstrated support for them. This ground then started being used by them for their play. Though the community had offered little support to these youngsters at first, they too began using the grounds for cultural programme.

In 2017, YUVA facilitated a city-wide forum for youth groups across *bastis* to launch a 'Claiming Spaces Campaign'. The success in Malwani helped ideate on how to claim the Moina Masjid ground in Ambujwadi (Malad). The youth cleaned the area and converted it to a kabaddi[2] ground with their efforts. Girls who had no opportunity to leave their houses earlier also started playing on these grounds. In 2016–17, the children started kickboxing lessons in this space too. They scouted for coaches to train them on various sports. The space is now inclusive, being used by CYP, both girls and boys from minority communities too. A few of the children who have excelled at sports have also started training to play professionally.

Children enjoy a race at the space claimed in Malad

2 | Excerpt from WTO: Agriculture at the Mercy of Rich Nations' Focus on the Global South, India, Jafri H. Afsar, 2005

The Malwani model also prompted youth from other areas to place their demands before relevant authorities[3]. In total, the claiming spaces movement has gathered strength in five communities, and has spread to eleven other areas as well.

In this way, vulnerable children across the city have invoked their right to play and taken active steps to protect and uphold it, even when denied these spaces indoors. Their resilience has inspired others to join their movement. The demand for play spaces has expanded to include all needs connected to those for adequate housing, for instance the growth of safe spaces, community resource centres, garbage-free communities and so on.

Conclusion

For YUVA, people's mobilisation has remained foundational to our advocacy work. Endeavours have always been made to encourage collective strength and prevent duplication of efforts by initiating networks or strategically aligning with civil society networks, labour unions, people's collectives, etc. This is congruent to our founding mandate of 'intervening in any issue of social justice' in partnership with people.

Prior to the New Economic Policy, most advocacy work in the country, was through engagement with the State. Post liberalisation the industrial market, multilateral finance agencies (such as the International Monetary Fund and World Bank) and trade agencies (such as World Trade Organisation) emerged as powerful influencers of the State, prescribing market-centred solutions to development problems. The demand for an alternative paradigm of people-centred, sustainable development, also called for demonstrating how this could work. YUVA's model building exercises on area sabhas and integration of street vendors in land use plans are carried out with this objective.

YUVA has also found it useful to partner with international justice campaigns like in the case of the Habitat International Coalition. Other similar campaigns that YUVA has partnered with are Social Watch and Wada Na Todo Abhiyan—an indigenous campaign for governance accountability on commitments to national and international development goals.

In the passage of the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, YUVA took the opportunity to complement the government's work, by taking it to the people. When a progressive legislation, policy or scheme is brought about, it is important that development organisations step in to complement efforts for its effective implementation, while maintaining its autonomy, so as to be able to continue its primary watchdog role on behalf of the people. The challenge for YUVA (and perhaps for other organisations like us) is to maintain autonomy as the watchdog of the people, while not being viewed as hostile. Hence, legal action is something that YUVA resorts to when political and bureaucratic will is lacking.

Our recent experience with the Hamara Shehar Mumbai campaign also highlighted this through the participatory process on the Development Plan. For the first time, marginalised groups in the city were pushing for future-focused reservations specific to them. The same groups that would earlier ask authorities to address local issues such as water supply or play areas, were now asking for land reservations that were future-focused and would be beneficial to the community in the long term. It was also interesting to see people coming together to address how the city's future could be imagined collectively, and not just through the eyes of a certain class of people or parties with vested interests.

3 | Excerpt from WTO: Agriculture at the Mercy of Rich Nations' Focus on the Global South, India, Jafri H. Afsar, 2005

NARRATIVE BUILDING

Over 35 years of work on the field, YUVA has closely witnessed the struggles of the marginalised, especially in the urban context. From forced evictions to resettlements, to struggles for livelihood, harassment and abuse, we have closely experienced many unequal realities and seen the brutality with which these issues are addressed, especially in cities. Though we know that there are many organisations and individuals who, like us, work with communities to support their struggles, we always feel that something is missing: A majority of people in the city refrain from participating in or attempting to play a role to resolve these struggles. Is it apathy and ignorance? Do these struggles not seem relevant to them? More than anything, however, it could be because people of different backgrounds rarely interact with one another in the city as equals, and are therefore not able to understand and adequately value the role each one plays. There are hardly any platforms where people can talk to each other in a constructive, non-confrontational manner, and then arrive at solutions.

It was in 2016 that we first looked at narrative building as an extension of our work in a formalised manner. This is not to say that narrative building had not imbued our earlier work, but that we viewed it through a more focused lens now. The story of any city is one of continual transition and multi-dimensional layered experiences adding to the city's ever-evolving narrative. So how could we go about creating an understanding of the many transitions the city had undergone, was experiencing, and was likely to encounter in the times ahead? And through this understanding can we begin to move to inclusive ways of viewing the 'other' in our cities? These were the nature of complex questions we wanted to explore answers to through this area of work.

ComplexCity

YUVA curated and organised ComplexCity, which was a celebration of and engagement on urban values, history, culture, socio-economic realities, and more aimed at encouraging people from different walks of life to come together, even if briefly, to gain a glimpse into each other's way of living and being. The first edition of ComplexCity was held in March 2018, and though we were aware of the awkwardness that could result from such encounters, we aimed to promote dialogue and a better understanding of individual identities.

We believed that narratives could be used to connect the new with the old, and to foster a sense of identity and community. The festival was driven by the belief that in the absence of any pre-emptive dialogue, certain sections of society would continue to be denied their rights and be forced to the margins as they are repeatedly exploited, greeted by ignorance and apathy of their condition from the other side. YUVA offered knowledge-sharing platforms and spaces for the open debate and discussion of ideas, through a careful curation of events that would engage with people with varying mindsets. The second edition was held in February 2019, with a focus on partnerships for all events, which enabled wider ownership as well as outreach. Our goal is to continue to support these events so that they become a recurring feature of the city's culturescape.

ComplexCity reached out to a wide urban audience, from the urban poor to middle-class residents, children to the elderly, members of indigenous communities to recently-arrived working professionals, cutting across class, gender and age.

Different experiences curated as ComplexCity

Equipolis: A seminar focused on urban praxis.

Living Mumbai: A film festival featuring stories from the urban world.

Bolti Bombay: A series of competitions (photography, street play, debate) to promote critical thinking on the urban.

Culture Kaun: A showcase of indigenous lives and traditions through performance.

Making Mumbai: A convention to showcase youth action across city spaces.

City Walks: A walk-through in the city's oft-overlooked areas.

Rhythm by the Bay, one of the events held as part of ComplexCity

ORGANISATIONAL SUSTAINABILITY

Within the non-profit sector, especially for community-based organisations working with diverse stakeholders, leadership is a dynamic and ongoing journey. At YUVA, leadership has been a central tenet from the time the organisation was finding its feet. Even today, with its strongly established credentials in the areas of poverty, social justice, urban planning and governance, and environmental sustainability, the focus on leadership remains strong.

Since YUVA's inception, when it was founded by Minar Pimple, a 23-year-old at the time, the need to develop youth leadership to drive change was an underlying area of focus. We promoted the empowerment of marginalised people, supporting their rise as agents of change so they could inspire those around them and drive more holistic change. Even within the organisation, our leadership was convinced that the organisation could thrive only with a diverse profile of employees and volunteers. This would include not only those from formal academic streams, but also those enriched by life experiences who could contribute to the work in significantly different ways and help the organisation strengthen its competencies. It was with this in mind, that YUVA developed detailed paraprofessional training programmes, animator and leadership courses, to specially cater to the needs of employees and develop their leadership skills.

It was in 1999 that Minar expressed that he was looking to move out of his role as Executive Director in a phased manner. The purpose was to allow for the organisation to move into its next level of growth and the Board backed his decision. By the time Minar stepped down from his role as leader of the organisation in 2004, the new leadership had already been trained and capacitated to confidently and effectively steer the organisation forward. There were challenges in the period of transition, including a difficult external socio-political and funding environment. However, the essential strength within the organisation, of organisational leadership at the field operations level, complemented by professional leadership ensured that the work was unhampered. The focus on always valuing creativity and boldness ensured that the organisation kept the spirit of embracing change and innovation alive.

Our ability to thrive independent of our founder was fairly unique, given that many other non-profits in the country continued to remain an extension of the founder's identity and vision. The succession framework that we had put in place helped insure us from the inherent risks such as loss of institutional knowledge and funder disengagement that other founder-centric organisations faced, when key members exited. At the same time, we keep revisiting our leadership sustainability plans, based on external and internal contexts. The growth of an enabling and inclusive culture, from its early years, had ensured that transition and the following phases flow fairly seamlessly under the able leadership of the succeeding directors.

Today, YUVA remains committed to the motto 'Everyone is a leader'. Nurturing potential leaders from within has ensured that there is a continuity of institutional knowledge and accountability. Additionally, this sense of accountability is reinforced and is reflected at every level of the organisation through a value building exercise that is carried out for every new individual who joins, for assimilation of culture, values, systems and policies.

YUVA remains deeply committed to developing people's leadership at every stage. By actively participating in and promoting cross-organisational networks, we has been able to connect more people and shift towards a more participatory and peer-led structure. The conversation about developing each person's leadership finds a space in team meetings, organisational reviews and appraisal conversations. Discussions take place regularly on concepts such as investing in one's well-being, compassion, handling of conflicts, and approaches to change, not just at the level of work, but factoring in external changes and how they impact the self. This is driven by the idea that leadership is more about talking and working with oneself on the inside than the outside, and in having faith in one another despite setbacks. By investing in everyone as a leader, YUVA believes that every individual can be more present and invested in their work and support each other's leadership journeys as well. We believe and hope that these strategic and practical investments in organisational sustainability will stand us in good stead as we move into newer phases of our work in the years to come.

CONCLUSION

For YUVA, this book has been an effort spanning over a decade, shaped by the hands of numerous contributors. While we had planned to release a version of this book to commemorate our 25th year, for reasons not entirely in our control, it could not see fruition. In hindsight, it was perhaps for the best, as the organisation has taken great strides since, and we have been able to enrich our narrative further.

While we know that this is by no means a complete and comprehensive retelling of YUVA's history, this is our attempt to feature key experiences of the organisation in working with marginalised communities in the country. If you feel that we have missed something critical, the mistake is ours. You are welcome to write to us on communications@yuvaindia.org with your contributions, which we then hope to incorporate in subsequent editions.

We now look forward to traversing the next 15 years and are keen to see what YUVA@50 has in store for us. Finally, to all who have been a part of YUVA's journey over the past 35 years, this book is a testament to your efforts. Thank you.

Isliye Raah Sangharsh Ki Hum Chune: YUVA's Journey Over the Years aims to trace our journey from the young group that sought to build youth leaders in Mumbai, to the organisation that we are today. We also address key shifts in our strategy and internal governance that have helped us create an organisation that is dynamic, resilient and impactful in the face of new challenges.

The title of the book comes from a song by the same name, composed by lyricist Vashisht Anup, which became popular during the Narmada Bachao Andolan. We find that the words mirror the kind of work we do, giving us energy and the passion to do more.

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