



OUR WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN URBAN INDIA

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA), India



WHY ENGAGE WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

There are 444 million children in India under the age of 18. They constitute 37% of the total population in the country (Census 2011).



By 2020, India is set to become the world's youngest country with 64% of its population in the age group of 15-35 (UN-Habitat 2012). Research suggests that urban spaces have not necessarily aided the quality of life, the problem is not urbanisation per se but the inequalities that it accentuates. Such trends necessitate protecting the rights of children and youth as fundamental to the process of urbanisation.

In this context, where the nation's population is increasingly 'young' it is important to recognise and enable children and youth as agents of socio-political change. As active citizens, they must be engaged in a participatory democratic process of development. YUVA believes in facilitating children and youth to develop workable solutions within their worlds.

ABOUT US

Youth for Unity and Voluntary Action (YUVA) is a voluntary development organisation committed to enabling vulnerable groups to access their rights and address human rights violations.

Founded in Mumbai in 1984, YUVA has since grown into a national organisation. YUVA encourages 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 urban issues. Currently YUVA operates in the states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa, Assam and New Delhi.

YUVA has facilitated children and youth participation at the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, Habitat II, Habitat III, the World Social Forum and consultative meetings of the MDGs and SDGs. It is also part of the United Nations Major Group on Children and Youth. It has been a collaborating organisation for the emergency helpline service CHILDLINE since 1996.

CHILDREN

ENABLING ACCESS TO HEALTHCARE AND EDUCATION

- » YUVA runs preschool centres for children below the age of 6 in areas where government facilities are absent or not in sufficient number. Here children are provided essential preschool education and nutritious food on a daily basis. With an aim to curb malnourishment - growth monitoring is an essential component of these centres.
- » Teachers from the preschool centres are in charge of ensuring that all children are enrolled in school and conduct house to house visits with advice and information on health and education.
- » With members of the community, parents and youth a Community Based Monitoring (CBM) group is formed that actively monitors YUVAs preschool centres as well as the government run preschool centres in the community.
- » School Monitoring Committees (SMC) are formed with representation from parents and children to address academic and developmental issues in the schools' operations.

ENABLING SAFE SPACES

- » YUVA runs Child Resource Centres (CRC) where children find a safe space to engage with peers within their neighbourhood. Some of the basic facilities and activities at the CRC include regular educational activities, a reading library, digital learning, educational games and sports for development. Guidance and counselling on issues related to education, substance abuse, sexual abuse etc are also provided in these centres. educational games and sports for development.

DEVELOPING CITIZENSHIP

- » Bal Adhikar Sangarsh Sangathan (BASS) or Collective for the Struggle for Child Rights is a collective for children to come together, build solidarity and together claim their rights. It is collectively owned and run by children in the communities where YUVA works.
- » At the community level child leaders are elected, they collaborate to negotiate and demand services from the local police, elected representatives, Community Based Organisations, youth groups and women's groups.
- » This develops leadership among children at an early age and instils in them an attitude to work on issues that affect them and those around them.
- » In communities, Child Protection Committees are formed, made functional and capacitated to improve access to services for children, transform unsafe spaces and coordinate with allied systems at the ward and city level through convergence with the District Child Protection Unit.
- » Children have actively participated in the revision of the Development Plan of Mumbai providing their demands and suggestions for the plans in their localities based on their spatial needs

YOUTH

Our interventions with youth have been focused on promoting core values of social justice, gender justice, environmental sustainability, integrity, secularism and democracy. Ensuring accountability in governance, building community participation and personal transformation are areas of work youth engage in. We also support youth in their employability through skills training.

FOSTERING LEADERSHIP AND PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNANCE

- » Anubhav Shiksha Kendra (ASK) provides youth with life skill training and exposure towards their development as agents of social change. Through partner organisations this youth programme operates in 27 districts in 2 states (Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh). The youth involved have taken part in and conceptualised several awareness campaigns of issues of social importance.
- » Maharashtra Yuva Parishad (MYP) a state level umbrella youth organisation has been facilitated to provide a space where youth are able to voice their concerns on civic issues, problems faced in slums, demand creation of youth friendly cities and negotiate representation in governance. The MYP has influenced the State Youth Policy with inputs at the drafting stage.
- » A number of youth groups in various communities we work in are active independently and take up various issues that affect their community - these include issues on water, sanitation, housing, gender justice and urban planning among others.

ENABLING ACCESS TO LIVELIHOOD

- » Certified skill up gradation courses and livelihood training programmes are provided in partnership with government and private agencies.
- » Job fairs are conducted for youth in search of employment. We also link youth to scholarship programmes and higher education opportunities for those who wish to continue their education.

SOCIO-POLITICAL EDUCATION

- » YUVA, in partnership with the Centre for Lifelong Learning of Tata Institute of Social Sciences (Mumbai) conducts a 10-month diploma course on 'Youth Development and Social Change'. This course is aimed for working professionals, NGO workers, youth and people looking at career shifts. Modules include self-development, exposure to multiple social perspectives, field engagement and facilitation of youth as agents of change.
- » A course on 'Inclusive Cities' is conducted for youth from cities who have been engaging on civic issues. This course provides perspective, skill and builds on local expertise towards building the capacities of youth to work on issues within their communities.
- » Media training courses for youth are organised to develop their skills in using new media to communicate their stories innovatively. The power of creating knowledge through media inspires them to be change agents.





A CASE OF YUVA'S CURRENT WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Located in the western suburbs of Mumbai, Ambujwadi is a densely populated informal settlement with an estimate population of around 16,000. Located along a creek it has developed on marshy land. Like most of the city itself, through the efforts of people seeking a space in the city, this land has been transformed into a thriving settlement. As per the Development Plan it is located in a 'No Development Zone', it has not been 'notified' as a slum by the government. Our work in the community is holistic and we actively work with all stakeholders to ensure overall development of the community. Children and youth in Ambujwadi are doubly marginalised - they are cut-off from the mainstream economically and socially. Our work with children and youth in Ambujwadi includes:

Preschool Centres

With an aim to curb malnourishment and encourage preschool education, YUVA runs early childhood care centres. Through these centre we provide pre natal counselling for mothers, nutrition and preschool education for children below 6, growth monitoring and awareness programmes on health and hygiene.

Child Resource Centres

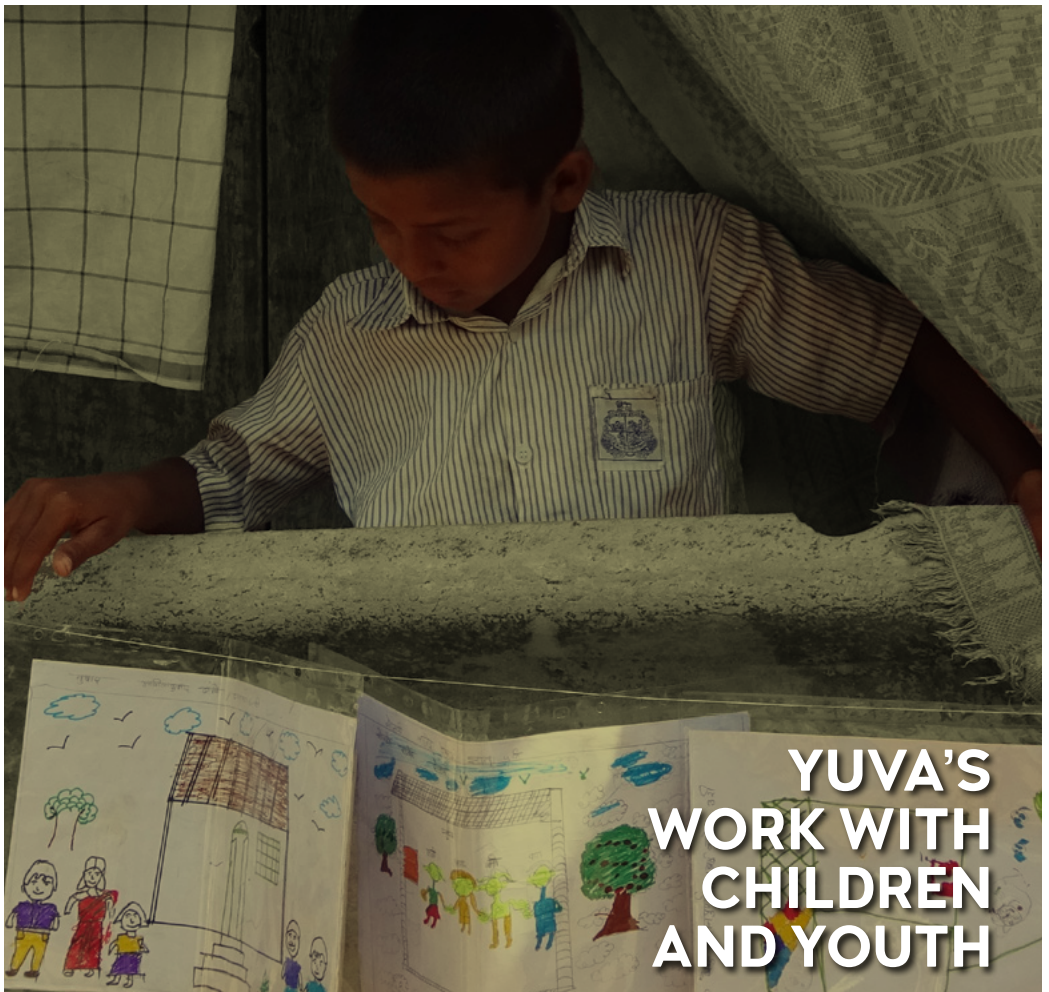
In order to enable a safe and secure space for children, CRCs are open through the day for children in the formal education system as well as school drop outs. Multiple basic facilities are available in these centres. Children collectivise into the BASS - the children's collective through which they form a support group among themselves. Through the CBM and SMCs mutual accountability is created between all stakeholders in the community.

Malvani Yuva Parishad

After a long process of engagement with the youth, youth have initiated a collective of youth from the different settlements called Malvani Yuva Parishad. Our work with these youth focuses on social political awareness, rights education and community engagement. They meet regularly and take up pressing issues within the community that need to be addressed.

Livelihood Centre

Our work with youth groups led us to work on economically empowering youth through provision of vocational training programmes. We also link youth with the job market or enable them to further their education. Through our Livelihood Centre we empower youth to enter the job market and seek financial security for themselves and their families.



YUVA'S WORK WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH

**Since its inception,
YUVA has empowered
children and
youth with the
knowledge and skills
to participate in
democratic dialogue.**

YUVA's Children and Youth Programme is a community-based and community-led programme that engages children and youth living in informal settlements, resettlement colonies and those living in street situations.

YUVA employs a 360-degree, rights-based approach primarily through building capacities of young people to participate in democratic dialogue and address the issues that most affect them. Our work with children and youth is rooted in their habitat. It includes enabling access to healthcare and education, enabling safe spaces within communities, participation in governance, access to livelihood and socio-political education.



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Also see our brochure on
'Our Work Towards Creating Inclusive and Just Cities'

YUVA is an accredited NGO with UN ECOSOC