

YOUNGINFLUENCERS

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Youth for Development: A Pilot Programme

A Few Words from us...

This issue of Younginfluencers captures the journeys of a bunch of energetic, young individuals, who undertook Youth for Development (YfD), a 6 month long internship programme that Pravah piloted along with VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas), a partner organisation, in India. Actually it was a journey all of us undertook together last year...

In the year 2007, Pravah launched Youth for Development as a pilot programme in India in collaboration with VSO-India. Choosing the broad theme of Participation and Governance, we focused on the areas of education and communalism, and placed five volunteers in four partner organisations working on the theme areas across the country from 15 August 2007 to 15 February 2008. The young volunteers spent six months living and working in the different organisations, often amongst the villagers and contributed to the issues while gaining learnings for life.

Over the six months, the interest among the volunteers in development work and their earnest desire to contribute grew. Further, their understanding of cultures, local issues grew, and they learnt the local language quickly. Above all, in living alone in a new place and working with the communities, they faced a huge challenge, and a new respect for community life developed among them. Some are re-looking at their own lifestyles and relationships from a new perspective today. The fact that all the volunteers want to engage with the development sector post the YfD programme, is a huge celebration for all of us.

The impact of people-to-people contact however, can not to be measured for the immediate period. The seemingly crazy but interesting and educated young people in their early twenties, from different cultures and corners of the country, speaking different languages, came down to these lesser known areas and tried to adapt to the local circumstances while they developed bonds of friendship with the staff and the locals in their host organisations.

In this issue, we share with you their experiences, subtle changes in their attitude towards life and thinking, their meaningful contribution to the communities and issues during this placement. For us this is cause for celebration because the experiences, the changes in perspectives, understanding and action are in effect, a change in society.



YfD review workshop in progress

About YfD

YfD (Youth for Development) is a six month long internship programme piloted by Pravah in India in partnership with Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO). The programme has been inspired from the YfD model of VSO in UK, which is an intensive youth volunteering programme that VSO has been running for the last thirteen years.

YfD offers an opportunity to young people in India to learn skills and gain valuable experience in the development sector. As YfD volunteers interning with NGOs in India, young people can contribute to social issues in various communities. The YfD programme offers the volunteers extensive training, mentoring and a monthly stipend through the period of internship. The programme is open to Indian citizens between the age of 18-27 years, who have a working knowledge of English and Hindi.

The YfD Process

- ☞ Volunteers are recruited, trained to work in development, and placed in organisations. Volunteers are supported to maximise their learning and contribution by processes such as a mid-period review, on site mentoring, post placement evaluation, opportunities for sharing, etc.
- ☞ Through the placement period, volunteers get to meaningfully contribute to the work done by the organisations.
- ☞ The volunteers learn through experience and intensive engagement during their work placements and interaction with the organisation/community that they are placed in.

Volunteer Speak

"Post my YfD experience I have learnt to be more comfortable with myself. My opinions (today) are based on my experiences with life, people and everything around me. I now feel responsible for each decision I take because I have decided to be less frivolous with my life. What makes the difference more satisfying to me is the fact that now I am not apprehensive of voicing my thoughts and my disagreements with people around me.

More than anything else, my YfD experience has brought me closer to my family and some of my friends. It has convinced me about the fact that decisions taken from the heart are much more satisfying than the decisions taken from the head.

My placement with Pravah Initiative Jaipur has helped me understand the various aspects of an organisation in the urban sector. There is a lot that I learned on relationship building, partnerships, got to know about some of the funding agencies and their functioning. My exposure helped me connect the realities of the world with the theories taught in the classrooms.

Though I cannot say that YfD has helped me find answers to my questions yet what it has taught me is to keep this quest alive."

- **Rajani Nair**, 22 yrs, is from Kerala. She was placed in Pravah Jaipur. As a YfD volunteer, Rajani co-facilitated a FUN camp and SMILE exposures both programmes for young people to get out of their comfort zones and learn about social issues. She also coordinated with colleges in Jaipur for citizenship education workshops and potential partnerships.



"My placement with Digantar-Jaipur has helped me develop knowledge about the traditions, customs and the history of the society we live in. My YfD experience has taught me to trust people and to love and believe the work that I do. I have also realised that I need to change certain things about myself. There are some skills that I have developed like management skills, especially time management."

- **Susanta Nag**, 24 yrs, is from Orissa. He was placed in Digantar. Susanta helped to conduct Geography and Environmental Studies classes using innovative methodologies for 5th and 6th standard students. He was also involved in goal-setting and evaluation processes for the students.

"I have gained experience in developing my own skills in development in Baliposi village... skills that I can use in my further career.

Days in Baliposi are filled with dramatic adventures, once in a life time experiences and wonderful friendships. A teary goodbye is a guarantee I am leaving Baliposi with humility and humbleness that I didn't have previously and a new-found compassion towards people of all backgrounds.

My first hand observations, project experience and the invaluable inputs from Sundar Narayanji (my mentor) enabled me to have a definite plan to continue to support the children groups and create change. It also enabled me to feel empowered. I feel, I can and should contribute even after I have returned to my normal life back in Maharashtra."

- **Ashok Pawar**, 26 yrs, is from Maharashtra, He was placed in CYSD. Ashok was involved in a detailed orientation of CYSD projects. He also worked in the Child Rights programme conducting meetings and taking up issues of relevance.

"My pre-YfD worldview is something I largely adapted from my surroundings, especially the views of my parents and peers. Now I find myself at philosophic loggerheads with the very people I care most for. My parents, for instance, think I have gone astray. My friends are sometimes uncomfortable with my new ideas, actions and responses. Today, I am having to rebuild my relationships, and this process sometimes tests my patience.

The other thing that has changed is the kind of life I would like to live. I am pulled between the familiar security of mainstream options, such as a corporate job and marriage, and the idea of living a life helping those underprivileged by circumstances and society. YfD has made my life a little more uncertain... which, I suppose, is the burden of choosing to remove blinkers.

A friend asked me the other day how I felt after my YfD stint. I told him, "I feel reborn." For this wonderful experience, I am grateful to the people of Pravah, SIDH and Ghati."

- **Pooja Mehta**, 22 yrs, is from Shimla. She was placed in SIDH and worked in the Sahjan programme, conducting lifeskills workshops for adolescents from the local communities. Pooja was also involved in conducting English and dance classes in the schools.

"Staying in the field didn't prove to be as easy as it seemed. Sometimes I feel that I was fortunate that I managed to spend 32 or 33 of my internship days in the field. And I think this has really made a difference in the way I look at my life.

Initially, being very particular about the water I drank, after a month I started getting used to drinking water without purification. I thought even my immune system got used to the place in the next few days as we started going to places for survey. I got to learn about child related issues and even got to interact with many of them as I stayed in Mayurbhanj.

My placement was a blessing in disguise and also an experience of my lifetime. I was lucky that I had the opportunity to mingle with the CYSD/PLAN staffs who are working selflessly for the well-being of the underdeveloped society."

- **B. Debchandra Sharma**, 26 yrs, is from Manipur. He was placed with CYSD. Deb worked in a Health programme of CYSD, which focused on HIV-AIDS awareness. He organised a health camp and also did a survey on health issues among tribal people in the area..

YfD Partners

YfD Partners Who Hosted Volunteers in 2007-08



CYSD (Centre for Youth and Social Development) is an NGO established in 1981 and works for the development of deprived and marginalised people in the remotest corners of Orissa.

D I G A N T A R
S h i k s h a E v a m K h e l k u d S a m i t i

Located just outside of Jaipur, Rajasthan, **Digantar Shiksha Evam Khelkud Samiti** has been working on alternative education for rural children since it was founded in 1978.

Pravah-Jaipur is a new initiative launched by Pravah, a registered non-profit organisation based in New Delhi, India. This organisation aims to create a **Youth Resource Centre** in Jaipur.



SIDH (Society for Integrated Development of Himalayas) based in Kempty, Uttarakhand, subscribes to the classical view and believe that education should not only help an individual acquire knowledge about self, society and environment, but also help him or her to lead a happy life.

About The YfD Programme Partners

VSO (Voluntary Service Overseas) VSO is an international development organization that promotes volunteering to fight global poverty and disadvantage. Volunteering is at the heart of VSO's contribution to development. VSO India works in the areas of disability, HIV and AIDS and participation and governance. VSO promotes active citizenship amongst all sections of society and promote inclusion of disabled people and people living with HIV&AIDS in structures and processes, which affect their lives



Pravah is a registered non-profit organisation based in New Delhi. We work with adolescents, youth and organisations and institutions working with young people to impact issues of social justice through youth citizenship action.

Life-changing

transformatory

great eye opener

discovering and learning more about myself and the world I live in

experience of a lifetime

We will be recruiting again soon. For further information, please visit www.younginfluencers.com or contact Kanika / Lokasish at 011-26440619, 011-26213918, 011-26291354 or mail us at smile@younginfluencers.com.

YfD will invite volunteers again in December, 2008. Log on to www.younginfluencers.com for information.