

# Nurturing Youth Active Citizenship in India

REPORT ON A STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

*New Delhi, India 3 – 4 March 2009*



*Conceptualized, designed and facilitated by  
Innovations in Civic Participation and Pravah*





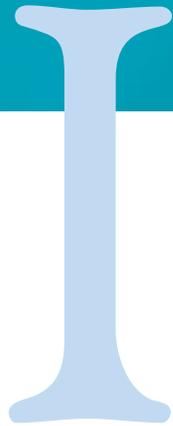
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# Executive Summary



India is home to one of the world's largest and fastest-growing youth populations, with 40% of its people between the ages of 13 and 35.<sup>1</sup> Stable democratic governance, economic growth, improved access to school and university education, and better health are all factors that today enable young people to play a much larger role in Indian social, economic and political life.

But are they doing so? Are young people emerging as a vibrant, innovative and constructive force that can find solutions to persistent social problems and create a more just, equitable and peaceful world?

In March 2009 a consultation designed and facilitated by Innovations in Civic Participation and Pravah in New Delhi, entitled Nurturing Active Citizenship among Youth in India, turned the spotlight on active citizenship as a catalyst for integrating young people into the social, economic and political mainstream. It identified the benefits that would accrue to India as a society, and concluded that mainstreaming young people as active citizens involves a conscious effort across civil society, private and public spaces.

The two-day dialogue between a diverse range of participants from public, private and civil society groups showcased the results that young people can produce when given support and the opportunity to prove their worth. These include improving health services at the village level, finding solutions to climate change and building social cohesion within communities that have faced religious conflict.

The consultation took a critical first step toward placing active citizenship at the center of efforts to position young people as key players for the future. The April/May 2009 election highlights the potential of the 200 million strong youth vote (18 to 35-year-olds) with many young people voting for the first time since 1989 when legislation lowered the voting age to 18.

Against this backdrop, the consultation produced a strong commitment to fostering a more supportive environment for youth active citizenship and made a range of recommendations for its integration in the political domain and the many other spheres in which young people can actively work for social justice, human rights, democracy and transformation.

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted from the Census of India 2001 in: *UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (2007). Understanding Youth Issues in Selected Countries in the Asian and Pacific Region.*

## 1 What is youth active citizenship?

According to the glossary in the Consultation Reader produced for this process (p2), citizenship has three key characteristics:

- Having a role and responsibility in making the rules of the community.
- Having a role and responsibility in the common life and values of a community.
- The ability and act of engaging with others in common tasks of importance to the community.

Pravah defines active citizenship as follows:

**Citizenship** is that, which makes us participative, proactive and responsible towards society. The core values of citizenship include democracy, social justice, equality, peace, respect. Active citizenship refers to the ability of (young) people to be engaged in social action in every walk of life. Where people take ownership for common spaces and act to make change by addressing important social justice issues. This citizenship is boundaryless ...not defined by state, caste, religion, language ...

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

So, does participating in a candlelight vigil constitute active citizenship?

The participants at the consultation held widely different views on this question. Some felt that participation in symbolic activities such as candlelight vigils could provide people with the opportunity to gain greater understanding about an issue, to meet people who are active citizens and may be very risky in non-democratic political contexts.

At the other end of the spectrum were those who felt that active citizenship needs to produce visible results and that a candlelight vigil does not change anything.

Between these two positions was a view that symbolic actions such as this one can draw the attention of media and policy-makers, and could be influential in respect of introducing young people to issues of social justice and human rights.

Common ground was found in the consensus that active citizenship takes a diversity of forms, all of which should be encouraged and supported in order to engage young people more fully in India's social, political and economic life.

## 2 Youth active citizenship – an emerging global focus

While this consultation was the first of its kind in India, it forms part of a burgeoning interest around the globe in the role of young people as active citizens and leaders of social change. The Latin America and Caribbean regions have a long tradition of youth development and new initiatives for active citizenship are emerging all the time. In African countries growing youth populations and the trend towards democracy are focusing government minds on the possibility of a 'demographic dividend' that depends on integrating young people more closely into the social and economic mainstream. South East Asian countries such as Cambodia have demonstrated new initiatives that support youth in positive roles in their communities. And in the USA, President Barack Obama has cited youth civic engagement as one of his priorities in his address to a joint session of Congress in February 2009.

An important landmark in this groundswell of interest was the World Bank's 2007 World Development Report, which focused on youth and youth service. In its wake, in 2008, the International Association for National Youth Service (IANYS) involved participants from 42 countries in a conference in Paris to talk about youth active citizenship and the need to strengthen a growing global network of practitioners, policy-makers and researchers around this and youth service.

Preliminary findings from a study currently in process among countries in the South Asia region (see box) show that while youth civic engagement policies and programs are at different stages of development, each country has a variety of available assets that can be strengthened for youth active citizenship through further investment by governments and local and international donors. In India, promising youth development and active citizenship models are in place, but there are few instances of collaborative efforts between the different stakeholders.

### **Building a knowledge-base on youth active citizenship in South Asia**

Active citizenship among young people in South Asia is coming under the spotlight as countries in that region recognize how their growing youth populations can shape the future.

In order to support investments in youth service and youth civic engagement in South Asia, Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP), a US-based NGO is engaging with Pravah, an India-based NGO and a variety of regional partners in a multi-year program in South Asia to build capacity for youth service and civic engagement in the region.

An early phase of this project included a program and policy scan (i.e. questionnaire and desk-based research) designed to identify existing youth service policies and civic engagement/volunteer programs currently underway in India, Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. In conjunction with local partners in Pakistan, Nepal and Bangladesh, ICP conducted survey-based and desk research as well as focus groups to learn as much as possible about individuals, organizations and programs in those countries that engage diverse groups of young people ages 10 to 24 (including university students) in civic engagement or community service activities (from volunteering to advocacy) that address issues of public concern. ICP also conducted extensive desk research and focus groups on programs and policies operating in India.

The findings of this research were summarized in a written report authored and published by ICP with input from its partner organizations. The working document, *Youth Development through Civic Engagement: Mapping Assets in South Asia*, was initially published in late 2008. While it presents a great deal of information regarding existing programs and policy in Bangladesh, India, Nepal and Pakistan, ICP continues to seek information about more programs throughout these countries, particularly India, and will revise the document accordingly. Through additional survey research and focus group discussions, ICP is confident that a more reflective picture of the field in India can be provided in the report. Through this project ICP seeks to bring greater attention and investment in youth service and civic engagement in South Asia by spotlighting promising programs and rewarding innovators in the field. ICP also hopes to build the capacity of existing organizations by helping them learn from and about each other, providing technical expertise and fostering regional collaboration and information sharing.

Consultation participants were asked to complete an online survey to begin collecting additional youth civic engagement program and policy information in India. We encourage all practitioners, policymakers and researchers working in the youth development and active citizenship field in South Asia to complete the online survey so as to swell the knowledge base about how young people are playing their role as active citizens, and how active citizenship can become a key facet of youth development in the region.

### 3 The India Consultation

Against the backdrop of these and other opportunities, the two-day consultation *Nurturing Active Citizenship among Youth in India* was conceived and organized by Pravah and Innovations in Civic Participation with the support of the American Center in New Delhi and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust.

The consultation set out to explore the needs of the field and make recommendations for creating a more supportive environment for youth development and active citizenship. Its objectives were to:

- explain what ‘active citizenship’ means and why we need to invest in young people as active citizens;
- discuss innovative approaches to youth development and active citizenship;
- identify opportunities and challenges faced by young people and organizations working with young people;
- identify the needs of the field and possible responses on the part of the different stakeholders

The consultation produced an overwhelming response and brought together over 100 key stakeholders from different sectors across the country – youth-led organizations, foundations and companies, government youth programs, educational institutions and NGOs working with young people. The participants were engaged through panel presentations and small group discussions to create a listening space for the diverse group of stakeholders. This was the first time such a large and diverse group of people had met to discuss youth active citizenship in India and the response indicates that the time has come for youth active citizenship to be prioritized on the youth development agenda.

Special efforts were made to involve participants from Bangladesh, Nepal and Pakistan. Representatives from the Nepalese organizations attended the consultation, but representatives from Pakistan were unable to obtain visas and the representatives from Bangladesh were prevented from traveling owing to the current political situation in that country. This was regrettable in the face of the significant role that young people can play in peace building and dialogue across the region.

The consultation aspired to increase the reach and impact of young people and create an ecosystem for organizations to work together in pursuing a youth active citizenship agenda. A Consultation Reader was produced to share some of the literature on issues associated with youth active citizenship currently in process, including preliminary results from the policy scan on youth active citizenship in South Asia.

“The consultation created an interactive space for the exchange of ideas between groups that would not otherwise come together around youth active citizenship.”  
–Kamini Prakash, Pravah

### 4 How do young people become active citizens?

How do young people become active citizens, leading social change, improving their communities and advocating for social justice?

Twenty young people were involved in the consultation to share their perspectives on youth active citizenship and help formulate the recommendations to support young people becoming actively engaged as full citizens in Indian life. Their testimonies speak volumes about the multiple factors that propel young people into active citizenship.

In **Rama Shyam’s** case it was the demolition of the Babri Masjid in 1992, when she was 13 years old, that triggered her social involvement. Her unanswered questions and the comments she received from adults that the mosque had been demolished because “minorities must be taught a lesson” propelled her into the field of social work, following which she became involved with youth in a community that had been involved in the riots. Predominantly Muslim, these young people opened their arms to her and triggered in her a personal transformation that is still in process.

“Some had been arrested just because they belonged to a certain community – why did they not become embittered? Why did they choose to channel their experiences into such constructive action? This inspired me to ask for my rights and to understand my responsibility.”

–Rama Shyam

**Nirmala Patel** was always involved in social work, but was not sure why. For her Gandhi proved to be the inspiration when she realized that he could have been a well-off lawyer, but chose instead to dedicate himself to a greater cause. Nirmala started on the road to active citizenship by conducting a house-to-house survey that demonstrated the prevalence of malaria in her village, and worked with others to advocate for the inclusion of the village in the malaria prevention program. She soon felt the need for a larger platform and joined the Yuva Mandal in her community. Then Patang gave her the opportunity to engage in a wider range of processes, all of which developed her confidence as an active and independent-minded young woman.

As a student, **Kartikeya Singh’s** research took him to rural areas where he realized that more than half of India’s people were living without electricity. This stimulated his research on alternative fuels (like biogas). However, the real trigger for his awareness of the need for active citizenship came when he attended the United Nations Conference on Climate Change in Bali in 2007, and realized that the Indian delegation was the only one that did not include youth representation.

In 2008 Singh established the India Youth Climate Network (IYCN), which focuses on India’s development challenges and is formulating proposed solutions for climate change. And at the conference on climate change in Poland that year, IYCN made sure that it was

part of India’s delegation.

These young people demonstrate how their energy, creativity and passion can be a powerful force for positive change in the face of many obstacles.

Rama Shyam argues that one of the greatest challenges that young people face is to be heard. “I could not be heard for a long time, because my parents did not believe in what I was doing. But with the support of many others, I have today become a catalyst, a sounding board for youth whom I can inspire to take citizenship action and change the language of leadership and power.”

In Kartikeya Singh’s case the biggest obstacle was the lack of insight older people had in their own mortality. “Climate change will not affect many of the people who are running the country right now. [But] at the UN conference in Bali, I had no voice. That was a shock.”



*Nirmala Patel tells consultation participants how she is an active citizen in her community.*

## 5 The view from government

One of the transitions young people make into adulthood occurs when they vote and the importance of this form of active citizenship was emphasized by Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar, Secretary of the Ministry of Youth Affairs in the Government of India, who delivered a keynote address at the consultation.

She noted that out of an electorate of 700 million, there are at least 200 million voters who are aged 18-35, but stressed that relatively little is known about the challenges and aspirations of this constituency. While important strides had been made in the recognition of gender as a key development factor, Mrs. Khullar argued that much more emphasis needs to be given to the place of young people in society.

“Most of the international policy leadership comes from countries that have aging populations and have already crossed the demographic transition,” she pointed out. “Only India and China will in future have young populations. This means that India needs to find its policy emphasis for the youth who make up one quarter of the Indian population, providing them with services and engaging them in civic activity.” Her view is that young people need to be active participants and agenda setters for the political, social and economic policy processes for the next 20 years. Since India’s growth rate is likely to continue at 5% or more, the challenge is to bring youth on to every stage and into every sector.

According to Mrs. Khullar, the task of the Ministry of Youth Affairs is to make sure that every policy and program applies a youth lens and to make young people under 35 part of this process. This means that there must be wider consultation with young people and wider inclusion of the young people themselves.



Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar, Secretary of the Ministry of Youth Affairs in the Government of India, provides the government’s view of youth active citizenship.

“The Ministry of Youth Affairs recognizes that India’s youth can be divided broadly into two categories: First, those who are not included in the mainstream and are looking for a second chance to set themselves up in life, but would not get the attention of regular policy forums in government. Second, there are those who are in the mainstream. They are studying, working, looking for training, involved in some major economic activity and probably form part of a strong social group. The Ministry of Youth Affairs needs to ensure that the needs of the first group are not neglected.”

Mrs. Khullar noted that youth in the mainstream are looked after by the department of education or adult education, by the department of labor with its huge array of programs, or by the department of social justice and empowerment whose task it is to provide social services to these young clients. She was particularly concerned, however, that among the young women who make up approximately 50% of India’s 400 million youth, more than 80% are married by the time they are 24 years old. The result is that they are totally embedded in their communities and their social settings, unable to engage more widely as active citizens.

The challenge for government is to ensure that sufficient investments are made in this large youth segment: *shiksha, swasthaya aur rozgar* (education, health and employment) are the three pillars around which every development activity revolves. In government’s view, much has already been set aside for these sectors within the national development effort, the 11th Plan, and the policy space is no longer restricted to government. Through voting, civic activism among the people themselves has ensured that the agenda setting is done more widely than by government departments.

“So the first change,” said Mrs. Khullar, “is to start looking at young people. The problem is programs that do not reach target groups and do not have the desired impact and outcomes. Today youth have to set the agenda and civil society must push that agenda so that it is acted upon. Together we need to work for the active engagement of the young in their own societies and communities.”

The national umbrella program for youth (Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan – NYKS) reaches every district and has its outreach through programs and people who are enthusiastically taking up initiatives that lead to empowerment and leadership, particularly in rural areas. The other major program is the National Service Scheme (NSS), which has a volunteer corps of three million college students between the ages of 18 and 22. Working predominantly in

“Funds are not a problem for our government in any area. The problem is programs that do not reach target groups and do not have the desired impact and outcomes.”  
–Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar, Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs, Government of India

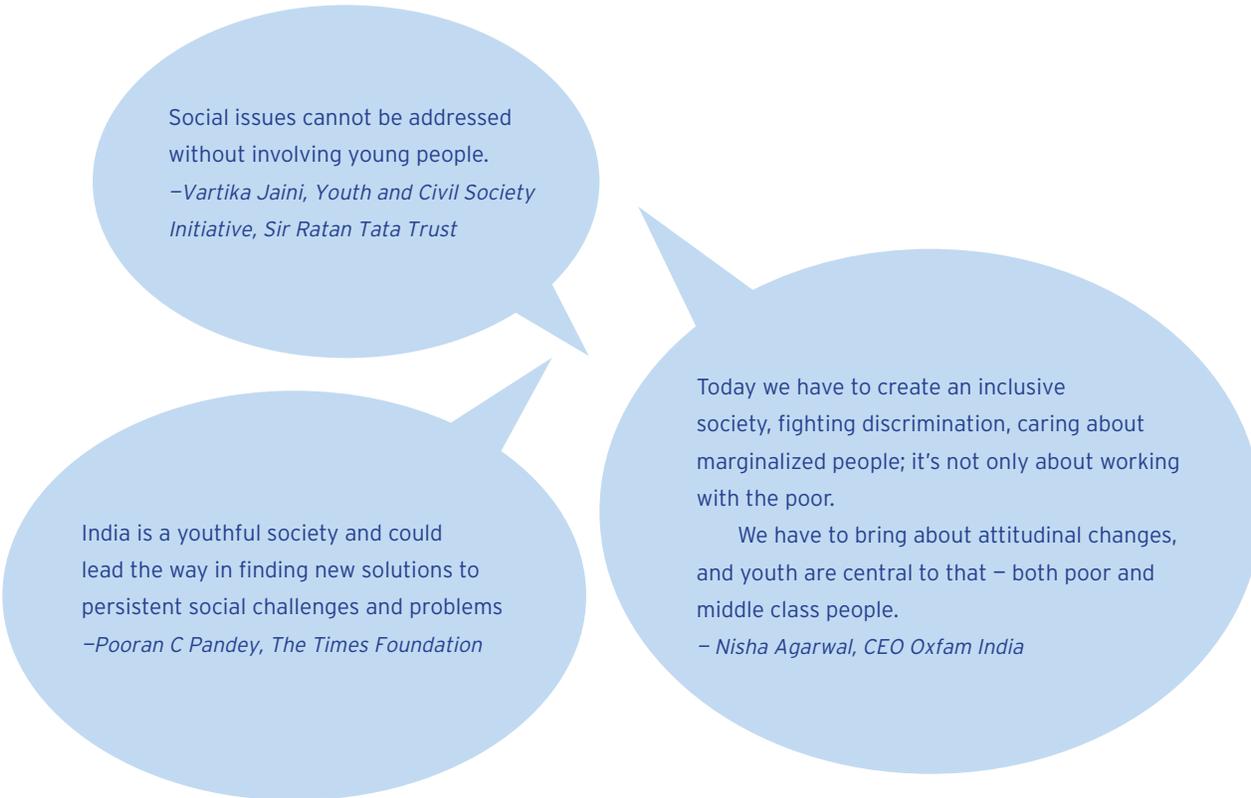
urban or semi-urban communities, this is a strong force that enrolls anyone and everyone who is interested in active service.

According to Mrs. Khullar, community service, volunteerism and active citizenship (civic engagement) are the three pillars essential to bringing change in the world. “Each person who is registered to vote must come out and cast his/her vote. As for volunteerism, while we are free with our checkbooks, can we extend this to volunteering time and make a physical commitment to serving others? “

Mrs. Khullar indicated that the Ministry of Youth Affairs wishes to be guided by the deliberations from this consultation and to act on its recommendations. She invited ICP, Pravah and other participants at the consultation to approach her with a programmatic agenda that would infuse future youth programs with best practices at the national and international level.

## 6 Why invest in young people as active citizens?

Several stakeholders at the consultation were vocal about the reasons why young people should be supported to become active citizens.



Social issues cannot be addressed without involving young people.  
–Vartika Jaini, Youth and Civil Society Initiative, Sir Ratan Tata Trust

India is a youthful society and could lead the way in finding new solutions to persistent social challenges and problems  
–Pooran C Pandey, The Times Foundation

Today we have to create an inclusive society, fighting discrimination, caring about marginalized people; it's not only about working with the poor.

We have to bring about attitudinal changes, and youth are central to that – both poor and middle class people.  
– Nisha Agarwal, CEO Oxfam India

A panel discussion of the following stakeholders discussed investment in youth active citizenship in India: Pooran Chandra Pandey, Chief Functionary of the Times Foundation; Nisha Agarwal, CEO of Oxfam India; Vartika Jaini, Assistant Programmes Manager of the Youth and Civil Society Initiative at the Sir Ratan Tata Trust; Larry Schwartz, Minister-Counselor for Public Affairs, US Embassy; and Arjun Shekhar, Co-founder and President of Pravah.

They identified four reasons why it is important to invest in youth active citizenship:

- 1 Young people are key to changing people's attitudes on a range of issues
- 2 We need to recognize the power of youth in the 21st century
- 3 Break youth stereotypes and recognize youth as assets
- 4 Mainstream young people in governance.

- **Youth can change people's attitudes**

To bring about deep-rooted changes in society, argued Nisha Agarwal, it is important to combine caring governments with bottom-up pressure for change. For the past 60 years the focus in India has been on organizing poor people to demand their rights under a democracy. Now the focus needs to broaden in order to achieve attitudinal change on gender and other issues about which both poor and middle class people hold entrenched views. Youth are central to changing people's attitudes.

This is where media can play a critical role, said Pooran C Pandey. India's diversity produces many voices that inform public perception. Changing attitudes depends on having a diversity of platforms and policy dialogue forums in place. The *Times Foundation* sees young people as being critical to changing attitudes at grassroots level, and plans to build their capacity to bring issues into the public domain through forums, networking, writing and disseminating new ideas.

"Reach and credibility help us influence people's mindsets and is different from engagement at meeting halls, etc," he said. "We bring the ideas into people's homes and try to deepen the roots of democracy and free expression. It is an opinion-building process."

Young people at the consultation agreed that it is critical to change the mindsets of parents about what constitutes success. It was felt strongly that active citizenship should be seen as one of the criteria for success in life, and that parents, the media and the public at large should be persuaded that young people can play an active and constructive role in society. Linking active citizenship to the achievement of sustainable livelihoods may be one way of gaining such recognition for young people

"It is critical to change the mindsets of parents about what constitutes success."

– Consultation view

- **Recognize the power of youth**

It was in large part the power of young people that delivered Barack Obama's victory as US President, ushering in the possibility of a new dispensation in American politics. The same potential exists in India, according to Larry Schwartz and Pooran C Pandey. With 200 million young voters in the 2009 election, youth power can become a real force for change in India. What is required is to view India's 400 million youth (people between the ages of 13 and 35) as a strategic asset?

To harness this power, Pooran C Pandey argues that it is necessary to motivate young people and help them understand why they are so important. "We need to help them become more aware of the issues and tell them: 'You have the ability and power, the bargaining capacity to play your part. We are there to help you. Together we will set the development agenda — political, social and economic.'"

And this, according to Larry Schwartz, needs to be sustained if the power of youth is to endure. He framed the challenge as follows: "How do you maintain the drive and dynamism demanded by young people? How do you prevent its defeat by frustration that builds up after the ages of 30, 35, 40?"

- **Break youth stereotypes**

The risk is that society sees youth as a homogeneous group, which it is not. Young people have different interests in terms of class and caste, and the reality is that there is growing inequality all over the world.

“In the last two years, young people are redefining the way they want to engage. It’s not activism as we knew it.”

– Arjun Shekhar,

Co-founder, Pravah

Nevertheless young people have to fight for recognition. Take, for example, the case of Shahana Sheikh, a final year BA Economics student at Lady Sriram College, New Delhi, who exposed the injustice suffered by ordinary women in New Delhi for whom there are no toilet facilities in the city. Add to this the case of a student who used the Right to Information Act to file for his right to a hostel room at Delhi University and won this in court. These are but two examples of how the energy of youth can contribute to the betterment of society – young active citizens campaigning not only for youth interests, but for the rights of all.

This is why, according to Vartika Jaini from the Sir Ratan Tata Trust, organizations working in different sectors should be helped to see young people as assets for their programs. “We have very few organizations working with young people. We need to help organizations working on climate change, health, human rights, to work with young people. We know that youth development methods work, but need to persuade more organizations to involve the underprivileged and the voiceless.”

Nisha Agarwal adds that there is much more to do to hook more volunteers into development, build their leadership potential and get organizations to see young people as an asset to their own goals. “We need to look at everything from a youth perspective.” In Arjun Shekhar’s view, it’s not only a question of scale, but also giving young people a context and changing the discourse about their involvement in organizations and processes of social change. “After independence youth were no longer involved; people became more and more cynical, and now youth are saying enough is enough.”

#### • Mainstream young people in governance

By virtue of its scope and nature, India’s democracy is one of the most impressive in the world, according to Larry Schwartz. However, the problem for young people is that they are in the youth wing. “You don’t want to be in the youth wing – you want to be in the main wing and be represented in the mainstream of all politics in the country.” How can young people be mainstreamed in public life?

The Government of India, through the Planning Commission, made a key decision to invest in youth and in women, and has planned outlays accordingly. At present various processes are in place to quantify the contribution that young people, women and volunteers make in Indian society. A Youth Policy (2003) is in place, and is currently up for review. These initiatives indicate a willingness on government’s part to focus on youth, but there is also a view that youth interests are not being sufficiently mainstreamed because of a lack of pressure from the youth sector. For example, a number of the provisions of the 2003 Youth Policy have not yet been implemented (such as the creation of a youth development fund governed jointly by civil society and government).

In discussing strategies for mainstreaming youth in government, it was pointed out that the Youth Policy helps to bring young people into focus (as opposed to aggregating young people with children) and can make young people aware that they have a voice. “We have to tell young people that they have a voice,” said one participant, “especially in rural areas. We have to tell them they are an important part of our society.”

It was also mentioned that building active citizenship depends on young people having the opportunities to lead. For example, in one case a panchayat is now being led by two very young people, showing that it is possible, even in rural areas, for youth to be recognized as leaders. This raises a challenge for organizations that work with young people, as well as development organizations across a variety of sectors, to give meaning to the concept of ‘youth-led’ organizations and to provide young people with opportunities to gain leadership experience.



Stakeholders from differing sectors discuss why it is important to invest in young people as active citizens.

## 7 Innovative practices for strengthening youth active citizenship in India

The consultation was attended by a variety of youth development specialists and practitioners, all of whom shared a range of lessons about youth program innovation. The following points capture the key insights shared about strategies for strengthening youth active citizenship.

- **Active citizenship involves bridging self and society, transforming the relationship between self and community**

Pravah's vision is to build youth leadership for social change. This involves a transformation from 'me' to 'we', through a process of building self awareness and inspiring young people to understand and engage with social issues so that they can initiate and lead citizenship action and bring about social change. Formed in 1993 following the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Pravah noted that the education system does not prepare young people for active citizenship. The organization started working with adolescents and soon adopted a number of approaches that include citizenship education, opportunities for exposure to social issues through volunteering, rural camps, action projects and campaigns, mentoring and internships. Pravah also supports youth-led social initiatives and organizations working on youth development. In Pravah's view, active citizenship is not about getting all young people to join the development sector, but rather for young people to take ownership of common spaces, bridging self and society, and transforming the notion of self and community. Through reflection, analysis and discovery, "it's a journey from self to society," says CEO Meenu Venkateswaran, "from me to we and back." The ultimate goal? Personal development for action around social change based on the values of peace, equality and social justice.

"Before, I knew when something was wrong, but didn't know what to do. Now I know how to address it, how to create dialogue about it."  
– Pravah program participant

- **Give young people practical experience as change makers**

In 1991 the Judiciary passed a directive that made environment education a mainstream subject in schools; but 10 years later, however, a review found that complete confusion was reigning in environment education in schools. The Centre for Science and Environment seized the opportunity to launch a *Green Schools Program* that places young people at the center of a practical initiative as change makers. It uses environment education to empower youth to develop and sharpen their knowledge and skills as citizens and environment managers. In schools where resources are scarce, the audit focuses on ensuring that basic needs are met; in schools where there is plenty, the audit helps prevent wastage.



Dr. Anita Patil Deshmukh (PUKAR) participating in a discussion on innovative approaches to youth development and active citizenship.

Using a simple audit map and a do-it-yourself handbook on how to audit the management of water, air, energy, waste and land within school premises, the program has drawn students and teachers out of classrooms to count, weigh, measure, explore and analyze the school environment.

The 'change maker' category was added recently to encourage schools to repeat their audits and measure their success as environmental managers. Over a two-year period (2007/8) the project found a startling improvement in conservation practices with 'change makers' increasing the actual rainfall harvested from 3% to 70%. The results show schools how they fare as environmental managers, and demonstrate that the young people change their perceptions of themselves as active citizens.

- **Stimulate critical engagement with social issues**

Partners for Urban Knowledge Action and Research (PUKAR) is a Mumbai-based organization that mainstreams young people by drawing them into spaces created for people to engage critically with social and other issues. Working across sectors with a range of partners, PUKAR adopts a multi-disciplinary approach to challenge the view of young people as passive and vulnerable by providing space for exploration, self-expression, and risk-taking. It views Mumbai as an incubator for concepts related to urbanization and globalization and aims to develop a new paradigm for knowledge production.

“We have heard politicians, leaders, social workers, religious people talking of peace. But it is the first time someone like us is talking peace, saying we can make it possible. It is different.”  
– *Village youth in Tripura*

Through a youth fellowship program, young people become both researchers and learners. Research provides a unique tool through which young people can investigate issues they confront on a daily basis, express their ideas in any form they feel is comfortable, learn from mistakes and create urban knowledge through questioning. It is participatory, encourages leadership and is process oriented. For example, in one project a group of friends worked together on issues of caste and how it impacts on people's attitudes. All were from different castes and the research proved to be a difficult process in which a number of the young people were offended or hurt by the views that were expressed. At one point the group thought about stopping the research to preserve their friendship, but they ultimately decided to work out the issues, dealing with their difficulties up-front. In the process they learned life skills, behavioral skills and citizenship skills, including the values of tolerance and respect.

- **Develop democratic values, respect for diversity and a language of peace**

In order to make young people more resourceful and resilient, a number of the projects work with young people to build the values of democracy and a language of peace. In the Northeast of India, the North Eastern Regional Youth Commission (NERYC) takes this a step further in a nation building project through its youth ministry: peace building means not only the absence of violence, but valuing diversity and changing the language of violence back to the language of humanity. Its vision is that the church belongs to the people and that youth have a major role to play in carrying out its mission. Its perspective is that if young people can be trained for violence, they can also be trained for peace-building.

In cooperation with three other Pan North East organizations, including the Bosco Institute, the NERYC launched Operation Shanti which is building a movement for peace with young people at the center, preparing the youth to live with violence without taking to violence themselves. Social impacts include educating the insurgents/militants to respect people, bringing divided villages together, a weekly common youth fellowship, greater willingness to talk 'peace', villagers asking for peace programs and young people volunteering for peace education. Impact on the young people involved include developing their skills to assist friends in their personal and social or school life, youth coming forward to assist victims of violence, the personal transformation of the trainees, and artists coming together to build peace through cultural revival. Within the church itself the program has prompted a greater openness and willingness on the part of the church personnel to get involved in peace issues and to seeing peace in the broader perspective of development, culture and well being.

- **Give children the chance to be competent and responsible participants in local and state government**

Project Citizen is running in over 60 countries of the world. It provides children with real-time opportunities to do something practical to solve social problems in their communities. Supported by the Center for Civic Education, USA, and Learning Links Foundation, India, the project has grown in India from a pilot in 2005 with 11 schools in New Delhi to 300 schools around the country, 100 of which are rural. Books have been translated into Hindi to reach out to students in the rural areas of North India. Project Citizen's sole objective is to get children involved in real world governance.

Children select a problem about which they want to do something – trash, traffic or a cigarette shop near a school are but some of the examples chosen to date. The children study the government policy related to the problem, meet government officials, and often realize that policies are in place, but are not being implemented. With the help of the project, they draw up an action plan or devise an alternative policy aimed at solving the problem.

The project operates on the basis of teams, each of which presents its proposals to a panel of judges (comprising lawyers, educators and social workers). Each team member participates in the presentation in order to build his/her communications and speaking skills. The young people interact with the judges who ask a range of questions about the project and the results are not necessarily measured by achievement, but by the level of involvement and passion that the young people display. A next step is to get senior students to mentor younger students, and to get the children involved in action research.

- **Draw on youth culture for campaigns on development, human rights and social justice issues**

Campaigns appeal to young people because many enjoy action. This helps mobilize large numbers of young people and develops committed volunteers. Campaigns can help sensitize the youth to social and other issues, give them an opportunity to express their ideas creatively and provide the building blocks for active citizenship. In the process the young people become change agents and the issues they campaign for are widely publicized.

Campaigns can help to mobilize large numbers of young people (from 400 to 4,000), develop committed volunteers, bring young people much closer to issues of social change, and help to develop initiatives such as *Youth4Change*.

The Center for Youth Development and Activities (CYDA) has built its campaigns around a range of festivals and events in order to mobilize as many young people as possible. These include the Social Harmony Festival, HIV/AIDS and Sexuality Festival, the campaign against the World Trade Organization, International Summer School, the Violence Against Girls Campaign, ICYDSA, Global AIDS Week of Action and the GM Free India Campaign. Mobilization strategies include marches, a bike campaign for gender equity and theatre, to name but a few.

- **Put media at the disposal of young people**

What if the poorest hundred thousand million people in the world had a media industry of their own?

Drishti is an initiative that puts media into the hands of young people in grassroots communities and presents them with the opportunity to tell their stories, from their perspective. It argues that mainstream media present one-sided information, glamorize the news and provide little information on social issues.

The media, arts and communications have huge appeal for young people, and 95% of the local people trained by Drishti are young. They may have zero literacy skills, but have a passion to do something active and creative in their communities to create change. The participants undergo intensive training over 18 months with a trained filmmaker to learn creative ways of conducting research, writing scripts, shooting film and editing. Even though they do not have much education, the young people soon learn how to use high-end software to create community magazine programs on diverse issues.

Daily screenings attract 200-500 villagers, many of whom walk 8-10 km to watch the program. Post-screening discussions are very important for the producers because every film makes a call to action which creates debate and aims to inspire people to view things differently. In this way, young people become leaders in their communities — they talk to local people about local issues and discuss how communities can take action to improve their lives.

In addition to community magazine programs, the project produces documentaries that are regularly screened at colleges and in private spaces in order to raise awareness, as well as materials to feed into the mainstream school curriculum, using local examples, e.g. in mathematics and science

- **Serving through the NYKS**

Citizenship action is not only related to state, but also civil society and the market (the economy). For this reason, the Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS) is a rural-based program run through youth clubs, which have been supported to set themselves up in 268,000 villages. Each year 13,000 volunteers are mobilized through the National Service Scheme and the NYKS. Two volunteers serve full-time per block. Young participants first take part in a youth development program, followed by rural development training. The youth clubs engage the young people in leadership workshops or vocational training.

“I have learnt to deal with the press – I felt more confident within myself. I started believing in myself. My self respect increased. My passion towards work also increased. Today, I communicate without hesitation.”

– CYDA participant

Volunteers are engaged in health, education or employment through community work, voluntarism and citizenship action (such as motivating young people to vote). For example, in the last Delhi state election, NYKS volunteers spoke through various resident welfare associations and undertook publicly to follow the candidates who have been elected and to hold them accountable for their election promises. Furthermore, a recent survey showed that in 10 500 panchayats, young people who have become a part of the panchayat structures have come out of the youth clubs. Tracking studies have found that 35% of volunteers who leave the NYKS go into the social sector.

NYKS volunteers also undertake campaigns such as the Let's Go to School campaign and the Rakhi campaign that encourages each young person to teach another, to raise the literacy rate. A health campaign called Red Ribbon Express involved six cultural teams across India and reached seven million people. At the time of the tsunami, NYKS volunteers were extensively involved and subsequently responded to other major crises such as the bomb blast at the end of 2008.

A key challenge facing the NYKS concerns quality assurance within its huge system. Much depends on the individuals anchoring the project, and the only people appointed by government are the district youth coordinator, accountant and peon (logistics). All other work is done by volunteers. The quality of the program thus varies since it depends on the youth coordinator. The NYKS program was reviewed by the Planning Commission in 1978/9, with good results. A more recent review was conducted by the India Institute of Management in Ahmedabad (IIM-A) and these results are pending.

## 8 Lessons from international experience

Internationally, youth civic engagement has taken many different forms. Three country experiences were presented at the consultation: Nepal, South Africa and the USA. Nepal's experience shows the importance of civil society action in putting youth issues on the public policy agenda and in creating institutional foundations for youth active citizenship engagement. In South Africa a strong youth service policy framework has been disappointing in its implementation, although innovative programs show how service can foster active citizenship among young people. In the USA, AmeriCorps provides an exceptional example of how a public-private partnership between government and civil society organizations succeeds in drawing young people into a variety of national service options; it is poised for massive expansion under President Obama's administration.

### Nepal

In Nepal it has taken almost two decades to get youth issues on to the national political agenda, and this is largely a function of government having changed its view of young people. Prior to 1990, the government viewed young people only as sports people. Between 1990 and 2005, this view expanded to include youth in relation to reproductive health issues, HIV and AIDS, and drug abuse. While these issues continued as priority concerns for youth, 2005 saw an important new dimension being added to the national perspective on youth — that of youth civic and political engagement (including civic education, human rights, peace-building, psycho-social counseling, entrepreneurship and youth service). In 2008 a Ministry of Youth was established and a national youth policy is currently under discussion.

These developments must be attributed to the efforts made by civil society organizations such as Youth Initiative, which was formed in 1999 partly in response to the voice of youth not being heard in Nepalese society. In 2001 the organization developed capacity building programs for young politicians and in the following year introduced civic engagement and active citizenship programs (called 'Civic Concerns'). These efforts contributed to the formation of the Association of Youth Organizations of Nepal (AYON) in 2004 and prompted a surge of donor interest in youth affairs. In 2007 more than 100,000 people were reached through 650 events.



*Robin Sitoula, Youth Initiative Nepal, discussed innovative approaches to active citizenship in Nepal.*

Currently all major organizations in Nepal have special youth strategies in place and run programs for young people. Many youth organizations have been established and the country has witnessed the rapid growth of organizations with youth chapters to promote young people working in civic and political engagement. There is also evidence of increasing investment in the ideas of young people through the Youth Initiative Awards, YAF, Ashoka Young Entrepreneurs Forum, Youth in Development Partnership, Change Fusion, etc. The 'hot cake' is the National Youth Policy, which is presently in formation.

Opportunities for increased youth civic engagement in Nepal stem from a growing awareness of the 'youth bulge'. In this context a changing youth paradigm is emerging, characterized by a shift from apathy to interest in youth. The demonstrated feasibility of low-cost programs involving young people has increased confidence in youth, while factors such as increased access among young people to ICT, and enhanced flexibility, energy and motivation among the young people themselves are making them more receptive to their peers.

However, the deepening of youth civic engagement is challenged by issues of stability, while more needs to be done to strengthen the professionalism of youth organizations, improve their governance, transform their leadership and achieve innovation rather than duplication. Future needs include institutional development and capacity building, expanding the youth movement to grassroots communities, increasing youth participation through 'for youth' programs, achieving wider collaboration and partnerships, profiling and gaining recognition for youth achievement, and strengthening the quality of youth programs through evaluation and validation.

### **South Africa**

In South Africa, young people constitute 41% of the population. Following the massive role played by young people in the anti-apartheid struggle, the multiparty democracy today recognizes the youth sector as a key stakeholder in society and has created a well-developed youth service policy framework to support youth development and active citizenship across a range of sectors (education, health, social development). This includes the National Youth Development Policy Framework 2002-2007, Green and White papers on National Youth Service (1997 and 1998), provision for community service in higher education and schools (1997), community service for health professionals (1997), the Child Justice Bill (2002) which recognises community service as a rehabilitative pathway for young people in conflict with the law, and a draft National Youth Policy (2008 - 2013).

In practice, however, the civil society youth sector has been weakened owing to the outflow of young leaders from civil society organizations into government after 1994. Despite the presence of a National Youth Commission and its provincial counterparts, young people have not been able to significantly influence mainstream policy, budgetary allocations and the direction of programs for youth. The draft National Youth Policy is currently up for discussion, and new institutional arrangements for youth interests are presently in formation.

Some of the challenges faced in keeping young people engaged in society derive from declining political participation among young people who are now more focused on individual aspiration and personal advancement rather than national priorities. Furthermore, practice lags behind policy innovation, with insufficient opportunities for youth civic engagement at the grassroots level and a lack of assessment of policy impact.

Nevertheless youth active citizenship remains a key goal in South African society and the contribution that youth service makes towards this goal is demonstrated by groundBREAKERS, a nationwide youth service program. Run by a youth HIV prevention organization called loveLife, groundBREAKERS targets unemployed youth between the ages of 18 and 25 and enlists them in a year's service to deliver healthy lifestyle and healthy sexuality programs to prevent HIV infections. By 2008 10,000 groundBREAKERS had graduated from the program, each having mobilized five mpintshis (buddies/friends) who are volunteers. This results in a cohort of over 60,000 young people having been involved in service by 2008.

In the context of low levels of active citizenship and high levels of unemployment among youth, it is significant that the program has turned to innovation around contemporary South African youth culture to mobilize so many young people into active service. First, groundBREAKERS appeals to the personal aspirations of young people for a better life; second, it uses brand awareness and social marketing to make service cool and speaks the language of young people; and third, it motivates young people to become active citizens/servers using mobile technology. MYMsta is a social network, using mobile phones and internet, that gives young people access to information about career, educational and employment opportunities. Membership is open to all young people and MYMsta provides a platform through which groundBREAKERS can motivate and encourage other young people to maintain healthy lifestyles and to engage their communities.

A self-reported impact assessment of the program, conducted by Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA), showed that the program impacts positively on the educational and employment prospects of the graduates of the program, builds their leadership skills and increases their involvement in long-term volunteering.

## USA

AmeriCorps is a national service program that partners with 2,500 NGOs and local and state government offices throughout the US. Since 1994 AmeriCorps has engaged more than 540,000 Americans in work to meet critical needs in education, public safety, health and the environment.

AmeriCorps has three objectives

- Positive impact on communities
- Impact on participants
- Impact on social cohesion — bringing communities together

The program began in 1993 under the leadership of President Clinton with funding from the government. It is administered by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS), which is a department of national government. Since 1994, 500,000 AmeriCorps members have served with thousands of nonprofit organizations, public agencies and faith-based organizations. Members carry out activities such as tutoring youth, building affordable housing, cleaning parks and streams, and recruiting, training and managing community volunteers.

AmeriCorps volunteers must be a minimum age of 17. Although there is no upper age limit, most participants are 18 to 28 years old. Members serve full or part-time over a period of ten to twelve months. Upon successful completion of their service, they receive an AmeriCorps Education Award of up to \$4,725 which can be used to contribute to their college or university costs. During their period of service, AmeriCorps members receive health coverage, training and student loan deferment; members also receive a modest annual living allowance.

Who benefits from AmeriCorps? *Youth, seniors and others in need* benefit from the tutoring, mentoring, health, housing and other services provided by AmeriCorps members. *Communities* benefit from having better schools, safer streets, more affordable housing, a cleaner environment and more engaged citizens. *Organizations* gain from having more reach and impact: 92% of sponsoring groups say AmeriCorps members helped increase, to a large or moderate extent, the number of people they served. *Members* acquire leadership and career skills, earn money for education and training and develop skills as active citizens.

Selected statistics:

- 542,000 AmeriCorps members have served since 1994.
- 705 million hours were served by AmeriCorps members.

- \$1.43 billion have been earned in Segal AmeriCorps Education Awards by AmeriCorps members.
- 1.7 million volunteers were mobilized by AmeriCorps members in 2007.
- 4,100 organizations hosted AmeriCorps members in service in 2008.
- \$5 billion in AmeriCorps funds have been invested in nonprofit and community groups since 1994.
- 92% of AmeriCorps sponsoring organizations said members helped them increase the number of people the groups served to a large or moderate extent.
- 72% of AmeriCorps members continue to volunteer in their communities after their term of service ends.
- 87% of former AmeriCorps members accepted public service employment after completing their AmeriCorps service.

President Obama's national service plan, supported by the US Congress, is to expand AmeriCorps from 75,000 to 250,000 members serving each year and to create a Healthy Futures Corps, Education Corps, Clean Energy Corps and Veterans Service Corps. It will engage retiring people on a large scale; expand service-learning in schools, expecting all middle and high school students to do 50 hours of service each year, and will require 100 hours per year of service in higher education institutions in return for a \$4,000 tax credit.

## 9 Young people as agents of civic and social innovation

Young people will be the architects of the new world order. This was the central message from Dr Eboo Patel, Founder and Executive Director of the Interfaith Youth Core in the US, as he addressed the consultation at the end of its first day.

“And if young people are to make the new order they need to understand the problems of their world,” he said. “In particular, they should focus their energy and creativity on creating solutions that others will adopt.”

Patel cited Bill Gates (founder of Microsoft) and Larry Page and Sergey Brin (the inventors of Google) as examples of young people who, as innovators in their twenties, had astounded the world with their business success.

He stressed, however, that too rarely do we acknowledge what young people can do in the social and civic worlds: “The history of social progress in the world is that of one era coming to an end and young people having big ideas to create a new world.”

Patel cited five examples of young leaders who had made a significant impact on social and political change in the world. “Mahatma Gandhi sensed the era of colonialism coming to an end. Aged 24, he started a movement against the pass laws in South Africa and later came to India where he created Satyagraha, the philosophy and practice of non-violent resistance.

“Martin Luther King Jr. learned from Gandhi. He applied the principle of mass civil disobedience to the struggle to end the world of segregation and racism in the USA in the 1950s, modeling the 1955/6 Montgomery bus boycott on Gandhi's example of the salt march.

“Around that time, at the age of 26, Nelson Mandela created a youth league in the African National Congress in order to mobilize black Africans against apartheid. He decided that apartheid in South Africa belonged to the old world and that what was needed was a new world.

“In 1989 Wendy Kopp came up with the idea of launching Teach for America to improve the quality of education in the country's most disadvantaged schools. Some 15 years later, many school principals considered Teach for America teachers more effective than other teachers.

“And, after completing his PhD, economist Muhammad Yunus saw people going from the villages to the cities in Bangladesh to die. He piloted a micro-lending system with a group of women, believing that, given the chance, the poor will repay the money borrowed. This developed into the Grameen Bank. Yunus helped create a new world in which poor people could feed and educate their families.”

“Young people are in the best position to be those architects because they don't have the same ingrained patterns of ‘this is the way things have been done.’”  
- Eboo Patel, founder, Interfaith Youth Core

## Lessons for the future

Eboo Patel argued that young people have their finger on the pulse of technological and cultural change. “So many of the people in the crowds following Obama’s win and his inauguration were young and dark,” he said. “They were in the campaign that elected him. The single greatest difference between the Obama and McCain campaigns was how they engaged young people. The Obama campaign engaged youth not only as voters, but as architects of the campaign.”

According to Patel, young people should thus spend less time agitating for a demographic in a political party and spend more time on *doing*, creating the solutions that others will adopt, simply because they are the best solutions. “Microsoft was a better idea than IBM,” he pointed out, “and Google was the best way to search the internet in the 1990s — that is why they made their mark.”

“Who is solving the challenge of people moving to cities in India and the developing world?” asked Patel. “Perhaps the NGO and funding sectors should be spending time with the young people who have the imagination and creativity to figure out better solutions.”

Young people need to foster ingenuity and innovation in political, social and economic spheres, stressed Patel. “They should seek strength in diversity, and define religion in ways that empower all.”

Referring to sectarian belief systems, he challenged the notion that religious identities necessarily work in opposition to each other. “In the old world, we form our identity in isolation from each other — we become Hindus, Christians, Sikhs in our homes. But are Hindus and Muslims, Jews and Christians fated to be opposed to each other?”

“Every religious extremist movement is a movement of young people taking action. But perhaps the greatest interest lies in young interfaith social entrepreneurs who can bring people from different backgrounds together,” concluded Patel.



*Eboo Patel, founder of the Interfaith Youth Core (US) fields questions from young people regarding their role as agents of civic and social innovation.*

## 10 Challenges and opportunities for youth active citizenship

The second day of the workshop took the form of a World Café, which is a methodology for moderating discussions where the objective is to bring out all relevant aspects of a topic by building on each other’s contributions. Five questions were discussed by participants who rotated through the different topics:

- How do we build the capacities of young people to become leaders of social change?
- What are good indicators for assessing youth active citizenship programs?
- How can youth active citizenship programs promote social change?
- What are the barriers to youth participation and what are the opportunities?
- What are the issues around the sustainability of youth initiatives?

### 10.1 How do we build the capacities of young people to become leaders of social change?

The consultation identified three key needs to be addressed if young people are to become leaders of social change:

- **Develop the appropriate skills, values and behaviors in young people** in order to build their capacity for communication, conflict resolution and critical thinking. It was recognized that young people’s ability to take a stance on particular issues depends on their self-belief and their ability to make the connection between personal goals and social change. This in turn depends on their developing political awareness and becoming economically empowered.

- **Create an environment that is non-judgmental of youth** in which young people can share their ideas, take responsibility for their actions and gain the experience of making decisions. This spans a range of spaces, from the household to broader society, and is fostered by transparency at home and in organizations. Giving young people opportunities to lead, to understand active citizenship and to be exposed to different realities are all important in helping them learn by doing.
- **Recognize young people for their actions and achievements.** This involves profiling young role models (particularly those from civil society) and redefining the criteria for success in life. Critical here is the need to help adults learn to let go of young people so as to give them space in which to explore, and to build the capacity of those individuals and organizations that work with young people.

The following transformative interventions were identified: young people being exposed to new opportunities and experiences, social entrepreneurship, connecting personal passion with social change, asking questions, taking opportunities to lead, learning from mistakes, utilizing nurturing spaces for youth, and identifying nurturing leaders and mentors for change.

Spaces through which youth active citizenship can be fostered exist in panchayats, eco-empowerment programs, in debating forums, schools, youth clubs, community centers — in fact all aspects of life in which there are opportunities to develop the leadership capacity of young people for social change.

**Significant stakeholders** were identified as being parents, educational institutions, government, NGOs and platforms in which young people can meet and express themselves.

- In respect of **parents**, it is recommended that young people form groups through which they can share with parents what they do and why, invite parents into these spaces to work together with the young people and target mothers for particular attention.
- It is notable that even when young people have a great deal of education, their participation in civic engagement remains low. **Educational institutions** at all levels should thus be made aware of their role in preparing young people for active citizenship — from primary school level where critical thinking skills start, to university programs. The possibility of carrying out community service for a requisite number of hours should be explored as part of the overall learning experience.
- Opportunities for fostering youth civic engagement in **government** were identified through the review of the National Youth Policy currently in process and in local self-government.
- **Non-governmental organizations** have a particularly important role to play in promoting youth active citizenship. There is a huge need for building the capacity of organizations to work with young people and in helping young people get organized in regular peer group meetings or participating in platforms through which they can voice their views. NGOs are well-placed to inspire youth involvement by creating role models, sharing real stories of young people and making the media aware of how youth can be recognized.
- **Young people** themselves need to take the initiative to communicate with others as active citizens and should be encouraged to see themselves as role models. It was noted that active citizenship should be portrayed as ‘cool’, ‘visible’ and ‘fun’ in order to appeal to contemporary youth culture. Youth festivals and the use of interactive theater could be important vehicles in this regard, helping to explain what active citizenship is, why it is important and why young people should get involved. It will also be important to explain what ‘youth leadership’ means and to distinguish between ‘citizenship education’ and ‘political education’.

## 10.2 What are good indicators for assessing youth active citizenship programs?

How do organizations determine and show that they actually promote youth active citizenship?

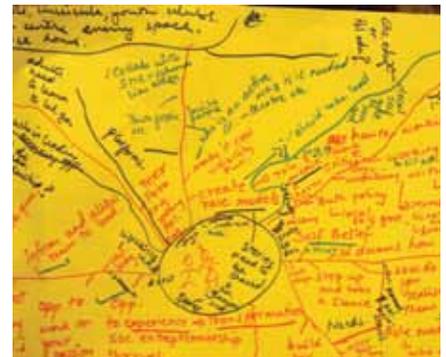
This discussion noted that the development of indicators for the assessment of youth active citizenship programs must be rooted in a larger defined goal, e.g. youth active citizenship for what?

Two types of indicators are required: those used for program assessment (process oriented indicators) and those used for impact – assessing the end product (e.g. who is an active citizen?). The latter was the focus of the discussion.

It was recognized that programs vary and will set different indicators for monitoring and evaluation, but that the mission of youth active citizenship lies at the core and facilitates the definition of some common indicators across the board. However, the indicators chosen must relate closely to program goals and content.

Indicators can be categorized in various ways, e.g. one category may be attitudes, knowledge, values, skills and behavior, while another would focus on self, peers/ family, community and nation (or beyond).

Defining measurable indicators is critical to assessing program impact, and programs need to consider how many indicators (or categories of indicators) a young person must meet in order to be considered an ‘active citizen.’ If impact is to be assessed, a baseline will be an important benchmark against which to measure change.



*Small groups discussed and mapped the opportunities, challenges and needs of the youth active citizenship field in India.*

The following indicators were proposed as a starting point for the assessment of youth active citizenship programs:

### • **Impact indicators**

#### **Self**

Young active citizens are ...

- Aware of social issues of the community, beyond the ones that directly affect them, and take action in this regard
- Able to identify and provide solutions to the issues around them
- Able to raise their voices on behalf of themselves and their peers
- Make personal choices in line with their values
- Cast a responsible vote
- Have the ability to think critically and have the confidence to question
- Respect diverse opinions, listen, accept and respect differences
- Take leadership roles in community/civil society
- Reflect on self and their own impact on community
- Able to deal with a challenge/conflict/negative situations
- Constantly challenging themselves (beyond their comfort zones).

#### **Peer**

Young active citizens are ...

- Able to bring others into a learning journey
- Able to serve as role models for others
- Able to create spaces for active citizenship.

#### **Community**

Young active citizens are ...

- Able to bring about concrete changes in the community
- Able to change the community's attitude towards young people
- Able to influence some changes in policy or recommendations made.

- **Program process indicators**

- The level of young people participating in the program (e.g. Roger Hart's ladder of participation, captured in the Consultation Reader).
- Is the program implemented democratically?
- Are young people in leadership/decision-making positions in the program?
- Are other youth organizations taking up the youth active citizenship ideas/methodology?

### 10.3 How can youth active citizenship programs promote social change?

Social change was defined as actions taken towards the achievement of a just society. Three ways in which youth development can contribute to social change were identified: self-development (behavior and action in relation to others); experiences with groups and relationships; and social action.

- **Self-development** includes behavior change, personal stances of young people, ownership of social issues, relating to others and reflecting on one's own experience.
- **Group interaction** includes mobilizing community support, discussing across caste/gender divides, creating an environment for open discussions and bringing the passion of young people to an issue.
- **Social action** includes campaigns (for the visibility or inclusion of particular issues), demand for entitlements for oneself as well as others (e.g. distribution of widow pensions) and transparency of public service programs.

The following positive outcomes were identified for youth active citizenship programs:

- Development of individual awareness on self and social issues;
- Behavior change;
- Greater visibility for youth citizenship action through media;
- Increased levels of youth motivation and participation;
- Increased community support, ownership and resources for local development;
- Participation of youth in planning and monitoring of government programs;
- Youth participation across the gender divide to discuss local development issues (PDS, water, anganwadi);
- Working in groups to give visibility to particular issues in the public domain — group membership enables young people to gain acceptance, take a stance and advocate for social change or a change in their own lives;
- Using a range of platforms that extend beyond one organization in order to increase the level of ownership and action.

A range of challenges were also identified in helping young people promote social change. These include:

- The organization/individual's capacity to encourage creativity and fun through various media such as theatre and role plays, which go beyond intellectual engagement with the social issue;
- Mentoring and giving young people challenges that foster personal growth;
- Exposing young people to positive role models: the NGO and youth facilitators need to be the role models and live the values for which they stand;
- Matching young people's interests with a diversity of social action issues, especially when the NGO may be working only on one particular issue;
- Creating platforms for young people to express themselves;
- Providing opportunities for recreation;
- Integrating democratic values into these programs;

- Drawing in significant resource people who can lend a level of importance to events through their participation;
- Gaining media recognition for youth work;
- Once the campaign or event in which youth played a role is over, the participating NGOs may no longer be accessible to young people. How can young people continue to play a role beyond the program?
- The priorities of NGOs may differ from those of young people and youth groups. How can these differences be reconciled?
- Dealing with lack of transparency, especially in public programs, e.g. NREGA;
- Mobilizing young people with conflicting views on a particular issue;
- Dealing with social constraints to participation, e.g. involving young girls or retaining their participation after marriage;
- Tapping young people's lived experience, frustration, even anger in order to help them build a personal stake in a social action process.

## 10.4 What are the barriers to youth participation and what are the opportunities?

### Barriers to youth participation

In many cases the barriers to youth active citizenship **start at home**. For example, there may be a clash of opinions between parents and children, which may be a function of parents' own bitter experience of poverty and discrimination. This often prompts their concern about young people in the household getting involved in social action struggles which they perceive as being risky and unsafe



*Participants indicate which activities they believe exemplify active citizenship while discussing the definition on the first day of the consultation.*

The home environment also impacts on the ways in which young people **develop a sense of self**. Very often they are not taken seriously and experience a lack of guidance on issues which they consider to be important. Young people are often stereotyped as not being sufficiently mature to hold their own opinions and this is aggravated by religious practices, regionalism and caste discrimination. Gender prejudice makes it difficult for young women to participate in social action. There may be differences between how these barriers feature in rural vs. urban areas.

At home young people also frequently experience **pressures in respect of financial issues and their future careers** and this sometimes makes it difficult for them to argue the case for civic engagement. Poverty and other circumstances mean that parents tend to be focused on the need for young people to earn a living, and a lack of information about career options can constrain the choices that young people feel are available to them. Among both young people and adults there is the perception that contributing to the larger society is not a profitable use of one's time, and this is fuelled by the extent to which society has become very materialistic, which is essentially a result of globalization. The reality is that young people and adults are interested in a more secure future.

Does the **education system** mitigate the barriers that young people experience at home? Does it provide them with information, support, platforms for expression? The discussion identified that in most cases the education system fails to help young people become critically self-aware and pays little attention to their need to develop a sense of self and become independent. Instead, the focus tends to be on exams rather than on volunteerism or community service. Furthermore, education is expensive for the poor and this disadvantages/disempowers young people in poor communities even further.

A critical barrier that young people face comes from the **stereotyped perceptions** that many adults have of **young people**. The lack of a clear definition of youth — the age range and maturity span — and the absence of the notion of youth as capable individuals, means that parental attitudes work against young people taking leadership or pursuing ideas in which they are interested. In some cases cultural tradition does not allow youth to question authority and this restricts the young people's own view of what their capabilities are.

A number of **institutional barriers** were identified. These include the education system not providing sufficient opportunities for young people to become engaged in civic or community-based action, a lack of good data on youth, gender bias and a focus on sport and excellence to the exclusion of other, more diverse, social action activities. It was also noted that schools can cause divisions between people, and that the quality of schooling itself may constitute a barrier to young people's ability to engage in social action.

Finally, a range of **social obstacles** were identified as constraining youth active citizenship. For example, migration makes it difficult for young people to develop a sense of belonging and constrains the contribution they can make at grassroots/community level. Young people may find that their values conflict with those of their elders, or that they lack inspiring role models. This is aggravated by feudal societal traditions in which class, caste and language can create barriers for youth involvement in society. In some cases this limits the options that young people perceive themselves as having, but in others it creates the conditions whereby youth want to perpetuate caste identity.

### **Opportunities for youth participation**

Against the many barriers and constraints identified above, the consultation surfaced a number of important opportunities that could foster youth civic engagement. The first has to do with the **changing face of youth in society**, driven largely by the growing youth population in India. This is supported by growing international recognition of the power of young people, the most recent example being the power of the youth vote in placing US President Barack Obama in the White House.

This is supported by **changes in young people's perceptions about themselves**, recognizing that they are working on important issues like sustainability and feeling more confident about developing positive ideas for change. Young people want spaces to meet, become involved and undertake important work, and carry less baggage from the past. Failed leadership and failures in competence also creates opportunities for young people to expand into new fields to try and do better than their elders. In this regard, however, they need to develop the discernment that is critical to the creation of new opportunity. The idea of engaging people across dividing lines is compelling to many young people and today there are many more openings in this regard than was previously the case.



*A consultation participant presents her view during the discussions.*

Opportunities were also detected in the **changing and more enabling environment**. Social movements have increased in scale and intensity, and there is growing interest in wider youth involvement in civil society and among other stakeholders (e.g. government laws and schemes such as RTI, NREGA, PRI, and changes in school curriculum). Adverse circumstances, such as recession or national/domestic tragedy can also create opportunities for innovation and youth involvement. An increasing number of information centers and training centers are providing young people with a wider range of opportunities for development.

Other opportunities were cited in **communities** where self-help groups can provide young people with their first experience of active citizenship. Although volunteerism is often undertaken as a resume builder, this is an important start for many young people.

**Institutional changes** include integrating a more questioning attitude to teaching, the recognition that education should precede vocational training, and growing recognition of the importance of youth clubs as a vehicle for organizing young people into productive activity. The growth of interactive media and technology provides young people with extensive opportunities to express themselves, and highlights the contribution young people can make. Finally, more jobs are today available in a greater variety of fields, providing young people with new avenues for their diverse interests.

## 10.5 What are the issues around the sustainability of youth initiatives?

Seven issues were identified as impacting on the sustainability of youth initiatives:

- Funding
- Participation of young people
- Stakeholder ownership
- Staffing
- Demonstrating results and effectiveness
- Advocacy and visibility
- Developing the field of youth active citizenship.

The majority of **funding** issues that impact on the sustainability of youth initiatives are related to donors. First, there is a notable lack of donors in the youth active citizenship field. Second, even where donors do fund youth initiatives, they tend to impose their own agenda and are mainly interested in funding projects, but not core NGO costs. The changing priorities of donors threaten organizational sustainability and make it difficult for youth-focused organizations to build incrementally on past successes. This makes it all the more important for organizations to find self-generated funding options.

Sustainable youth programs require the **participation** of a continuous flow of motivated young people and need to provide opportunities that allow the young participants to build on their experience. In areas where youth have few other opportunities they become particularly dependent on organizations; this can cause the NGOs to become static organizations unless they can find strategies for continuous renewal.

**Varied stakeholder ownership** is critical to the sustainability of youth initiatives and needs to involve the young people themselves, communities, donors and government.

**Staffing** is a key factor in program delivery and needs to be taken into account in sustainability planning. Competent and professional staff are critical to the quality of program delivery and a stable staffing core can help to avoid an organizational crisis during a change of leadership.

The ability to demonstrate **results and effectiveness** is an important aspect of the sustainability of youth initiatives since successful programs can help to counter prejudice against youth work and youth active citizenship. However, this should include attention to cost effectiveness as a driver of organizational success.

**Advocacy and visibility** depends on close collaboration with supportive media partners who are willing to profile the role of young people in their communities. Advocacy with stakeholders helps to sustain support and attract new investors/funding partners into the initiative. A supportive policy framework can make a huge difference to the sustainability of youth organizations. Equally important is the need for government support of the youth NGO sector (not just of government programs), but this requires either that NGO programs are aligned with current government priorities or that organizations advocate for changing those priorities. There is also a need for innovation in large government youth programs that have not changed since they were established, particularly with regard to youth active citizenship.

**Developing and sustaining the field of youth active citizenship** can be fostered through more collaboration and less competition between NGOs working with youth, i.e. greater sectoral cohesion. It is important also to work with NGOs that work with young people on sectoral issues and for them to include an active citizenship component to their programming. This is likely to generate a need for technical assistance and training among those NGOs. Developing the field of youth active citizenship will also depend on growing a network or learning community for practitioners, the establishment of an information resource center, greater use of technology, research, and writing, and intellectual discourse about youth development and active citizenship.

## 11 Recommendations

The consultation produced ten recommendations that will be taken forward cooperatively by a core group of organizations present at the consultation and convened by ICP and Pravah.

### 11.1 Definition of youth

There should be standard age criteria for youth so that there is uniformity between programs, and so young people know whether they are eligible. The current outer age limit of 35 years is too high as people over 30 have a range of concerns that younger people may not be facing to the same extent, e.g. looking after the family, career aspirations, etc.

#### Recommendations

- The age criteria for youth should be 13 to 30.
- The youth minister should be younger than 45 years since youth interests should be represented by younger adults, wherever possible, particularly because today the younger generation operates in a rapidly changing environment.

### 11.2 Data on youth

There is a need to map and create data and information on the status of youth and youth civic engagement in the country. Although this may already exist, it is located with different agencies and needs to be collated and made available. The gaps in the existing information also need to be identified so that the missing information can be collected and analyzed. This information must be made available and disseminated to all stakeholders in the youth sector as well as in the Youth Ministry and other government departments dealing directly with young people (education, health, etc.).

#### Recommendations

- Set up a comprehensive data bank on youth demography, resources, organizations and opportunities.
- Develop systems for collating and disseminating this data, e.g. websites, CDs and newsletters.
- Find strategies for getting the government to make this data available and accessible.

### 11.3 Shared understanding of active citizenship

There is a need to build a shared understanding of youth active citizenship among the stakeholders. The agenda of active citizenship cannot be limited to project cycles, but needs to permeate all aspects of youth work and youth development activities. A more appropriate form to take the agenda forward would be a movement with a network of organizations advocating for active citizenship.

#### Recommendation

- Youth development organizations should collaborate around issues of common interest and donors should look beyond project cycles and deliverables to find ways to incorporate active citizenship into existing and future plans.

## 11.4 Capacity building

There is a need to build capacities through technical assistance and training of youth, youth organizations and institutes working with youth to integrate active citizenship into their work. There is also a need for open, non-judgmental and diverse forums for young people to learn skills, attitudes, behaviors and values associated with active citizenship and to lead processes of active citizenship. To this end, we need to enhance the opportunities for direct youth engagement in social action, for example, internships for young people with non-governmental and other organizations engaged in social justice issues across India. Finally, youth programs need to develop political and social awareness and perspectives among young people according to social justice values.



*Consultation participants prepare to share their ideas on the opportunities, challenges and needs of the youth active citizenship field in India.*

### Recommendations

- Create a curriculum on active citizenship.
- Develop training programs and learning modules on active citizenship.
- Build the capacities of youth facilitators/people working with youth so that they develop their skills and understanding of active citizenship.
- Create youth-led platforms in institutional and non-institutional spaces and build the capacities of young people to run these spaces and to involve their parents.
- Increase youth participation in social and political processes by strengthening college and school unions, creating more youth groups, supporting those standing for elections, and building their social and political perspective through citizenship education.

## 11.5 Participation of civil society in review of youth policy and programs

There is a need to enhance civil society participation in the review and reform of youth programming and policy.

### Recommendation

- The Ministry of Youth Affairs should review the government youth programs such as NYKS, NSS and BSG with participation from civil society organizations and young people.

## 11.6 Greater involvement of young people in policy making and implementation

There is a need to create a variety of mechanisms to escalate the involvement of young people in policy making and in ensuring effective policy implementation. This is intended not only to give young people a voice at the policy level, but also to ensure that implementation takes place to the benefit of young people across India.

### Recommendations

- Establish a national civil society forum to lobby for and integrate an agenda for action around youth active citizenship and for engaging youth in the political process.
- Create a national youth commission, comprising of young people, to take responsibility for looking after the perspective of youth and reviewing programs and policies across all sectors from the youth perspective.
- Ensure that the national youth commission is effectively linked into policy making and policy implementation processes at different levels of government.
- Develop mechanisms for a more accountable and transparent Youth Affairs Ministry in order to facilitate greater youth engagement with its mandate and processes

## 11.7 Evaluation tools

There is a need for effective evaluation tools, methods and frameworks to measure the impact of youth active citizenship programs.

### Recommendation

- Engage research agencies (universities, the World Bank, UNDP) to help develop appropriate evaluation tools to assess the impact of youth active citizenship programs.

## 11.8 Create visibility and recognition for youth active citizenship

There is a need to create greater positive visibility for youth active citizenship through proper communication of the impact of such programs. This, in turn, would enhance recognition for such initiatives and strengthen a culture of youth active citizenship. The creative use of media together with resources from CSOs and corporates (pro-bono and funding support) could be used to make youth active citizenship fun and cool.

### Recommendations

- The media must give more coverage to youth active citizenship as an issue, particularly to profile examples in which young people are actively promoting citizenship, not only in electoral processes, but in all spheres of life.
- Use media effectively for communicating positive impact of active citizenship and to build organizational capacities to articulate issues of active citizenship.
- Create support for youth engagement via academic accreditation or other forms

## 11.9 Secure funds for youth active citizenship

Youth active citizenship needs to draw the active support of a range of stakeholders and find its way into a myriad of programs and activities for young people.

### Recommendations

- Secure funds and other resources for training and creating new, innovative and phased opportunities for youth engagement in active citizenship.
- Establish a youth action fund that will provide systems and training programs for human resources development and active citizenship in the youth sector.



*Young people work to articulate what it takes to be an active citizen during the youth track of the consultation.*

## 11.10 Gender considerations

Too often young women are excluded from programs due to social constraints.

### Recommendations

- Ensure that young women are supported to participate in all programs directed at fostering the active participation of young people as citizens.
- Program design and content must recognize the power dynamics between young men and women in order to remove the barriers that young women currently face in becoming active citizens in India and the region more widely.

## 12 Conclusion

This consultation constitutes a first, critical step towards a deeper engagement and collaboration around the mission of fostering youth active citizenship in India.

Next steps include submitting the recommendations to the Secretary, Ministry of Youth Affairs, who has expressed her interest in the outcomes of the consultation. A core group, formed from among the consultation participants, will meet with the Secretary and discuss the way forward.

The consultation involved many participants whose organizations are already working on different aspects of these recommendations, such as capacity building of youth and youth organizations, evaluation of youth development programs and youth participation in policy making and implementation.

“It is the hope of Pravah and ICP that all the participants will build on the relationships developed during the consultation and invite others into these spaces,” said Kamini Prakash, one of the organizers of the consultation. “That way we can all participate and take responsibility for working toward the implementation of these recommendations and advocating for youth active citizenship within our own circles of influence.”

## Appendix 1 List of Participants

Sl no.	Participant's name	Organization
1	Rashmi Soni	Adobe, Delhi
2	Jasmer Dhingra	AIESEC
3	Echo Han	AIESEC
4	Sanjay Chittora	Ajeevika Bureau, Udaipur
5	Nandita Shah	Akshara, Mumbai
6	Larry Schwartz	American Center, US Embassy, New Delhi
7	Michael Macy	American Center, US Embassy, New Delhi
8	Diane Brandt	American Center, US Embassy, New Delhi
9	Mandeep Kaur	American Center, US Embassy, New Delhi
10	Sampson David	Association for Indian Universities (AIU), Delhi
11	Deependra Chamlagain	Association of Youth Organizations, Nepal
12	Nivedita Bose	Bluebells School, Delhi
13	Father Jerry Thomas	Bosco Institute Of Social Work, Assam
14	Ashish Shah	Center for Science & Environment (CSE), Delhi
15	Sumita Das Gupta	Center for Science & Environment (CSE), Delhi
16	Matthew Mattam	Center for youth development activities (CYDA), Mumbai
17	Manoj Matthew	Centre for Civil Society, New Delhi
18	Amin Ul Iskan Khan	Common Wealth Youth Program Asia Center (CYPCA), Chandigarh
19	ML Aggarwal	Delhi Transport Cooperation
20	Vishal Talreja	Dream A Dream, Bangalore
21	Gaurang Raval	Drishti, Ahmedabad
22	Kavita Dasgupta	Drishti, Ahmedabad
23	Anirban Gupta	Dshriti, New Delhi
24	Uma Nair	Google, Hyderabad
25	Divya Talwar	I Volunteer, Mumbai
26	Susan Stroud	Innovations in Civic Participation, USA
27	Jean Manney	Innovations in Civic Participation, USA
28	Pat Wasley	Innovations in Civic Participation, USA
29	Eboo Patel	Interfaith Youth Core, Chicago
30	Kartikeya Singh	IYCN, New Delhi
31	Vijay Parmar	Jan Vikas, Gujarat
32	Pawan Sharma	Khoj Foundation, New Delhi
33	Anuradha Sen	Learning Link Foundation, New Delhi
34	Anjalee Prakash	Learning Link Foundation, New Delhi
35	Matthew Spacie	Magic Bus, Mumbai
36	Priyanka Sharma	Magic Bus, Mumbai
37	Pravin Srivastav	Ministry of communication & Information Technology
38	Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar	Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports
39	Mrs. Mridul Bhasin	Muskaan, Jaipur
40	Barsha Poricha	National Foundation for India (NFI), Delhi
41	Ajay Mehta	National Foundation for India (NFI), Delhi
42	Dr. Girish Tuteja	National Service Scheme (NSS), New Delhi
43	Swathi	National Youth Foundation (NYF), Bangalore
44	Zulfikar Akram	National Youth Foundation (NYF), Bangalore
45	Chandra Shekhar Pran	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
46	Anita Bhartiya	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
47	Rahul Bansawal	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
48	NK Sharma	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
49	P. Kushwaha	Nehru Yuva Kendra Sangathan (NYKS)
50	Nisha Agarwal	Oxfam India, Delhi

51	Rita Mishra	Patang, Orissa
52	Meenakshi Bhanjdeo	Pravah ,Jaipur
53	Meenu Venkateswaran	Pravah, New Delhi
54	Arjun Shekhar	Pravah, New Delhi
55	Ritikaa Khunnah	Pravah, New Delhi
56	Kamini Prakash	Pravah, New Delhi
57	Navneet Prakash	Pravah, New Delhi
58	Ishani Sen	Pravah, New Delhi
59	Lillian Strand	Pravah, New Delhi
60	Ashraf Patel	Pravah, New Delhi
61	Gouran Dhawan Lal	Pravah, New Delhi
62	Neha Buch	Pravah, New Delhi
63	Lokasish Saha	Pravah, New Delhi
64	Meera Balachandran	Project Citizen, New Delhi
65	Dr. Anita Patil Deshmukh	PUKAR, Mumbai
66	Rama Shyam	SAHER, Mumbai
67	R. N. Syag	Samavesh, Bhopal
68	Robin Sitoula	Samriddhi, Nepal
69	Anita Ratnam	Samvada, Bangalore
70	Benson Issac	Samvada, Bangalore
71	Vartika Jaini	Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT)
72	Digpal	Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT)
73	Arun Kumar	Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT)
74	Manish Subharwal	Student Worldwide Partnerships, Delhi
75	Arun Nathan	Student Worldwide Partnerships, Delhi
76	Puneeta Roy	Tehelka Foundation, Delhi
77	Dr. Steve Solnick	The Ford Foundation, New Delhi
78	Pooran C. Pandey	Times Foundation, Delhi
79	Ananya Datta	Times Foundation, New Delhi
80	Lata Narayan	TISS, Mumbai
81	Santosh Shah	Today's Youth Asia, Nepal
82	Anoj Chhetri	UNV, New Delhi
83	Rakhi Sarkar	Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Delhi
84	Manish Mitra	Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO), Delhi
85	Helene Perold	VOSESA, South Africa
86	Mona Aditya	Youth Initiative, Nepal
87	Vipin Thekkekalathil	Youth Ventures, Mumbai
88	Tarini Barat	The YP Foundation, New Delhi
89	Linda McGinnis	
90	Imtiyaz Alam (youth track)	Mumbai
91	Reshma Bhikle (youth track)	Goa
92	Jauban Bhoi (youth track)	Orissa
93	Ketan Deshpande (youth track)	Pune
94	Hemraj Gour (youth track)	Rajasthan
95	Prakash Meghwal (youth track)	Rajasthan
96	Ganesh Naik (youth track)	Mumbai
97	Ankit Panchal (youth track)	Gujarat
98	Nirmala Patel (youth track)	Orissa
99	Anusuya Pasayat (youth track)	Orissa
100	Krati Prakash (youth track)	Lucknow
101	Akhilesh Sharan (youth track)	Mumbai
102	Suchismita (youth track)	Delhi

## Appendix 2 Consultation Programme

### Nurturing Active Citizenship Among Youth In India: A Consultation

March 3 – 4, 2009

Jacaranda, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi

#### Objectives

- Clarify the concept of active citizenship and understand the need to invest in young people as active citizens
- Learn about existing models and innovative approaches to youth development and active citizenship
- Identify opportunities and challenges faced by young people and organizations working with young people
- Identify the needs of the field and possible responses to create a supportive environment for youth active citizenship.

Time	Session
March 3, 2009	
8.30 - 9.30	Registration and tea
9.30 - 10.00	Welcome, introductions to the consultation and the participants  Susan Stroud, Executive Director, Innovations in Civic Participation Kamini Prakash, Director - Streaming Initiatives, Pravah
10.00 - 10.15	Opening remarks by Mrs. Sindhushree Khullar, Secretary, Government of India, Ministry of Youth Affairs
10.15 - 1.00	Setting the Context: What is active citizenship and why invest in youth as active citizens?  Participants will explore the concept of active citizenship along with individuals and organizations who will share their experiences and perspectives on youth active citizenship.  <b>Young voices:</b> Rama Shyam, Director, SAHER, Mumbai Kartikeya Singh, CEO, India Youth Climate Network Nirmala Patel, Volunteer, Patang, Orissa  <b>Anchor:</b> Ms. Gouran Lal, Founder and Board Member, Pravah  <b>Panelists:</b> Mr. Larry Schwartz, Minister Councillor for Public Affairs, US Embassy Mr. Pooran Chandra Pandey, Chief Functionary, Times Foundation Ms. Nisha Agarwal, CEO, OXFAM Ms. Vartika Jaini, Assistant Programmes Manager, Youth and Civil Society Initiative, Sir Ratan Tata Trust Mr. Arjun Shekhar, Co-founder and President, Pravah  <b>Anchor:</b> Ms. Susan Stroud, Executive Director, Innovations in Civic Participation, USA

Time	Session
1.00 - 2.00	Lunch
2.00 - 3.30	<p>Innovative approaches to youth development and active citizenship in India</p> <p>There will be two parallel sessions during which panelists will highlight different approaches to building active citizenship among youth in their regions and explain what makes these approaches innovative.</p> <p><b>Panel 1:</b>  Ms. Meenu Venkateswaran, CEO, Pravah, New Delhi  Mrs. Balachandran, Country Coordinator, Project Citizen India, New Delhi  Ms. Anita Deshmukh Patil, CEO, PUKAR, Mumbai  Mr. C.S. Pran, Director-Programmes, NYKS</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Ms. Pat Wasley, Board Chair, ICP</p> <p><b>Panel 2:</b>  Father Jerry Thomas, Director, BOSCO Institute of Social Work, Jorhat  Sumita Dasgupta, Coordinator, Green Schools Program, Centre for Science and Environment, New Delhi  Mr. Mathew Mattam, CEO, Centre for Youth Development Activities (CYDA), Pune  Kavita Dasgupta (Program Manager) &amp; Gaurang Rawal, Drishti, Ahmedabad</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Ms. Ishani Sen, Director – Adolescent Interventions, Pravah</p>
3.30 - 3.45	Tea
3.45 - 5.00	<p>Innovative global and regional approaches to youth development and active citizenship</p> <p>Panelists will highlight different approaches to building active citizenship among youth in their regions and explain what makes these approaches innovative.</p> <p><b>Panelists:</b>  Ms. Helene Perold, Executive Director, VOESASA, South Africa  Mr. Robin Sitoula, Youth Initiative, Nepal  Ms. Susan Stroud, Executive Director, Innovations in Civic Participation, USA</p> <p><b>Facilitator:</b> Ms. Lillian Strand, Changelooms Senior Coordinator, Pravah</p>
5.00 - 6.00	<p>The role of young people as active citizens: A talk and discussion with Mr. Eboo Patel, Founder and Executive Director, Interfaith Youth Core, USA</p> <p>Introduction: Mr. Michael Macy, Cultural Attaché, The American Centre, New Delhi</p> <p>Facilitator: Ms. Neha Buch, Chief Coordinator, Pravah Jaipur Initiative</p>
6.15 - 7.00	Tea
7.00 - 8.30	Concert by the youth band - Ekam Satyam at the amphitheatre

Time	Session
March 4, 2009	
9.30 - 10.00	Energizer and overview of the day Facilitator: Ms. Helene Perold, Executive Director, VOSESA, South Africa
10.00 - 1.00	<b>World Café: Challenges and Opportunities</b>  This is an interactive session where participants will discuss the challenges and opportunities for youth development and active citizenship  Facilitator: Ms. Ashraf Patel, Co-founder and Board Member, Pravah
1.00 - 2.30	Lunch
2.30 - 5.00	<b>Needs of the field and possible responses</b>  This is an interactive session where the different stakeholder groups will identify the needs of the field and discuss how they can respond to these needs.  Facilitator: Ms. Helene Perold, Executive Director, VOSESA, South Africa
5.00 - 5.30	Tea and feedback
5.30 - 6.00	The way forward and a word of thanks  Ms. Pat Wasley, Board Chair, ICP Ms. Meenu Venkateswaran, CEO, Pravah

## Appendix 3 Concept Note for Consultation on Nurturing Active Citizenship among Youth in India

### Project overview

South Asia is home to one of the largest and fastest-growing youth populations on the planet, with 33% of India's population between 15 and 35 years old. In India, a growing democracy with a complex and diverse society, the challenge is to ensure that this huge cohort becomes a vibrant, constructive force that can address social issues and create a more just, equitable and peaceful world. Rather than see young people merely as a passive recipients of services and consumers, it is critical to recognize them as change agents who have the energy, passion and creativity to make a significant contribution to society while also building their skills for the future. India's dependency ratio is expected to decline sharply in the next 30 years giving it a demographic advantage over other countries. Given this scenario, there are a few key questions we need to address: how can we prepare young people so that they can lead meaningful and successful lives? How do we build the capacities of young people to become leaders for social change, improve their communities and impact issues of social justice?

Experiences around the world, including India, have shown that youth civic engagement and active citizenship is an effective strategy for promoting youth development and leadership for social change.<sup>2</sup> In India, promising youth development and active citizenship models are in place but there are few instances of collaborative efforts between the different stakeholders. Developing the field further in South Asia requires a structured approach that builds the capacity of policymakers and practitioners to develop innovative approaches to youth development and civic engagement.

There are several key stakeholders in India working with young people on issues of concern to them. These stakeholders include the Indian Government through the National Youth Policy 2003 and national youth service schemes, such as the National Service Scheme and the Nehru Yuva Kendra Scheme. Donor agencies, the private sector, universities and practitioners (non-governmental organizations) are also working on youth issues, such as

<sup>2</sup> Youth development is defined as "an ongoing process through which young people attempt to meet their needs and develop competencies they perceive necessary for survival and transition to adulthood." A key component is active citizenship, i.e. developing young people as active citizens, i.e. enabling them to make their own decisions and to take responsibility for their own lives and communities.

education, livelihood, recreation, health and life skills. In order to encourage further investment and build the capacity of young people to become leaders for social change in India, Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP), Pravah, the American Centre, New Delhi and the Sir Ratan Tata Trust have come together to host a national consultation in March 2009 on youth development and active citizenship in India.

### **Consultation Details**

The consultation will be held at the **India Habitat Centre in New Delhi during March 3-4, 2009**. Designed as a listening space to understand different perspectives on youth development and civic engagement, it will bring together international experts and key stakeholders, including government officials committed to strong youth policy, leaders of high-performing youth development programs, heads of educational institutions and representatives from the private sector. It will engage participants in a dialogue to explore the needs of the field, highlight innovative models and approaches that address these needs, and develop a framework for creating a more supportive environment for youth development and active citizenship. A parallel youth track is also planned so that youth perspectives substantially inform the consultation.

### **Objectives of the consultation**

To engage key stakeholders in a dialogue with a view to a) clarifying key concepts and understanding the need to invest in young people as active citizens; b) sharing information about existing models and innovative approaches to youth development and active citizenship; c) identifying opportunities and challenges faced by young people and organizations working with young people; d) identifying the needs of the field; and e) developing a framework on how we can address these needs in the future.

### **Partner organizations**

**Pravah**, registered in 1993, is based in New Delhi. It works to build leadership for social change through active citizenship and youth development interventions. Pravah builds with and in youth respect and understanding of citizenship, attitude of ownership for common spaces, skill of leadership for social change and behaviors to develop strong relationships as the foundation. After a decade of intensive work with individuals, it expanded its portfolio to include teachers training, incubating new initiatives and facilitative work with other organizations working on youth development and together with these partners advocate for youth development and citizenship action.

**Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP)**, based in Washington, DC, is a global leader in the field of youth civic engagement. ICP's mission is to facilitate the generation of opportunities for young people to improve their communities and build essential skills for future success through civic engagement. ICP works with individuals and organizations around the world to support the development of innovative approaches to two civic participation strategies: national youth service and service learning. Founded in 2001 by Susan Stroud through a multi-year grant from the Ford Foundation, ICP grew out of Ms. Stroud's 30 years of experience in designing programs and policies and building networks that result in many more young people being given the opportunity to engage in civic activities. Since 2001, the team at ICP has worked to expand opportunities for tens of thousands of young people throughout the world to engage in service.

The **American Center** in New Delhi presents a broad range of activities promoting professional, academic and cultural relations between the people of India and the United States. It represents the American Embassy vis-à-vis the Government of India in official business related to education and culture. The office provides funding for and administrative support to the bi-national Fulbright Commission, established in 1950 and now known as the U.S. India Educational Foundation (USIEF). The Center supports programs and exchanges which allow Indians and Americans to share ideas and experiences on diverse issues. The American Library at the Center is a circulating and public library offering membership to the residents of the eight states in North India. It offers a wide range of resources and services. Its mission is to provide timely, reliable and comprehensive information on contemporary American politics and government, economics and trade, foreign affairs and defense, the rule of law, human rights and the environment.

**The Youth and Civil Society Initiative of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust** recognizes the potential role of young people as change agents. The non-profit sector response to constructively engage young people with issues of the underprivileged and marginalized has been sporadic and scattered. There is need for well-designed, inter-linked focused spaces to sensitize youth to the underprivileged and encourage youth action in development. The Trust initiative addresses this challenge and is structured at the following levels: (a) direct action programs to generate learning from field action and (b) common platform and networks that bring these projects and other youth-focused organizations together.

## Appendix 4 The Youth Track Workshop

The Youth Track Workshop was an orientation workshop for young participants who participated in the main consultation on Nurturing Active Citizenship among Youth in India. Its purpose was to bring a diversity of young people together to share their personal journeys as active citizens. It also served to recognize their contribution and their transformational journeys, give them the opportunity to advocate for the need to invest in active citizenship, and help them to learn about the concept of active citizenship. The idea was that these young participants should gain a broad understanding of active citizenship while appreciating the value of small actions and initiatives.

The workshop was held on 2 March 2009, the day before the consultation and involved 12 participants from Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Orissa, Goa, Maharashtra and Delhi. Each of these young people had been associated with an organization or program for some time. The workshop was designed and facilitated by Rita Mishra, Navneet Prakash and Manmeet Kaur.

The workshop objectives were for the participants to:

- Share information about themselves, including their region and the organizations/programs with which they are associated;
- Define active citizenship and articulate its benefits by reflecting on their personal journeys and experience;
- Articulate what it takes to be an active citizen, keeping local realities in mind;
- Design a campaign to advocate the need for investing in youth active citizenship during the consultation

Expectations shared by the participants included finding out about the projects young people are doing, learning about the challenges young people are facing, taking back lessons learned in order to strengthen their own initiatives, and understanding the perspective of other young people on different issues, especially migration.

Through a set of activities and exercises the workshop participants shared information about themselves and were encouraged to express their wishes for a new world. These included: a boundary-less world, colorful world full of life, people being close to nature, optimism and energy, one vision, peace and harmony.

Participants identified the qualities of active citizens as being the following:

- Be conscious of the environment
- Politically aware/right to voting
- Not discriminate on the basis of caste
- Take leadership
- Be volunteers
- Be committed
- Have basic moral values like honesty, humanity, transparency
- Should not be part of fundamentalist groups
- Be aware about social issues
- Be confident
- Be realistic

- Follow law and order
- Be disciplined
- Be comfortable with group work
- Be a decision maker.

In the course of a lengthy discussion on the qualities of an active citizen, some participants felt inclusion is an important value of active citizenship while others argued that simply being active does not mean that a person is an active citizen, because in this case, they argued, terrorists could be regarded as active citizens. It was agreed that the motivation for engaging in positive actions is very important. In other words, doing something positive with an unspoken expectation could not be called 'active citizenship'. Most importantly, actions taken in the name of active citizenship should be based on the values of social justice and should be constructive .

Reflecting on their personal experience, the participants identified the challenges and benefits of active citizenship as follows

### **Challenges**

- Lack of support from family and community members
- Not being taken seriously by elders
- People underestimate the ability of young people
- The system is hierarchical and is therefore not easy to access
- Lack of financial support
- Lack of popular identity
- Social action initiatives are not recognized as significant achievements or indicators of success
- Academic pressure is very high
- Young people are expected to show the impact of their work
- The intentions of young people are treated as suspect — adults seem to think youth engage in active citizenship for monetary reward
- Young people lack platforms to enter the political arena
- The formalities of funding agencies.

### **Benefits**

- Recognition from media, peers, community
- Seeing the impact of their own work as young people — feeling they have made a difference
- Inspiring others
- Self-satisfaction
- Hope
- Friendship
- Strengthening their values and beliefs.

The participants used the workshop to prepare for their engagement and interaction with Eboo Patel and enjoyed a performance by Ekam Satyam, a youth band that performed its original compositions.

The workshop thus provided participants with an opportunity to meet peers from other parts of India and to learn from one another. It was instrumental in bringing a youth perspective on active citizenship into the consultation and helped the young people gain a deeper understanding of youth active citizenship.

## Appendix 5 Credits

We would like to share credit with the following people for helping to conceptualize and design the consultation:

- Arjun Shekhar, Pravah
- Ashraf Patel, Pravah
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- Helene Perold, VOESASA
- Jean Manney, Innovations in Civic Participation
- Kamini Prakash, Pravah
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