



LAND AND NON-VIOLENCE

ENGAGING YOUTH IN TRANSFORMATIVE SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Youth are fresh, creative and have a big stake in building a better future. When provided the adequate space for participation and opportunities to empower themselves, youth are effective agents of change for shaping their own development and that of their communities. Youth engagement is crucial for achieving land rights.

ILC works on empowering and harnessing the potential of youth to bring about change for people-centred land governance, and on cultivating a space for ILC youth to become a big voice on the struggle for land rights. Ekta Parishad, ILC member and one of the biggest mass-based peoples' movement for land rights in India gathering 250,000 landless people, works very actively on youth development as means to achieve social change and justice.

With the common goal of promoting leadership of grassroots and people's movements, ILC and Ekta Parishad joined forces in a series of learning and mobilisations initiatives seeking to strengthen transformative social movements with youth at the centre —the ILC-Jai Jagat Fellowship 2020 being one of them. The present manual is one of the results of this collaborative work.

This publication offers an overview of seven initiatives designed, planned and implemented by Ekta Parishad and its partners in India:

- /// Jai Jagat, a global movement for Justice and Peace combining marching, training and dialogues to inspire people and decision-makers to adopt nonviolence.
- /// Janadesh, a historical foot-march of 25,000 landless people in India to demand land policies at national level.
- /// Youth Camp, a nonviolent-based training method developed by Ekta Parishad in rural India.
- /// Go Rurban, a movement through which urban and rural youth come together in youth camps in rural areas and other events, so as to bridge the gap between the urban and rural dimensions.
- /// ANSH Happiness Society, a youth-led organisation made for youth to explore and implement their ideas freely and creatively to achieve social change.
- /// Anant Mandi, an organic farmers market where youth, farmers and consumers learn from each other, build together a more sustainable lifestyle and strengthen local communities.
- /// Constitution and Active Citizenship, a programme set up by youth for youth to increase – through workshops and meetings – young people's understanding and awareness of the values and rights at the basis of democracy.

These initiatives range from marches, to campaigns, camps and trainings. But they all have in common a strong engagement of youth, who are mobilised or are spontaneously coming together to generate change in the society they live in. Additionally, all are based on an approach drawing from the principle of non-violence, in line with the philosophy guiding the work of Ekta Parishad.

These seven experiences are retraced and explained in this manual in all their most important characteristics: the main goal, the actors involved, the engagement of youth, the step-by-step process to put them in place, the key factors of success and the lessons that those who were directly involved have learnt during their implementation. By using the links and references available at the end of each chapter, it is possible to access more information about each initiative and learn more directly from the organisations that have planned and implemented them.

This publication is intended to inspire and be used by ILC members and partners and by any other organisation interested in adapting and replicating the approach and the activities of the initiatives that are presented.

JAI JAGAT 2020: A GLOBAL CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE AND PEACE

WHAT IT IS

Jai Jagat is a global campaign for justice and peace rooted in the thought and practice of Gandhi, as well as other contemporary experiences of nonviolence, mainly from India. It combines a foot-march from India to Geneva, trainings, movement building, dialogues and outreach to inspire people and decision-makers to adopt nonviolence and ensure inclusion in tackling poverty, discrimination, conflict and climate crisis (its four pillars), in line with achieving the SDGs. It was launched on 2nd October 2019 to be concluded in October 2020. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the march had to be suspended in Armenia but it is intended to be reshaped as a ten-year movement.

ITS GOALS

Jai Jagat emerged from the need to connect local efforts and initiatives from different regions of the world to address global problems related to the climate crisis, the increasing inequalities and the acceleration of wars. Throughout this campaign it is expected to instill the courage to people, especially the young, based on their own power to make a change, rather than a dependence on a large external system. In one year, it aims to increase awareness on issues related to the four pillars (poverty, exclusion, climate crisis and violent conflicts), strengthen capacities on nonviolence and leadership, generate spaces for dialogue among civil society and authorities of different levels, and consolidate a collective force to move forward.

ACTORS INVOLVED

Jai Jagat is a movement initiated and carried forward by both people/groups working on the ground and those advocating for justice and peace. The core group of the Global Peace March was integrated by 30 Adivasis activists & farmers from remote villages all over India, 10 youth from different Indian states, and 10 international walkers. The campaign has been supported by over a hundred of CSOs, institutions and social movements from around the world, and tens of UN representatives. During its course, the March has succeeded in involving Indigenous People, farmers, activists, academics, schools, spiritual leaders, politicians. Among them: 8000 women, 18,000 youngsters, 20,000 men, and 50,000 children.

CONTACT contact@jajagat2020.org **PHOTOS** https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1psBhNt_G0mAp3t3sz6XgNIPJAzTHx7kU?usp=sharing

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

Since the beginning, youth participation has been fundamental to the development and success of the campaign. When the idea of Jai Jagat began to germinate in India in 2017, Ekta Parishad introduced it in their youth trainings, in colleges, and with their partner organizations. Later on, a Youth Fellowship Programme was created to select the 10 youngsters from rural and urban areas to participate in the core group of the March. They took the initiative to promote the campaign organizing bicycle rallies and meetings in different states, with the aim of building a youth's network who would welcome and join the March when it passed through their cities and villages.

On the other hand, through solidarity organizations and people who already knew from Ekta Parishad, young people were called on an international level to join the March and collaborate in any possible way according to their skills and interests. An example is the ILC-JJ Fellowship Programme with nine young fellows from ILC members from Asia, Africa and Latin America, who marched for 21 days in India and learned nonviolence from the villages and activists from around the world. Also, in Italy and Armenia, groups of young students formed a communications team to disseminate the campaign in their languages and relate them to their contexts.

During the march, the young activists led various cultural programs and activities. They took the responsibility of the communications hub, mainly in the creation and management of social networks. They were a bridge for people inside the march, translating and documenting the process, as well as for people outside by creating audiovisual material to share what they were living. On the journey, the youth brought energy and a fresh look at the various issues.

"We provided a more inclusive and diversified structure. We shaped the campaign in a more real way. We made it for our today, inspiring people showing them that we are doing something now".

Khushbu Chourasiya, a young marcher from India

HOW IT WORKED IN PRACTICE

PREPARATIONS & ENGAGEMENT OF KEY ACTORS

To engage the different key actors; marchers, solidarity and partner organizations, corresponding institutions and authorities, and UN delegates and representatives. Trainings and meetings were fundamental to raise awareness about the relevance of the March and the whole campaign in order to share a nonviolent approach for social change. Then, for people to be directly involved and committed it is important to have actions (no matter how small) that they can be a part of. For example; some authorities passed a motion of support; people were invited to sign an endorsement letter, and they were also invited to take up a local action in their own countries to celebrate the launch of the campaign on October 2nd.

STEP 2 |

MARCHING

Marching is a nonviolent action which, depending on each case, can be very powerful to build a joint force, inspire people, and increase pressure on decision-makers. The Global Peace March walked for four months in India and one month in Armenia. Along the way, it brought people together and engaged with local communities, civil societies, and the issues they face, as well as their interesting solutions. Given its length, the March was also a mobile training to strengthen capacities on nonviolence and leadership for the walkers, and on some occasions for other groups on their way. It was a two-way learning process between marchers and communities.

STEP 3 |

OUTREACH & COMMUNICATIONS

Marching itself is a very valuable tool, but unless it succeeds in communicating a message outwardly, it remains as an experience only for those who can participate directly.

Communication and (social) media outreach were crucial to enhance the impact of the resilience of the marchers; to get many people and organizations aware and involved as possible; to influence global public opinion and to build a global movement. Documentation (mostly audiovisual) of the issues related to the four pillars and good practices of nonviolence was thus one of the central tasks.

STEP 4 |

PROMOTING DIALOGUE

Building quality dialogue between different grassroots organizations, civil society and decision-makers was another key step in order to identify and act upon the challenges and solutions at stake.

Jai Jagat promoted dialogues at different levels. In some villages, after having identified any conflict related to land and forest rights, marchers contacted the authorities directly in charge so that the people could be heard and given follow-up. Through core events like Peace Conferences, Meetings and Webinars; activists, academics, spiritual leaders and politicians came together to exchange nonviolent tools and approaches, as well as to strengthen relations and capacities for further advocacy actions. This emphasis on people having the solutions and the capacity to innovate and demand change is vital to unleashing social change from the bottom and achieving the SDGs in an inclusive and sustainable manner.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED

The foot-march covered a total of 2,360 km in six months. During the journey, it succeeded in raising the need to incorporate peace and nonviolence as central elements in the public sectors of society; in India and Armenia some schools agreed to incorporate Peace Clubs; in Iran, a Nonviolence Chair was announced in the Institute of Philosophical Studies; in India, a university launched a Centre on Nonviolence and Peace Higher Studies and the Rajasthan government announced the establishment of a Peace Ministry. In 10 months of campaign, the Jai Jagat has provided a nonviolent approach to local issues and global debates. Marchers and participants have returned to their home countries taking with them values and practical tools to their respective groups and networks in order to propose new strategies for their own processes.

Although the march and the Geneva Forum (a week-long event including dialogues with UN representatives) had to be suspended, interactions among several groups have consolidated a platform and given an ongoing momentum to move forward and face the new challenges that the pandemic has brought. People are encouraged to organize local actions and virtual discussions, and to prepare case studies for further dialogues in the period of 2020-30 (the remaining duration of the SDGs).

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

/// Jai Jagat is based on years of grassroots work.

These previous experiences, both from Ekta Parishad and other allied groups, have brought a time-tested approach from concrete realities. It has also enabled broad involvement of those sectors and communities that, in many cases, are the most affected by the multiple forms of violence and oppression, while at the same time they are the ones with creative and innovative experiences for its transformation. In addition, the background of those experiences has been fundamental in giving some credibility to the campaign.

/// Jai Jagat provides an inclusive and diverse platform.

In order to achieve SDG's, Peace and Justice there is a need for more inclusive and ambitious action by all. From a nonviolent lens, it is fundamental to create spaces of participation with diverse actors, in which everybody can contribute in their own way and from their own conditions. Thus, the capacity for social change of each stakeholder alone is multiplied exponentially, and a long-term process can be built to address the global challenges at different levels. Mobilizing different actors has strengthened the campaign and helped to consolidate a platform to move forward.

/// The foot-march as the central action.

Marching for six months under diverse conditions and taking the walk as a learning experience in the individual, the collective, the communitarian, and resonating in the global, is an inspiring example of commitment and a clear message of peace and nonviolence as a journey. This simple action, allowed to reach tens of thousands of people that otherwise would not have been possible. It empowered and built leadership in the walkers, and in day-to-day relationships, they learned values such as solidarity, unity, and equality.

"We've got a 'worm's eye view' of people's lives. Step by step, village by village, city by city connecting with the action of so many people, it has been an amazing view into the daily lives of such a diverse population. This is very different from the 'bird's eye view' which tends to see things from aerial heights without touching the ground realities".

Jill Carr-Harris, Marcher and International Coordinator

LESSONS LEARNED

Peace is not only a desire of many people but is a living practice in many places. The knowledge that emerges from all the rich experiences and exchanges during the march is the starting point to transform the development paradigms and building nonviolent ways of life. It needs to be linked to a set of social relations at a global level in order to achieve deeper changes on a large scale.

Jai Jagat has been an interesting experiment on that, but along the way it has become evident that such an ambitious requires a stronger organizational structure and the firm commitment of more people in concrete tasks. It was a great challenge for the walkers to walk 20 km a day and at the same time do all the work of documentation, communication, and logistics.

Another great challenge in developing a global campaign is to incorporate the wide diversity of views, learn from dissidence and still cooperate. Although all those involved on the campaign agree with its principles (nonviolence and peace), these have their nuances according to each context, and that is why it is important to be open to different ideas.

Observing the interest that this campaign aroused in many people, it seems that building a global movement of nonviolence is not only possible but relevant in today's world.

READ MORE

BLOGS OF ILC-JJ FELLOWS:

- /// Learn from Molatelo: How to build a social movement
<https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/blogs/how-build-social-movement/>
- /// Access to land, solidarity and nonviolent action: Learning from the Jai Jagat
<https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/blogs/access-land-solidarity-and-nonviolent-action-learning-jai-jagat/>
- /// Empowering youth is investing on the future
<https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/blogs/empowering-youth-investing-future/>
- /// Jai Jagat Webinars: Building Capacities for Justice and Peace
<https://learn.landcoalition.org/en/e-learning-courses/jai-jagat-webinars-building-capacities-justice-and-peace/>
- /// Film "100 Days of Jai Jagat 2020":
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u3JB_JYnJh4&t
- /// Film "Jai Jagat in Syunik Region (Armenia)":
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QTstRoArtDc&t>
- /// For more info visit: <https://jaijagat2020.org/>



Picture: © ILC/Simon Williams

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PHOTOS <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/18NJUX1nb-oSUKtqivOYJIS03h2TsoHy?usp=sharing>

JANADESH: PEOPLE'S VERDICT FOR A NATIONAL LAND REFORM

WHAT IT IS

Janadesh is the first massive foot-march of 25,000 landless and homeless in India, who came together representing communities from across the country to demand a nationwide land reform agenda. The march started on October 2nd, 2007 in Gwalior, and almost one month later reached the National Parliament in Delhi, where their demands were heard and an answer was given.

People walked, marched and sang for over 360 km, demonstrating through nonviolence actions their determination to access their land rights and resources they depend on for their livelihoods. Janadesh brought the people's verdict (Janadesh) to the forefront of national policy.

ITS GOALS

After two decades of work, Ekta Parishad realized that although campaigns at the state level had resulted in a number of successes, there was a need for major changes at the national level to create a system of land rights that ensures that people can actually benefit from their land.

Since 2005, they worked developing a new vision for land reform and submitted a draft policy to the Indian government, but no satisfactory actions were taken. Later on, in 2006 a report was submitted to the Ministry of Rural Development with recommendations, but still not official acknowledgment came.

Thus, Janadesh was launched with the clear objective of getting the government to act on the following demands:

- /// to implement the Forest Rights Act and Land Reforms Legislation and Policy;
- /// to establish a National Land Authority to clearly identify land for redistribution;
- /// to make available a Fast Track Court system to settle land claims;
- /// to set up a single-window system for the landless people of India to be able to settle land issues without having to travel long distances, wasting what little time and money they have.

ACTORS INVOLVED

The 25,000 marchers came from 12 states of India, among them over 500 grassroots organizations, Adivasis (Indigenous People), women, young people, activists, and artists. Soon, the campaign achieved national media coverage, enabling intellectuals, religious leaders and politicians to join in and extend their support.

In its course, schools, communities and civil society, contributed by donating food, water, and all kinds of materials. International activist from Brazil, Canada, Kenya and Switzerland also joined in solidarity to learn from Ekta's tools and strategies.

Finally, the government was the main interlocutor. At the end of the march, the process of negotiation was held with the Minister of Rural Development.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

For more than 19 years, Ekta has carried out a process of youth empowerment based on "Education for life", as Gandhi said and practiced. Through various trainings, capacities are strengthened and community leaders are formed with a near-base education so that they can be agents of change, especially on land issues. In a way, Janadesh was also a result of that process. Many of the young people who were trained at the time participated in the lines of the march, leading, supporting logistical issues, and encouraging others with music, singing, and dancing.

On the other hand, the campaign taught many young people the importance of the land and the power of nonviolence to protect it.

HOW IT WORKED IN PRACTICE

MOBILIZING & TRAINING

The campaign began to be organized by going into villages and listening to people's stories about the lack of access to their lands and resources, facilitating a deeper understanding of the problem at the national level, and encouraging them to take ownership of the struggle. It was a three years process, which also included the training of 1500 community leaders for the operation of the march.

SEEKING DIALOGUE WITH THE COMPETENT AUTHORITIES

Once the possible solutions were identified, the movement took a step forward in developing a policy proposal and specific recommendations which were submitted to the concerned authorities. This seeks to establish a cooperative relationship with the government, and not just completely delegate responsibility to them. It also helps to empower the movement and to get credibility. If the interlocutor yet don't recognize it, then it is needed to take further actions and let them know about it.

STEP 3

MARCHING & MASS MOBILIZATION

Organizing a padayatra (foot-march) of thousands of landless people, all with the strong commitment of not taking a step back until they receive a response from the government, was the central action of the movement. Such determination is fundamental to gaining recognition and support from all sectors of the population to the extent possible, especially from public opinion. It also signals and put pressure on those directly responsible to act.

"From the past three and a half years, every day we were talking about Janadesh, but it was beyond my imagination. I still can't believe it... the ocean of the people, nonviolent people, simple people. They are tired but I see the courage they have. I see the way they walk. I see they have more and more hope each step, so this is very very important and historical".

Gauri Kulkani. Marcher, activist, and dancer.

STEP 4

FOLLOW-UP ON DIALOGUES

The negotiation of the specific changes in the land policies was extended to the constitution of two entities, in which an important representation of the movement was involved. Once the bases for a larger scope dialogue were established and some agreements undertaken, it was very important to follow up and oversee the implementation of the land reforms policy.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED

The impact of the People's Verdict led the government to establish a National Land Reforms Committee and Council with 50% of the new committee's members coming from grassroots and civil society organizations involved in the land rights movement.

Through these platforms, some changes were made at the policy level such as:

- /// the long-awaited amendments of the Land Acquisition Act;
- /// the proposal of a Resettlement and Rehabilitation Act that places the value of land at the social, cultural and economic level, and;
- /// the declaration and implementation of the Forest Rights Act, which resulted in nearly 100,000 tribal people receiving land rights within the operational area of Ekta Parishad. With the inspiration of the movement, over 5000 landholders were adopted organic low-cost farming in various states and several cooperatives also started for strengthening their local economy.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

- /// **The union of the fragmented struggles on land issues all over India, and keep it as a people's movement.** Most of the marchers had been displaced from their land and deprived of their livelihood resources, so their message was their personal experiences. From a nonviolent approach, this is very powerful when it comes to getting moral recognition from people outside the movement. On the other hand, when a struggle is built from the roots of structural and/or cultural violence, it is more likely to generate deeper change.
- /// **The campaign had clear, concrete, and feasible demands for specific authorities.** It helped to focus the attention on people's needs when making resolutions and agreements.
- /// **The good organization and coordination of the march in spite of its magnitude.** The previous trainings on logistics and security issues were key, as well as the discipline of the thousands of walkers, especially the group leaders who were in charge of keeping food, water, and basic needs covered.

LESSONS LEARNED

- /// Nonviolent actions like mass mobilizations are effective tools in a process of struggle when they succeed in gaining recognition and legitimacy of as many people as possible. The challenge is to convince others that it is also their struggle for a better society.
- /// As was seen with the process of dialogue that followed the march, the struggle is not an end in itself, but the way to achieve a change in power relations at a structural and cultural level.
- /// Janadesh was a great experience not only because of what it achieved in terms of land reforms but because it placed the land issues on various agendas, groups, and organizations (rural and urban) all over India. It was also a precedent for further campaigns.
- /// Youth is not only the audience of social movements, but they have the force and spirit to take up active participation. In order to consolidate a longterm process with young people, it is important to connect with the new and fresh ideas they can provide. This learning was taken to future actions, where young people had a greater influence on shaping campaigns.



Picture: © ILC/Simon Williams

READ MORE

- /// Nonviolent Action, Film by Hans Jürg:
<https://www.ektaparishadindia.org/mediaresources>
- /// Janadesh and a way forward. From institutional reforms to land reforms.
Ekta Parishad: <https://bit.ly/2DcadHh>

YOUTH CAMP: TRAINING ON NONVIOLENCE

WHAT IT IS

The youth camp is a training method developed for over 30 years by Ekta Parishad to prepare people to take up social change processes through nonviolence, and to become part of the movement.

Accordingly, it is based on a nonviolent pedagogy mainly shaped by Gandhian values and learnings. Some of them are duty to service, manual work, connection with the local and the land and the most important, satyagraha "*truth force or soul force*", a notion that seeks to vindicate the moral power over any other form of power, in order to achieve real social change towards more just and humane relationships.

ITS GOALS

In the early 90's Rajagopal P.V brought some of the nonviolent techniques to strengthen capacities of the tribal and rural communities in central and Eastern India for mobilization on keeping their land and livelihood resources.

Youth camp training aims to recognize people's strengths and constraints and, in the process, identify how their strengths can be leveraged for their own benefit, as well as to engage a wider segment of society in addressing a violent system and promoting a rights-based approach to land issues.

Furthermore, it is expected to form community leaders who, eventually, will also be able to play the role of educators in different areas such as: literacy on land policies and procedures, nonviolent tools, and promotion of dialogue.

ACTORS INVOLVED

Trainings are developed by the leaders and activist of the movement for young men and women between the ages of 18-50. Some of them are from tribal communities and rural areas.

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ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

Ekta Parishad workers who are already working in villages identify and nominate youth who have leadership potential with different skills in oratory, mobilizing people, interpersonal skills, in the arts (such as music, dance, theater etc), documentation, ability to articulate issues, among others.

Later, it is intended to engage them with villages and communities, creating trust and building knowledge from people's issues.

HOW IT WORKED IN PRACTICE

Trainings are participatory and informal processes, which over the years have been modified and adjusted to different needs and new ideas. The following steps don't mean to be 'recipe' but seek to provide some methodological keys that can help other movements.

STEP 1 |

CONFIDENCE-BUILDING

People work on developing their presentations skills to feel comfortable when giving information and performing in a group setting. Throughout the workshop, people take different responsibilities by simulating the role of community organizer. Everyone has something to contribute with regardless of social differences.

This step is key to get people to see that they are not socially defined by religion, by caste, by gender or by any power structure. The trainees are put in situations where traditionally held worldviews are challenged. For many of them, it is the first space where there is no gender bias, or where they can interact with people from different locations in the social hierarchy. This way they learn that self-transformation is the bases of social change.

STEP 2 |

MANUAL LABOUR

Participants would undertake a manual task, preferably one they like the least, such as cleaning a toilet or digging of a trench. This breaks down the mental barrier of dignity of labour in their minds. They are willing to take any job necessary for the "welfare of all"- sarvodaya, a nonviolent tenet of Gandhi.

Manual labour is also used as practice to instill discipline and physical effort, which will be necessary at the time of nonviolent action.

Trainees also learn the principle of teaching and learning by doing besides discussing. When Ekta's workers start their initiative in a new village, it is invariably through the process of shramdhan (volunteer labour). It opens up spaces for conversation and an opportunity to educate the villagers on the principle of 'doing what they can to improve their lives'.

STEP 3 |

SOCIAL ANALYSIS

Rounds of discussions are held in plenary and sub-group to develop a critical understanding of the structure of the society and its impact on their own situation. First, it is question whether the government has adhered to their Constitutional obligations since Independence. In a second round, trainees discuss with regard to the problems in the village. Problem-posing techniques are used to have people analyze and challenge those forces in society that kept them passive. This is part of a conscientization of their inner power and to build resistance to the kind of cooption that was carried out by their oppressors. This gives place to a third round in which people's responsibilities are examined. Dependence on the State is loosened so that people can determine a direction of development that is more just and equitable, and creatively use their own capacities to build themselves as self-reliant communities.

STEP 4 |

COMMUNICATIVE ARTS

One of the main objectives of the previous analysis is to build the capacity to communicate their situation to the communities they will start to mobilize after the training. Songs, slogans, and theatre techniques are used with that purpose. For people that are illiterate, these are very important tools to produce and re-produce knowledge, to convey clear messages, to weave a common culture, and to inspire villagers to take up collective action.

STEP 5 |

ENGAGEMENT WITH COMMUNITY

At the end of the youth camp there is a selection process in which those with the strongest leadership potential are selected for Ekta Parishad worker positions. The selected youth go through a month of field training in a new village where they get engage with the community and identify local issues by applying a survey. During that month they are mentored to develop skills to understand the intricacies of bureaucratic processes connected with land-entitlement, to communicate and dialogue with government and different authorities, and to create local-based initiatives for improving quality of life.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED

Thousands of young and marginalized people in rural India have been empowered and have strengthened their capacities to be effective actors of nonviolent change not only in their communities but nationally. Examples of this are campaigns like Janadesh, Jan Satyagraha and Janandolan, in which all that force has been condensed.

Trainings have also made it possible to have a sustainable movement over several generations. Many of today's community leaders came out of those processes.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

Near-base education. It is an educational process focused on the contexts and needs of the participants and their communities. It is in this way that meaningful knowledge can be built to change their concrete realities.

Theoretical & practical process. Manual work, communication activities and engagement with communities allow to put into practice and action theoretical discussions. Understanding land-related issues and structural violence is conceptual at the beginning until trainees are able to work hand to hand with villagers.

Self-transformation on the center. In the process, trainees understand that social structures are in each of them, in their ways of thinking and of relating to others. This is key for them to take responsibility and develop leadership.

LESSONS LEARNED

-The education that Ekta Parishad carries on can strengthen the formation of a community organization. However, forming disparate community organizations alone will not lead to the development of pro-poor policies and a just society. The strength of these community organizations will have to be pooled for collective nonviolent action to apply the desired moral pressure. The educational process must lead to action.

- Young people have many skills, knowledge and potential to make in-depth changes at the root of social disparities. They just need spaces where they can have the freedom to propose, develop their creativity and connect with their interests. Social movements have a lot to learn from them.



READ MORE

- /// A Pedagogy of Non-violent social action. Based on the work of Ekta Parishad. (2010):
<https://bit.ly/3gnNtCC>
- /// For more information, visit:
<https://www.ektaparishadindia.org/publication>



Picture: © ILC/Ekta Parishad

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PHOTOS https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/10hBVK0QBx8bFay/Uab3jvu5aVH-ka_XU

GO RURBAN

WHAT IT IS

Go Rurban is a youth movement aiming to create understanding and sensitivity about the highlights and shortcomings of both the rural and the urban lifestyles. It is a collaboration between Ekta Parishad, ANSH Happiness Society, and other partner organisations.

The name Go Rurban is a combination of the words “rural” and “urban”. This initiative, besides having led to a number of youth camps, is also a broader campaign where urban youth can explore and experience rural backgrounds, so the gap between the urban and rural dimensions can be bridged. Go Rurban is a journey to give, take and learn from nature, bringing together the youth of both rural and urban areas and creating a network of creative and sensitive minds that can spread the message of peace and non-violence.

ITS GOALS

In India, there tends to be a huge divide between the rural and the urban worlds. This is marked by a strong difference not only in environment and people’s livelihoods, but also in language and culture. On one hand, rural communities can be very isolated. People often belong to scheduled tribes, which have historically been marginalised. However, they are sometimes not even aware of their own marginalisation. On the other hand, urban youth are typically not aware of what living outside the city means, where the food they eat is coming from, and what it is like to live in a rural community.

The concept of Go Rurban took shape in 2017 during a Yatra in Chambal region with the founder of Ekta Parishad and Activist for Peace Rajagopal PV. Here villages are populated by Sehriya Tribe in Sheopur and Shivpuri in Madhya Pradesh. Urban youth participating in the Yatra came up with the idea to organise camps where urban youth could explore and experience rural life, better understanding rural people’s struggles for land and other livelihoods. This aimed to develop awareness among urban youth of the deeper reasons of the ongoing non-violent protests for land rights, peace and justice.

ACTORS INVOLVED

Rural and urban youth are the protagonists of the Go Rurban initiative. Additionally, in each camp a number of senior community members, local politicians or experts are involved, depending on the theme of the camp and the possibility to engage them.

Go Rurban is supported by a number of civil society and grassroots organisations, like Ekta Parishad, ANSH Happiness Society and the Blue Ribbon Movement.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

The initial idea stemmed from a group of urban youth, in conversation with the organisations above. Originally, it mostly focused on exploring the rural working area of Ekta Parishad.

After organising a number of youth camps, Go Rurban now involves urban participants through open calls disseminated online, especially through social media. Such calls raise a high level of interest and response. Urban youth are normally male and female college students from various fields of education or young professionals, coming from different parts of India.

Rural communities where camps take place are typically already known by Ekta Parishad and part of their network. Rural youth are curious and happy to get involved and to engage with urban youth, exchange with them and learn about their lifestyle.

HOW IT WORKED IN PRACTICE

ENGAGEMENT OF THE RURAL COMMUNITY

To begin, a rural community is identified and engaged to host a Go Rurban youth camp. The privileged connection of Ekta Parishad with a range of rural communities is key to establish the partnership.

LAUNCHING A CALL AND COLLECTING APPLICATIONS FROM URBAN YOUTH

A Google form is spread out through different social media networks and connections. Based on the applications that are received by filling out the form, a number of participants is selected, depending on the characteristics of each specific camp.

INTERVIEWS AND ORIENTATION

Participants go through a session of orientation and briefing, along with a personal interview with the camp's organisers. Logistical information is provided to all participants, as well as details about the rural community and information about the core ideology at the basis of the initiative. Such sessions can be in person or through remote connection, depending on where participants come from.

THE CAMP

During the camp, a range of activities are proposed to participants —some adapted methodologies of the Youth Camp trainings described in the previous section could also be applied in Go Rurban camps. Activities include working for the villagers, for example by cleaning, collecting trash or painting buildings; engaging in discussions on non-violence and justice with external guests invited to interact in dedicated sessions with urban and rural youth; visiting community members door to door to get to know the community better and understand people's lifestyle.

STEP 5

AFTER THE CAMP

Establishment of a broader youth network: After camps are over, young participants are full of enthusiasm for having lived a strong learning experience. Some rural and urban people keep in touch and become for each other points of reference in urban and rural areas. Among the urban youth, many camp participants decide to get involved in the work of Ekta Parishad or other organisations or movements, having increased their awareness of land and indigenous peoples' issues, and improved their understanding of the non-violence philosophy and approach. A number of youths also get involved in nonviolent marches and events, and those who cannot do this for logistical reasons, provide support through social media.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED

Thanks to the Go Rurban initiative, urban youth learn about

- /// peace and non-violence
- /// the rural and tribal culture and folk
- /// appreciating life and nature, even when adopting minimalistic habits without any luxuries
- /// the challenges that rural people face in their daily life
- /// balancing 'giving' and 'taking' with respect to people in rural villages and nature.

Additionally, thanks to the experiences offered by Go Rurban, a non-violent youth leadership takes shape in-between rural and urban areas.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

The planning of the camps is based on an open and participatory approach, to make sure the needs of the rural community are well understood and the presence of urban youth is in line with them and gives a positive contribution.

The activities undertaken during the camps are dynamic and open to both urban and rural participants, with the objective of reducing the initially perceived divide between urban and rural people and of creating a pleasant and friendly atmosphere.

At the same time, all proposed activities are instrumental for participants to experience and understand the rural community's lifestyle, the issues rural people face and their struggles, so as to challenge prejudice and preconceived ideas and bring about real change through their increased awareness.



LESSONS LEARNED

In rural areas, there is a lot of unexplored potential that urban people are not aware of. Becoming aware of opportunities in rural areas, while at the same time understanding the principles of non-violence, allows both rural and urban people to more effectively engage with other individuals and with institutions for a positive change in society.

It is a life-changing realization for urban people to see that there is no superiority of the urban over the rural, and that in reality, while it is possible for the rural to survive without the urban, the opposite is not possible.

At the same time, rural people get rid of their sense of inferiority. They get to learn about the opportunities the urban offers and through the urban youth that they meet, they can benefit from support and connections in the city to fulfil their aspirations.

Until now, Go Rurban has mainly targeted urban youth. It would be ideal if in the future the programme expanded to involving rural youth more actively, bringing them at the centre of the initiative. One step in this direction is the setting up of a Go Rurban store in Bhopal, where rural people can sell their products, often unknown or unavailable in cities, to urban customers.

Finally, in the future the Go Rurban team wishes to expand the initiative to rural communities not already connected with civil society organisations, to increase rural participation from outside pre-existing networks.

READ MORE

- /// <https://varunspixography.wordpress.com/2017/12/30/gorurban-initiative-to-bridge-the-gap-between-rural-and-urban-india/>
- /// <https://mitaanexpress.com/go-rurban/>
- /// <https://www.facebook.com/gorurban>

ANANT MANDI: A COMMUNITY RUN INITIATIVE TO ORGANIZE AN ORGANIC FARMERS' MARKET AND TO PROMOTE HEALTHY AND SUSTAINABLE LIVING PRACTICES

WHAT IT IS

Anant Mandi is an organic farmers' market led by a group of young people that connects urban consumers directly with the food they eat and to the farmers that grow it.

Since February 2019, consumers, organic farmers and *"their products"* —mainly from the city of Bhopal and its surroundings— come together twice a month to exchange experiences, learn from each other and build together a healthy lifestyle. Anant Mandi is more than a market. It is an educational and cultural space that promotes friendly environmental and sustainable consuming practices by raising awareness about the importance of organic agriculture and its positive effects on human health, climate change, biodiversity and soil quality. Apart from just food products, there are many other small entrepreneurs, artisans and artists who manufacture products (e.g. cosmetics, handicrafts, textiles) in an ecologically sustainable manner, also showcasing the essence of local culture.

ITS GOALS

Many consumers are aware that inorganically cultivated food is unhealthy to great extent, but do not know how to switch and what to switch to. They are looking for healthy food choices, but they are mostly expensive and available in large supermarket chains only. On the other hand, there are numerous small farmers and entrepreneurs striving to innovate with healthier, organic, more environmentally sustainable cultivation techniques, but hardly find a market and visibility. Where would consumers find them? How can such products be made available and affordable to the masses?

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PHOTOS https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1f6oXdVq-bmAtJ7P9_YahU6AezVe2yj

Having identified this situation in Bhopal, a group of young people launched Anant Mandi so that people could buy directly from farmers and farmers could access a market without intermediaries. The main goal of Anant Mandi is to create a culture of sustainable and healthy lifestyle in urban areas, and help people adopt such practices. It also aims to:

- /// Enhance and build good relationships between farmers and consumers and, in turn, strengthen local communities
- /// Help people understand the process in which the food they eat is cultivated, and through this process raise awareness and learn about land, organic agriculture, and environmental issues
- /// Engage and educate more youngsters into the discourse and practice of sustainability and land-related issues to start making behavioral changes in their own places and lifestyles
- /// Promote local economy

ACTORS INVOLVED

Anant Mandi was initiated by a group of young volunteers associated to Ekta Parishad, Go Rurban, Anant and Gandhi Bhawan. These youngsters are responsible for the whole process of organizing and promoting the initiative.

Farmers offering their products in Anant Mandi do chemical free farming and are mainly based in urban spaces of nine districts of Madhya Pradesh state. Most of them own their own lands and have started their small businesses. Although Anant Mandi farmers are basically urban, they connect with rural producers through the cooperatives they run. Thus, Anant Mandi also offers products cultivated by the few organic rural farmers of the different villages around Bhopal (organic farming practices are still very limited in rural areas).

Consumers are urban people of Bhopal in search of healthier and sustainable practices, which are captured through the various outreach channels. Many of them have already become frequent and active customers.

As the idea is to create a space where people can interact, learn and enjoy, many people visit the market to eat the food prepared freshly from organic products and offered there, and to engage in the different activities happening.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

The initiative stemmed from youth. They are responsible for the logistics, organizing and outreach of every event (market), which involves at least 10-12 volunteers. The team is also dedicated to engage with the visitors (farmers and customers) and to the side activities happening during the market: workshops, food, cultural forums, theater, concerts.

Youth makes this market not “normal”. It is a festive, diverse and interactive space where people come to have a vibrant experience every two-weekends. Anant Mandi is an open space that welcomes people who have different ways of thinking but the similar goal of adopting more sustainable and healthier practices.

HOW IT WORKED IN PRACTICE

STEP 1

FORMING A TEAM.

A group of 8-10 young people from other initiatives (Go Rurban, Ekta Parishad, Anant) decided to come together to design a solution for the problem identified: to close the gap between consumers and farmers, and respond to the need for education on food and environmental issues. They invited a couple of farmers to the team, who participated in the conceptualization of the initiative and helped identify other producers.

STEP 2

IDENTIFYING AND REACHING OUT TO FARMERS.

The leading team identified a first group of 4-5 farmers: farmers that were already associated to the initiatives they were working in and even to their own families. Through them, other producers were contacted. In some cases, the team made a verification of the organic farming processes by discussing with farmers and visiting their farms.

STEP 3

ORGANIZING AND CREATING THE EVENT.

All the collected information, resources and contacts were collated to give shape to the event. The different tasks were distributed to different teams: a logistic team ensured that people and things were in place for the market; a communications team prepared outreach and advertising material and identified the available channels to promote the event; and a team responsible for the side events (workshops, games, forums, artistic presentations) programmed them to be introduced in the market.

STEP 4

OUTREACHING.

Communication and outreach are crucial to ensure a good level of attendance at the event and a good media coverage for the next cycle of events. It is important to: i) prepare a good list of media people and sources (from traditional and non-traditional media), ii) prepare communications and outreaching materials accordingly (including nice social media pages); and ii) explain media contacts about the event and engage them in the cause. Social media is effective as everybody can be involved in promoting the event. Also, traditional media, such as radio and newspapers, are still very effective especially in local contexts.

DOCUMENTING.

Building and maintaining a database of consumers is crucial to see who the visitors are and to keep them informed about coming events. Through them, more people are reached out. Collecting testimonials from consumers and documenting the interactions between them and farmers—as well as the little things happening in the market—are a very good way to show the benefits of the initiative for both parts and for the community as a whole. Farmers stories (their duties, journeys and even their sales in the market) are also helpful to show the essence of the initiative and raise awareness about the issues behind.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED**From the farmers end**

- /// Local producers have gotten access to a wider market, and established longer-term relations with consumers; some of them becoming permanent customers. Regular markets gather around 150 consumers and special events, such as the celebration of its first anniversary, Anant Mandi received between 800-1000 visitors.
- /// Interactions between farmers have led to more collaboration opportunities and learning exchanges. Farmers are now connected and organize activities (e.g. visits to each other's farms) to know about others' farming processes, discuss productivity issues and learn new techniques. So far, Anant Mandi has associated with 20 to 25 farmers, which 10 on a regular basis.
- /// People have converted to more sustainable consuming practices by getting organic supplies from the market and by learning home gardening from Anant Mandi promoters (leading group and farmers providing techniques, advice and even seeds to cultivate their own products).

From the youth point of view

- /// Youth is more empowered. Anant Mandi offers youth an open space to enhance skills, and explore and put their potential into practice to bring about change.
- /// Youth is more aware about the importance of sustainability issues and healthier lifestyles in the city. By connecting agricultural processes to their urban dynamics and role, many youngsters have started to practice and teach urban gardening techniques.
- /// Anant Mandi's identity is consolidated as a place led by youth that connects people, offers eco-conscious choices and learning opportunities, and where connections and change happen.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

- /// Strong networking and good communication have allowed to reach out to an important number of visitors and keep many of them as frequent consumers.
- /// Diversity brought by youth participation and leadership is a huge source for creativity and energy, which make Anant Mandi a vibrant place.
- /// Collective ownership by farmers, volunteers and consumers has ensured high engagement and a strong collective work.

LESSONS LEARNED

- /// Building and maintaining good informal relations. Interactions with farmers and customers are not transactional. It is about building trust, friendship and love, which increase the involvement of and connection between people. Sustainability is a journey where everyone is involved. Anant Mandi is like a family working together.
- /// Collaboration is one of the biggest elements for success, which can even minimize financial issues. Collaborative relations are the basis of Anant Mandi, which collaborates simultaneously with other small youth groups.
- /// Although financial sustainability has not been a big problem, figuring out a good financial model is necessary to make Anant Mandi sustainable over time.
- /// Sharing ownership. Youth volunteers, farmers and consumers feel Anant Mandi as their own place where they can innovate, make proposals and act to help empower local communities and economies.

READ MORE

- /// Facebook Page:
<https://www.facebook.com/anantmandibhopal>
- /// <https://www.business-standard.com/multimedia/video-gallery/general/anant-mandi-organised-in-bhopal-to-promote-ecological-farming-89844.htm>
- /// <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2019/state-editions/anant-mandi-held-on-sunday-at-gandhi-bhawan.htm>
- /// <https://www.freepressjournal.in/bhopal/bhopal-anant-mandi-organized-to-promote-organic-farming>



Picture: © ILC/Ekta Parishad

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PHOTOS <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1r1QPytPfe2wRP5pEa5ERDUgqDHJ79rz90?usp=sharing>

ANSH HAPPINESS SOCIETY

WHAT IT IS

ANSH Happiness Society is a youth-led organization that offers a platform for young people to explore and implement their ideas by using different and innovative mediums. It also connects youth with other organizations and individuals in the field of social development.

Based in Bhopal, ANSH is led by young volunteers from different regions and engages with diverse people, audiences and organisations, which makes it an open and highly rich creative space for social change.

ITS GOALS

ANSH is the abbreviation for Act Non-Sense Spread Happiness. It was established in 2014 by a group of young students who realized that even though the youth was full of ideas and motivation, they lacked opportunities to channelize this energy. They created ANSH as a space led by and made for young people under the principle that youth must act. Whatever happens, every experience is a learning path that helps youth, and any person, recognize themselves.

ANSH aims to offer an appropriate platform for youth to express their ideas and explore creative solutions for social problems. It is also a means for personal exploration and growth.

ACTORS INVOLVED

Inclusion is one of ANSH's main components. ANSH targets young people from diverse backgrounds and organisations, including university students, young farmers, youth from grassroots organisations and others working government institutions. Anyone can join. For some specific initiatives, ANSH has partnered with organisations such as UNICEF and Ekta Parishad.

Core implementers are young volunteers also from diverse backgrounds who take different roles in managing, organizing and mobilising youth.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

ANSH Happiness Society was ideated by the youth and for the youth. It works like an incubator of ideas where youth themselves cultivate them and mature them into action through different mediums.

Some important initiatives bringing youth on board include:

- /// Summer Internship, which promotes exposure-based learning. It is a 30-day program gathering 30+ interns who meet each day with an influencer sharing varied experiences. Participants also learn many things from planning to execution.
- /// Mehfil is a space for young artist to express. It also helps them to nurture in the art form they pursue. In 2016 the first open mic initiative was held in Bhopal, in which singers, poets and storytellers got an opportunity to perform in an open space. Open mic has become very popular in Bhopal now and is a very effective way to disseminate social concerns.
- /// Kaafila is a space for performing arts to address social issues. It is majorly focused on theatre based on the principle that youth has the potential to promote positive change through new trends and creative ideas.
- /// Youth for Children is an initiative that mobilizes and sensitizes young people to become advocates for Rights of Children.

HOW IT WORKED IN PRACTICE

BUILDING THE BASIS.

A group of 20 people who believed in the power of youth came together and decided to act. After setting the main goals of their initiative, they identified possible areas of work: issues that attract youth and that are in the need of the youth, such as the connection of youth with rural areas, coworking opportunities, entrepreneurship, inequality, arts. Resource persons were also listed and then contacted to brainstorm with them on possible solutions.

ENGAGING VOLUNTEERS.

With first ideas set, the recruitment of collaborators was done through friends, a very active word of mouth, social media and other initiatives taking place. For example, the first edition of the Summer Internship was a big opportunity to attract and engage more young volunteers.

STEP 4 | STEP 3

IMPLEMENTING ACTIONS.

When ideas and proposals are received, a brainstorming is done to come up with possible solutions and spaces to implement them. This can also include fundraising solutions, for example through different creative ways (e.g. by cooking and selling meals in events) or by engaging with other organisations.

DOCUMENTATION AND REFLECTION.

Audiovisual documentation of the different initiatives is important for evaluation and improvement as well as for communication purposes. After every ANSH initiative/activity, promoters identify lessons and reflect on them.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED

High visibility in the media has put youth and social issues in the local agenda.

Various directions and opportunities opened for youth involved in ANSH. Some of them have started their own organisations, for example Netri Foundation that works for women's full and effective participation in politics. Other two ANSH volunteers who used to sell cakes in ANSH festivals as a way to raise funds have opened their own bakeries and support other people in food related issues.

Development and empowerment of youth. They have not only increased their contacts and networks, but also strengthened their confidence by developing speaking, management and other skills.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

- /// Diversity and openness. One of ANSH main principles is to accept, explore and promote diversity. It has a broad vision regarding the people involved and also the initiatives and solutions explored.
- /// Youth's energy and dedication. ANSH volunteers spend long hours and days gathered in Gandhi Bhawan to reflect on solutions for different social problems. They are always ready and have no limits to find solutions.
- /// Youth leadership. An active and self-regulating attitude is key for volunteers to take ownership and bring something out from ideas.



Picture: © ILC/Ekta Parishad

LESSONS LEARNED

- / Diversity enriches all the experiences, but can also bring conflict. Keeping a positive mind and an attitude of fun based on the idea that every experience is a learning process have helped resolve differences.
- / Every member has a responsibility, which contributes to a greater ownership and engagement.
- / Flexibility is crucial – there are multiple ways to approach every idea. A growth mindset is always helpful to challenge existing beliefs and processes. Managing the unstructured is important to find solutions (certain structure) that will allow achieving the goals.

"ANSH has always been sort of like a laboratory according to me—with different apparatuses, different setups, diverse and eager people with whom you imagine, experiment and explore. Everything and everyone taught us something. We explored different facets of theatre for social change here with Kaafila which inculcated a deep sense of responsibility in us."

Testimonial by Sahil Khan (a volunteer at ANSH)



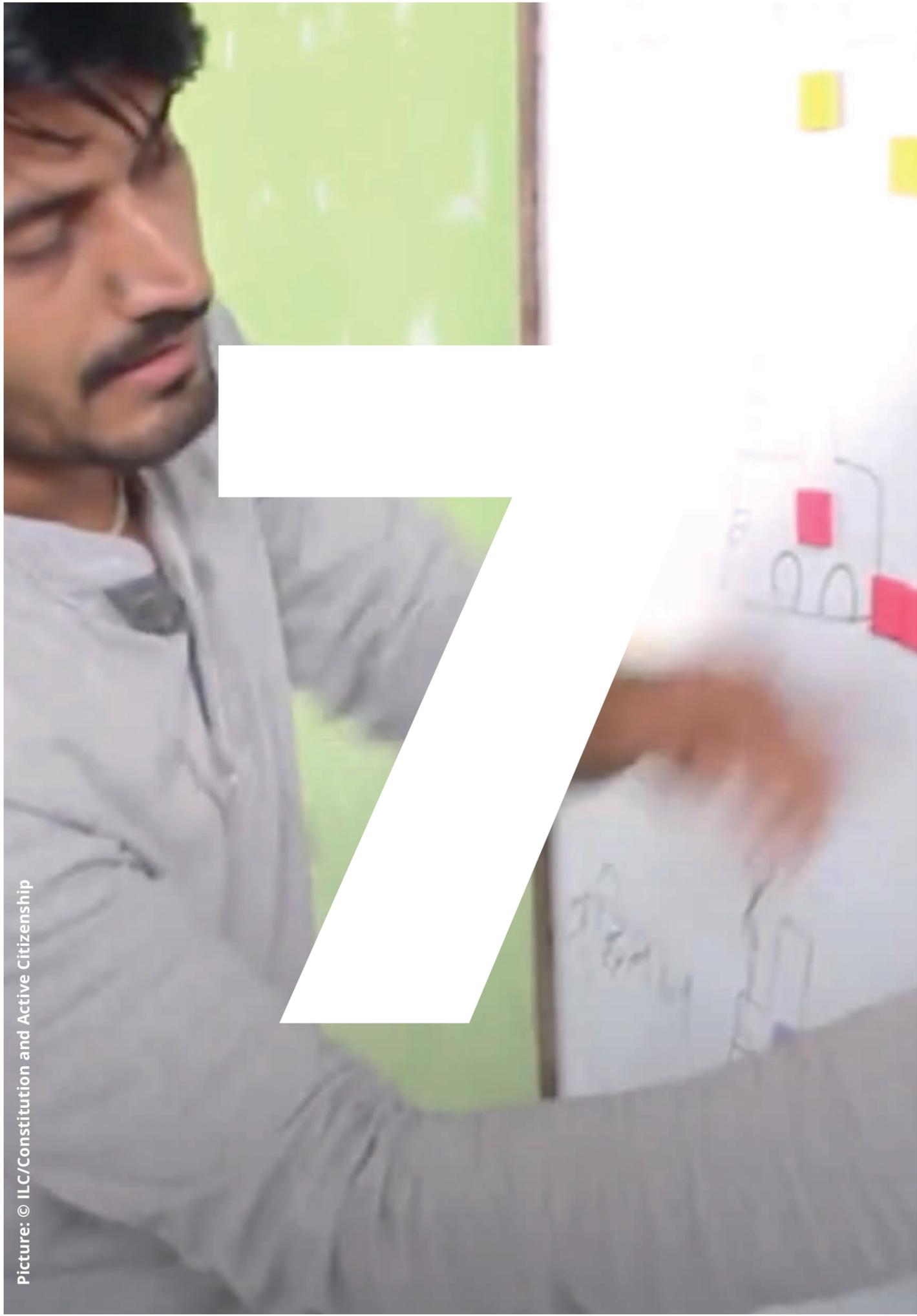
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- / <https://www.facebook.com/HappinessANSH>
- / <https://www.theoptimistcitizen.com/this-unique-internship-by-ansh-happiness-society-is-using-the-power-of-the-youth-for-social-development/>
- / <http://samarpita.in/sports-4-development-i-ansh-happiness-society/>
- / <https://thelogicalindian.com/amp/story-feed/get-inspired/nukkad-marathon/>

"I have always enjoyed learning and working with people who really want to make something out of the very ordinary things. This is just what I have been experiencing at ANSH in the past few years. Not just the initiatives that we work for, but every volunteer, every team member has something unique to add to the cause and that makes it something simple yet special in its own way. The liveliness of the people here makes this place even more dynamic."

Testimonial by Anupama Sarathe (a volunteer at ANSH)



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VIDEO <https://youtu.be/L0rCaSnIxss>

CONSTITUTION AND ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP

WHAT IT IS

The initiative "*Constitution and Active Citizenship*" is a programme set up by youth for youth to increase their understanding and awareness of the values and rights at the basis of democracy.

The programme consists of a series of experiential workshops targeting youth, and enriched with games, discussions and reflections. These aim to make participants experience the importance of the Constitution's principles in their daily life.

Workshop participants can range from college students, to representatives of Panchayats (rural parliaments) or other young professionals, such as teachers. Many of these people have experienced land issues and struggles on the ground through their work or because of their place of origin. Therefore, while the broader programme focuses on the Constitution and the principles orienting the Indian society on paper, in practice workshops also cover topics that are of direct interest to the target groups, such as for example indigenous peoples' rights or the application of the Forest Rights Act and other land related laws.

ITS GOALS

The programme started in 2015, when a group of young people identified the need of bringing the Indian Constitution closer to citizens. Most people in India perceive the Indian Constitution exclusively as a set of laws, ignoring that it is based on the principles of liberty, fraternity, equity and justice, which are highlighted in the Constitution's preamble. The preamble is a vision document that aims to guide society.

Through workshops of several days (from one to three days), "*Constitution and Active Citizenship*" aims to disseminate knowledge about:

- /// The values in the Indian Constitution's preamble
- /// What it means to be a citizen
- /// Rights and duties, and what these entail in people's daily life
- /// Responsibilities of the institutions
- /// Importance of education in the constitutional framework
- /// The Forest Rights Act, land issues and indigenous peoples' issues, when this is relevant to the target group.

ACTORS INVOLVED

Each workshop involves a group of youth who have something in common: for example, they are students in the same college or they are employed in Panchayats.

The organising team is composed of a group of young people who takes care of developing the curriculum for each workshop and of organising the logistics.

Sometimes, facilitators with specific expertise are involved in the workshops, depending on the features of the curriculum that was designed.

Such facilitators are always engaged on a voluntary basis.

The programme benefits from the support of more established civil society organisations such as Agrini and We The People.

ENGAGEMENT OF YOUTH

The initiative stemmed from a group of young people and it is currently directed to youth from various backgrounds and occupations – they can be urban youth; college students coming from suburban or rural areas or belonging to scheduled tribes; young professionals. People decide to participate based on personal interest, partnerships that are put in place or specific opportunities.

While the participants and the organisers of the workshops are typically youth, facilitators and experts involved can be from other age groups (for example, they can be senior land rights activists, Panchayat representatives or forest officials). However, overall the initiative sees a predominant participation of young people.

HOW IT WORKS IN PRACTICE

CHOOSING THE TARGET GROUP

The organising team identifies a potential group of participants and gathers information regarding their interests and needs. Sometimes the target group is chosen strategically. For example, schools are often targeted, as working with students is considered particularly effective. Working with teachers is often a consequence of engaging students in schools. However, it can also happen that the target group is identified based on a contingent opportunity, after coming into contact with representatives from the group in events or marches.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE CURRICULUM

The curriculum for the workshop is designed according to the interests and needs of the target group. Based on a broader framework created by the organising team, activities are adapted and customised each time, based on discussions with the target group and other actors engaged.

STEP 3 |

ESTABLISHING PARTNERSHIPS

It is key to set up a partnership with institutions, such as schools or Panchayats, so that participants are allowed and encouraged to participate. Sometimes, agreements are taken to hold two or three workshops on a regular basis within the same supporting institutions.

STEP 4 |

THE WORKSHOPS

After defining the logistics, the actual workshops take place. The venues hosting the workshops can change, depending on the number of participants and other circumstances. For example, normally workshops with college students happen directly in the college. The training that is offered tends to use a quite informal approach, which entails starting with a song or a dance to break the ice, sitting on the ground in a circle, performing dynamic activities throughout the session. The final part of each workshop is dedicated to the elaboration of follow-up action projects based on what was learnt. These can be either group or individual projects.

STEP 5 |

FOLLOW-UP ACTION PROJECTS

On the basis of their learning, participants design their own project. For teachers, for example, it can be a project to carry out with students, as part of their regular teaching. Informally, the organising team monitors how participants have used what they have learnt in the training after it is completed.

WHAT IT ACHIEVED

In five years, “*Constitution and Active Citizenship*” has engaged around 25,000 people from different backgrounds: teachers, Panchayat representatives, college students, school students, youth leaders and activists.

The initiative has achieved to facilitate young people to use a rights-based approach in any case or controversy concerning forest rights, employment, education or land rights issues.

KEY FACTORS OF SUCCESS

- /// A good design of the curriculum, which properly addresses and responds to the needs of the participants. Having an experiential training is extremely effective in making people understand the importance of principles and rights in real life.
- /// The peer-to-peer formula adopted in this programme is key to actively engage young people and turn them into potential agents of change.
- /// The organising team is extremely passionate about disseminating knowledge regarding the Constitution’s values and human and land rights. The programme is entirely based on voluntary contributions, so commitment and motivation of the people steering it are crucial.

LESSONS LEARNED

Until now, running this programme has been a learning experience even for the organising team. For the future, there is the intention to turn this quite informal experience into a scalable and more structured programme.

The importance of citizenship education as part of formal education at school or of professional training, has emerged very clearly from this programme. When people only acquire technical skills as part of their education, they learn in a vacuum and will be unable to be promoters of change in society.



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