

Yuva Mandal (Youth Group)

“Youth are not useless but youth are used less”. – Swami Chinmayananda

Fifty-four percent of India's youth are members of youth groups. Seventy percent of those involved reside in villages. In the field of rural development, youth can play a vital role. CORD is trying to harness the youths' potential and energy. Youth are the future of our country. Imparting spiritual knowledge to them with values would go a long way to develop and divert their energy and innovative ways of thinking to shape a prosperous society based on character and firm foundation.

Youth, as the future, need to have their energies and dynamism channelled in the appropriate directions. CORD has established youth groups in the villages. A total of approximately 280 youth groups of CORD have been built at various sites in Himachal Pradesh, Orissa and Tamilnadu. Regular youth group meetings encourage activities such as self-development, leadership skills, representation in local governance, natural resource management and even include the



organization of social activities (e.g. cricket matches etc.).

Youth Follow-up at CORD center

Currently there are approximately 4500 youths involved. This year CORD trained more than 186 new village volunteer resource persons (VVRP) on different subjects like HIV/AIDS, alcohol abuse awareness and female foeticide. CORD organizes regular monthly follow up programmes both inside and outside the centre that include a variety of activities on different issues through group discussions, plays, songs, games, external speakers etc.

The vision of CORD to harness human resources and enable the poor to transform their lifestyles through programmes that they drive is an integral part of CORD's programmes. It facilitates participatory, integrated and sustainable development for the poor through the youth groups as well as networking with other resources such as the Nehru Yuva Kendra and District Sports Department. Members of youth associated with the Chinmaya Mission too volunteer in CORD's youth programmes to add color and variety to youth groups.

What is Yuva Mandal?

Yuva Mandal groups consist of youth between the ages of 15 to 35. These youth groups create organizations for the development of their respective villages. Yuva mandal is the platform through which youth can develop the ability to discuss personal and village related problems and find the appropriate solutions.

Objectives of Yuva Mandal?

The objective of Yuva Mandal is to mobilize and harness the energy of youth for their growth and for the collective development of the village. The youth need to be guided

in a positive direction towards opportunities for livelihood through self employment as well as jobs by building their capacities and skills. Not only do the youth need to be groomed for personal development but they need to also become responsible citizens by active involvement in socio economic and political, environmental, health and education issues collectively to make relevant changes in their communities.

Some achievements of Youth Mandal through the year 2007-08 include:

- Organized programmes on different issues like alcohol abuse, gender discrimination, etc.
- Provided tuitions for local school students for some preparation for their school/college exams.
- Increased participation in Up-gram Sabhas & Gram Sabhas through special programs.
- Lead construction activities:- Yuva Mandals



Yuva Mandal Members constructing a toilet



constructed roads, low-cost toilets, temples, kuhls (irrigation channels) and bowries (traditional water resources) and maintained water harvesting tanks.

- Kept the community clean – facilitating garbage pits, toilets, cleaning drives of roads, of sports grounds, and of bowries

- Conducted classes on education and careers orientation covering areas of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, forestry and allied activities.
- Till June 08, CORD Sidhbari has trained 178 youngsters in basic computer course through Yuva se Yuva (CYsY) program. In the other site of CORD at Thamraipakkam too, members of youth groups are being trained in computer skills through a basic computer course.
- 17th May 2007, a workshop “Achieve the Goal” was organized for 170 youth participants including disabled youth. The Canadian High Commissioner Mr. David Malone graced the occasion.





Right to Information (RTI) and National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) participated by 105 youth.

- Organized a competitive cricket match as well as a volleyball tournament, to create stronger bonds and interest in new members.
- On 22nd April 2007, a workshop on Leadership and Growth training “Just Think” was organized; workshop was attended by 86 youth of nearby villages.
- 11th May 2007, a workshop was organised to increase awareness on Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme

- Celebrated Swami Vivekananda Jayanti as National Youth Day (12th January). Plays, songs and speeches were performed to commemorate the contribution of Swami Vivekananda. The event received significant media coverage.



- Yuva Mandal



regularly conducts awareness rallies time to time such as on Environmental, Alcohol, Gender discrimination, Female Foeticide and other social issues etc. to

Formation of Youth Clubs:

- Mobilize the youth for meeting, by first visiting the village's Mahila Mandal with the remark, “We are making a Yuva Mandal and the meeting is at so- and –so time at a center location of the village, and both boys and girls should come.” The Mahila Mandal members are also invited, while the mothers “having learnt so much from CORD” are instrumental in sending the girls and boys for the meeting next month.
- The youth purchase ‘two registers’ – one for activities and minutes of the meetings and the other for ‘chanda’ (collection) from the members when they come for the meeting as schedule. The membership fee is Rs. two to five/per member/per club.
- In the first meeting the group is formed with interested youth, rules and regulations discussed, with understanding of how to work the two registers, and electing of the office bearers.
- CORD used to conduct Yuva Mandal meetings in the afternoon till the year 2003. However, later on it changed the meeting time to late evenings, because most of

the members were away from homes for jobs or were in the school or the colleges during the day time. Dramatic shift! The YM Core Team workers would then start their day at 2:00 p.m and visit the village's Mahila Mandal meeting in progression to understand the issues and then later bring up these issues in the youth meetings.

- Ensuring that the MM and YM meets would be held on the same day helped us to strengthen the youth programme which was not the case earlier.
- By the third month grassroots planning for their needs, besides the role that the YM could play was discussed.
- The implementation stage for Yuva Mandals usually begins from the fourth / fifth month.
- By the sixth/ seventh month, the Yuva Mandal's capability is assessed along with the initiative being taken by it.
- The Yuva Mandal applies for registration once they are regular in their monthly meetings and activities with Block Development Office entitling them to be facilitated and assisted by them besides the recognition it gains from being a registered body.

General topics usually discussed at Yuva Mandal

Social

- Caste System
- Alcoholism
- Old Traditions
- Literacy
- Gender Issue
- Illiteracy
- Disability
- Unemployment
- Education
- Dowry
- Migration
- Informal legal topic



Tuition classes at Tamraipakkam, Tamilnadu

Economics

- Providing training time to time on agricultural (Growing of Oyster Mushrooms, Vermin Compost)
- Giving training on Income generation Activities

Sports

- Organization of Sports events.
- Giving information on Sports Departments
- Giving information on Nehru Yuva Kandra.
- Cultural and National Programmes

Spiritual

- Celebration of festivals.
- Sawayadha (Self Un-foldment)



- Temple construction
- Parbhat Feri.
- Jagran (Jagrata)

Health

- Family planning
- Aids/HIV
- Individual Cleanliness
- Female Foeticide

Members of youth club in Tampraipakkam,
Orissa

Politics

- Importance of Up- Gram Sabha and Gram Sabha.
- Good relations with Panchayat members, Panchayat Samiti and Zila Parsid
- Importance of Panchayati Raj
- What are the Panchayat powers
- Discussions on **NREGA** and **RTI**

Environment

- Cleanliness of roads and schools
- Cleanliness of Natural water resources
- Construction of Toilets
- Plantation of trees
- Sanitation
- Rain Water Harvesting
- Water shed related topics

Village Voluntary Resource Person (VVRP)

CORD initiated the Village Voluntary Resource Person Training programme in Khas (focused) and Super Khas Panchayats in Sidhbari. The resource people are currently being trained in HIV/AIDS awareness, Female Foeticide awareness, and Alcohol Abuse awareness.

1. Alcohol Abuse Awareness:-

A. Definition: The misuse of alcohol despite knowing the negative effects associated with it calls for greater emphasis to make youth imbibe its ill effects and change habits towards healthier practices.

B. Effect: Being drunk or hung over during work hours can result in loss of employment, which can lead to financial and social problems. Gradually health deteriorates – thus leading to inability to support the family.



- C. Youth are made to see that it is smarter to say **NO** to alcohol than be weak enough to succumb to its ill effects by not having the courage to refuse alcohol and drugs when faced with peer pressure.
- D. Alcoholics are encouraged by CORD to avail CORD's treatment facility in its OPD at Sidhbari.

2 HIV / AIDS

- A. Simple definition of HIV & AIDS is explained to the youth with special attention to its modes of transmission through unsafe sex and blood transfusions, infected syringes and intra-placental transmission and Intranatal to a baby. It is an incurable disease. The illness slowly deteriorates the immunity system of the body and makes it impossible to fight any other illness.



B Effect: Over half of all infection worldwide each year is among young people between the age of 15 and 24. Every day more than 60,000 young people become infected with HIV-almost five every minute. Yet the needs of world's over one billion young people are often ignored when strategies on HIV/AIDS are drafted, policies developed, and budgets allocated. This is especially tragic as young people are more likely to be infected. Young people are vulnerable to HIV infection because they lack the crucial information, education and services to protect themselves. HIV and AIDS is not a visible illness and so it can be difficult to know whether one has it. The youth in the Yuva Mandals are made aware of how AIDS is transmitted, how to prevent themselves from getting it and how to check if they have it or not. A government-based hospital called ICTC (Integrated counseling and test centre) is available for testing in certain Districts of India.

3. Female Foeticide

A Definition: Female foeticide is the killing of the baby girl foetus by abortion. Before taking birth the sex of the foetus is identified by ultrasound. It is illegal in India for the sex of the child to be told to the parents or relatives as people prefer boys to girls and about female foetus due to marked gender discrimination in the society.

B Effect: Female foeticide creates an imbalance in the male to female sex ratio. Besides this, a false perception of the female being beneath and dependent on the male is created which prevents them from progressing.

The Challenges

- The call of the cities is a huge boulder blocking the Yuva Mandal's development efforts, and it is imperative to try and contain the



Exposure Trip Yuva Mandal Team

migration. The big question – How to make agriculture hip and happening? Earnings alone will not suffice, for it is the overall quality of life and not to forget the excitement that cities supposedly provide which draws hordes of villagers. Ironically, this is as true for the Yuva Mandal Core team as it is for its constituency.

- The increased politicization of life too is a challenge with a community divided between different political ideologies. The pulls and pushes of power are leaving their mark and the Yuva Mandal has got its work cut out
- The youth being very fluid grow find their feet academically professionally martially and their impressionable dispensation is compounded when they are in groups. This affects the quality, the quantity and the ability to pursue in a synergized and consistent manner the development of their villages. The departure of a good leader for a better job more often than not breaks the group.

CORD is well aware of the aspirations of youth. However, it is time that the rural areas are built to provide jobs and opportunities to the youth by providing urban facilities to rural areas as envisaged by the former President of India Shri Abdul Kalam. Migration creates slums in the already crowded cities collapsing under inadequate facilities and infrastructures that make living conditions for the poor extremely unhealthy and taxing. To create rural wealth, agriculture and allied sector in the rural area needs to be built up along with natural resource management so that resources of the rural area can be mobilized towards sustainable environmental and ecological development that nurtures all beings. CORD has been working with the youth to develop their interest in farm and allied sectors along with natural resource management to sustain it.