

MADHYA PRADESH STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT

2025





About Synergy Sansthan

Established in 2006, Synergy Sansthan has become a beacon of empowerment for young people¹ across Madhya Pradesh, directly working in districts like Harda, Khandwa, Khargone, Barwani, Indore, Rajgarh, Vidisha, Damoh, Chatarpur, Guna and Bhopal. Born out of the vision and commitment of a few passionate youth leaders from rural India, the organization has grown into a powerful movement advocating for a youth-led, gender-just and participatory development paradigm. From its humble beginnings, Synergy Sansthan has evolved into a promising force in youth empowerment in Madhya Pradesh, currently operating directly across 11 districts and extending its reach to 21 districts through strategic partnerships and collaborative networks. Over the past 19 years, the organization has touched the lives of over 3 lakh adolescents and youth from marginalized tribal, rural and semi-urban communities—nurturing leadership, strengthening agency and catalysing grassroots change. At the heart of Synergy's work is the empowerment of adolescents and young people, especially those from Scheduled Tribes, Scheduled Castes, religious minorities and people with different gender identities. Flagship initiatives such as HumRahi, Udaan Fellowship and Yuvalaya have consistently demonstrated that when rural and tribal youth are given the right platforms, they emerge as resilient leaders, social entrepreneurs and advocates for justice within their communities.

Vision: To empower a generation of transformative young leaders, co-creating a just, inclusive and equitable society for all.

Mission: To nurture rural, tribal and urban youth by building leadership, future-ready skills and supportive ecosystems, enabling them to reach their full potential and drive inclusive leadership for a just and equitable society.

¹ Young People in the context of Synergy Sansthan refers to individuals aged 10-29 encompassing their diverse identities and backgrounds. This includes marginalized, vulnerable, SC/STs, religious minorities, people with different gender identities, victims of sexual violence, child marriage, harassment and with lived experiences of struggles and challenges in their eco-sphere.

MADHYA PRADESH STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE REPORT 2025



Published by
Synergy Sansthan
Ward. 19, Maharna Pratap Colony,
Behind Dr. Kailash Sighal Clinic,
Harda, Madhya Pradesh- 461331
synergysansthan@gmail.com

Copyright @ 2025 by Synergy Sansthan

This publication is for private circulation and is not a priced publication. Reproduction of this publication for educational and other non-commercial purposes without prior written permission is authorised, provided the source is fully acknowledged. For use in other circumstances, prior written permission must be obtained from the publisher.

Table of Content

		Page
Context		1
Conference Background		2
Day 1 - 29th August 2025		
Inaugural Session & Context Setting		5
Session 1	Being Young in India - Hopes, Challenges & Possibilities 8	8
Session 2	From Skilling & Future Readiness to Livelihood & Entrepreneurship	12
Session 3	Gender Inequality & Masculinity	16
Session 4	Intersectional Youth Identities	20
Session 5	Youth: Growing Up in a Digital World	24
Session 6	Youth in the Face of Climate Crisis	27
Session 7	Reclaiming Public Spaces	31
	Cultural Night- Abhivyakti	35
Day 2 – 30th August 2025		37
Fireside Conversations		39
Session 8	Active Citizenship, Democracy, and Youth Participation	42
Session 9	Youth, Creative Action & Social Change	46
Session 10	Rethinking Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing	50
Session 11	Role of Policy, Philanthropy & Practice: Investing in Youth led Change	54
Youth Agenda for MP 2025–2030		58
Closing Plenary: Reflections & Way Forward		61
Participating Organizations		63
Partner Organizations for Regional Consultations		64
In Media		65
Annexure 1: Agenda of Conference		67

Foreword



It gives me immense pleasure to present the report of the second edition of the Youth Conference. What began last year as an effort to create a meaningful platform for young people has now grown into a space where their voices are heard, valued and actively engaged with. **Yuva Aagaz Yuva Aawaz 2025** seeks to centre the voices and leadership of grassroots, tribal and marginalised youth, foster meaningful engagement with stakeholders and contribute to shaping an actionable Youth Agenda for Madhya Pradesh.

At its core, this conference is a celebration of young people—their aspirations, their questions, and their leadership. It brings together diverse youth voices, particularly those who are often underrepresented, and creates meaningful opportunities for them to engage directly with systems, ideas, domain experts, and decision-makers. I would like to extend my heartfelt congratulations to all the young participants whose energy, honesty, and insight truly shaped the spirit of this conference.

With participation from more than 100 organizations, over 70 panellists across 13 sessions, and close to 500 participants—along with a wider virtual audience—this conference stands out as a truly unique space to celebrate and amplify the voices of and for young people.

As we moved into the second year of this initiative, our commitments have also strengthened. We view Youth Conference as a sustained platform for dialogue, learning and collective reflection. A space where young people can engage with the larger ecosystem around them and where institutions, in turn, are invited to listen, respond and evolve. A defining strength of this year's conference was the presence of distinguished panellists and experts from different parts of the country, who brought with them a depth of experience across sectors. Beyond sharing perspectives, they entered into engaging dialogue with young people, listened to their realities and responded to their questions with openness. These exchanges created a rich and dynamic space where lived experiences met institutional knowledge, making the conversations both grounded and future-oriented. We look forward to deepening and expanding this platform in the years ahead.

This initiative would not have been possible without the continued support and trust of our donors and partners, whose belief in the importance of youth voice and leadership enables us to create such spaces. We are equally grateful to all stakeholders- government representatives, civil society organisations, educators and community leaders, who contributed their time and perspectives to make this conference meaningful.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of the entire team and everyone involved in organising the conference. It is through such collective effort that we are able to build spaces where young people can participate as active contributors to shaping a more inclusive and responsive society.

Vimal Jat
Chief Executive Officer
Synergy Sansthan



CONTEXT

The United Nations Youth 2030 Strategy provides an overarching vision of a world where young people's rights are upheld and their potential as leaders and changemakers is realized through meaningful participation in policymaking and decision-making processes. In India, states such as Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan collectively contain more than half of the nation's youth population, making them crucial regions for youth-centric development. Despite the demographic strength, youth in these states, especially from tribal, rural, and marginalized communities, face complex challenges including unemployment, gender inequality, mental health concerns, environmental crises, and the socio-economic impacts caused by rapid urbanization and digitization.

Traditionally, youth have often been seen primarily as recipients of developmental interventions rather than as active co-creators and leaders of change. To effectively address the multifaceted issues confronting young people, a paradigm shift is required—one that empowers youth to lead transformative change through community-rooted, youth-led solutions. This shift calls for new platforms, partnerships, and resources that position youth participation beyond tokenism, and equip young leaders to shape the systems that impact their future.

In response to these needs, Synergy Sansthan launched the inaugural Yuva Aagaaz, Yuva Awaaz conference in 2024, establishing a pivotal platform for amplifying youth voices and leadership across Madhya Pradesh. The conference convened over 250 tribal, rural, and marginalized youth alongside institutional stakeholders, co-developing a locally grounded youth development agenda and validating the efficacy of participatory, youth-led approaches in influencing policy and practice. Through robust dialogue and collaboration, the event facilitated a deeper understanding of both the challenges and opportunities facing youth, particularly within underserved communities.

The conference advocated for participatory, youth-led approaches not only as tools of inclusion but also as mechanisms to address urgent contemporary issues—ranging from inequality and exclusion to climate action and employment. It demonstrated that engaging youth as leaders and co-creators is essential for driving inclusive and sustainable development.

Building on these foundations, the 2025 edition, themed "Youth Power Reimagined – From the Margins to the Mainstream," aims to scale impact by further amplifying grassroots youth voices, fostering innovative multi-stakeholder collaboration, and co-creating a forward-looking Youth Agenda for 2025-2030. The event seeks to transform youth engagement from peripheral participation to central leadership in public discourse and policy shaping, ensuring that the realities, aspirations, and solutions of tribal, rural, and marginalized youth are integral to the development agenda. By convening youth leaders, civil society, policymakers, academics, philanthropists, and CSR representatives, the conference aspires to build a comprehensive and transformative roadmap for youth empowerment and inclusive development across the state.

a. Conference Background

India today stands at a pivotal demographic moment—a nation powered by one of the world's largest and most diverse youth populations. Young people across the country carry immense potential, hope and creativity, yet their lived realities are shaped by stark inequalities rooted in geography, gender, caste, class and identity. For tribal, rural and marginalized youth in particular, the journey toward opportunity is marked by structural barriers, emotional struggles and persistent exclusion from decision-making spaces. At the same time, they continue to assert their aspirations, negotiate complex social worlds and lead change within their communities.

Against this backdrop, the two-day conference was convened to deepen collective understanding of what it means to grow up as a young person in India today—especially in the context of Madhya Pradesh. It sought to bring together adolescents, youth leaders, practitioners, researchers, civil society networks, government representatives and development partners to examine the intersections of identity, opportunity, access and agency through a youth-centred lens. The workshop aimed to create a space where young people's voices and experiences guide the narrative, where practitioners reflect critically on systems and where stakeholders collectively reimagine pathways toward an inclusive, rights-based, and youth-led development ecosystem.

The sessions were designed to capture the diversity and complexity of youth experiences across ten thematic domains—ranging from gender, public spaces and mental health to digital inclusion, climate resilience, livelihoods, active citizenship and intersectional identities. Each session foregrounded lived experiences, grassroots innovations and emerging practices, ensuring that discussions were grounded in the realities of tribal, rural and marginalized youth. By weaving together evidence, field insights, practitioner reflections and youth testimonies, the conference sought to generate a holistic understanding of the challenges and possibilities that define youthhood today.

The proceedings of the two days, detailed in the following sections, illustrate not only the depth of dialogue but also the shared commitment to nurturing youth leadership and co-creating solutions that are culturally rooted, locally relevant and systemically impactful. Taken together, these conversations form the foundation for shaping **Madhya Pradesh's Youth Agenda 2025–2030**, steering policy, philanthropy and practice toward more equitable and accountable youth development ecosystems.



Day 1 - 29th August 2025

The day's convening has been curated as an immersive exploration into the lived realities, aspirations, and transformative potential of India's youth. The inaugural session opens with a warm welcome and a comprehensive context-setting that introduces the ethos of youth-centric development and the journey of SYNERGY Sansthan in strengthening young people's leadership at the grass-roots. This is followed by inspirational addresses from dignitaries and guests who frame the national and regional landscape of youth engagement. The plenary session, "Being Young in India – Hopes, Challenges & Possibilities," invites participants to collectively reflect on what it means to come of age in a rapidly changing social, economic, and technological environment.

The programme then transitions into two rounds of parallel panel discussions that deepen the conversation across thematic strands. In Round I, participants choose between dialogues on: Skilling, Future Readiness, and the Pathways to Livelihood & Entrepreneurship; Gender Inequality

and Masculinity; or Intersectional Youth Identities—each designed to spotlight structural barriers and emerging opportunities. Round II shifts attention to contemporary challenges shaping young lives today, with sessions on: Growing Up in a Digital World; Youth in the Face of the Climate Crisis; and Reclaiming Public Spaces as sites of citizenship, safety, and expression. These discussions collectively aim to generate actionable insights and strengthen cross-sector collaboration for youth-led change.

The day culminates in a vibrant Cultural Night, featuring Kala Samvad, performances by Samtar Band – Shedo, Paigam Group, and Kavish Seth. This celebratory space honours the artistic voice of young people, reinforcing the belief that culture, creativity, and dialogue are essential dimensions of youth empowerment and social transformation.



Yuva Aagaz Yuv

Inaugural Sesslo



Vishwas
Kallash
Sarang

Minister, Sports & Youth
Affairs, Cooperatives
Govt of MP



John Kingsly

Secretary, Govt of
Employment Develop
ment



Day 1 - 29th August 2025

Inaugural Session & Context Setting

Mr. Vimal Jat, CEO, Synergy Sansthan



The inaugural address was delivered by **Mr. Vimal Jat**, who warmly welcomed all participants to the conference. He highlighted that the event brought together young people from multiple districts of Madhya Pradesh and various states of India, along with experts, practitioners, media, and partners from CSR and donor communities. Emphasizing that India has the world's largest youth population, he observed that despite being considered a demographic advantage, there is still limited systemic effort to truly harness and nurture youth potential. Drawing attention to Madhya Pradesh, he mentioned that while small but meaningful youth-led initiatives have emerged, there are still societal and institutional barriers that restrict young people from innovating and taking leadership roles. Shri Vimal Ji underlined the need to shift from tokenistic engagement to real youth participation in decision-making. He described the journey of the Synergy Sansthan, which began in 2006 with a small group of young individuals from rural Madhya Pradesh who faced several challenges in pursuing their own ideas. This experience shaped the organization's vision – to view youth not as beneficiaries but as partners in development. He also stressed that youth programs must be contextual and inclusive, especially in a state as diverse as Madhya Pradesh, where 22% of the population is tribal. The two-day conference, he said, aims to create a roadmap for a youth-centered Madhya Pradesh over the next five years, fostering leadership, exposure, and collective action. He concluded by encouraging all participants to engage deeply in reflection and co-creation for a stronger youth agenda.

haya Pradesh who faced several challenges in pursuing their own ideas. This experience shaped the organization's vision – to view youth not as beneficiaries but as partners in development. He also stressed that youth programs must be contextual and inclusive, especially in a state as diverse as Madhya Pradesh, where 22% of the population is tribal. The two-day conference, he said, aims to create a roadmap for a youth-centered Madhya Pradesh over the next five years, fostering leadership, exposure, and collective action. He concluded by encouraging all participants to engage deeply in reflection and co-creation for a stronger youth agenda.

Mr. Vishwas Kailash Sarang, Minister for Sports and Youth Welfare, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh



The **Chief Guest, Hon'ble Minister**, delivered a powerful and emotionally charged address that blended inspiration, patriotism, and moral reflection. He began by congratulating the Synergy Sansthan and emphasizing that youth are the cornerstone of every nation's strength and progress. Drawing from historical examples – from Lord Rama and Lord Krishna to Bhagat Singh, Rani Lakshmi Bai, and Mahatma Gandhi – he illustrated how young people have always been the driving force of transformation. The Minister passionately recited lines that depicted youth as symbols of revolution who never bow before challenges. He spoke about the government's efforts toward youth empowerment and credited Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for making India globally recognized across sectors. However, he cautioned that development must not reduce youth to mere vote banks; rather, they must balance their **rights with duties**.

Through personal anecdotes, he illustrated the importance of raising youth who are "true Indians" – individuals who live with values and responsibility toward society and nation. He urged the audience to remember that every act of responsibility, from conserving resources to helping others, contributes to nation-building. He spoke about the need for individuals to embrace "Individual Social Responsibility (ISR)" rather than depending only on corporate initiatives, emphasizing that personal commitment to society can drive lasting change. The Minister called upon youth to take a pledge to live not just for themselves but for Bharat Mata, warning against distractions such as addiction and moral decay. Quoting poets and revolutionaries, he invoked a spirit of patriotism and duty. He concluded by aligning the vision of conference with the national goal of building a strong, self-reliant India by 2047 – the centenary of independence – inspiring everyone to live for the nation and make India truly "*Saare Jahaan Se Achha*."

Ms. Pratibha Srivastava, Welthungerhilfe (WHH)



Following the inaugural speech, **Ms. Pratibha Srivastava**, representative of Welthungerhilfe (WHH), delivered an inspiring address that blended personal reflection with professional insight. Introducing herself proudly as a daughter-in-law of Madhya Pradesh, she shared that the conference theme "Yuva Aagaaz" deeply resonated with her, as youth is the stage when dreams, energy, and determination converge to create real transformation. Drawing on her 36-year career in the development sector, she emphasized that commitments made during youth often lay the foundation for lifelong change. She urged young participants to recognize their vast potential and channel it toward constructive action amidst rapid technological and social shifts. Highlighting her experience in nutrition and food system programs, she stated that sustainable progress is impossible without youth participation in health, nutrition, and related policy frameworks. Ms. Srivastava shared that WHH's 2025–2030 strategy prioritizes youth

engagement at all levels, but real inclusion requires institutions to move beyond symbolic representation to meaningful participation. She cited WHH's innovative initiative "Football for WASH," where rural youth combined sports and hygiene awareness, creating visible change through collective action. She further spoke on the need to link artificial intelligence and digital innovation with youth-led development. In her concluding remarks, she focused on the growing concern of

food safety and dietary change, urging youth to preserve traditional Indian food habits amid the rising dominance of processed foods. She suggested organizing sessions on this issue and assured that WHH would collaborate in such initiatives. She ended by congratulating the Synergy team and encouraging youth to remain courageous, forward-looking, and rooted in their cultural identity.

Mr. Sunil Jacob, UNFPA, Madhya Pradesh



Mr. Sunil Jacob, representing the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, brought to the conference deep insights drawn from over two decades of experience working with young people across Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Commending Synergy Sansthan for organizing such a meaningful and large-scale gathering, he emphasized the importance of developing “context-based strategies” that recognize the diverse realities of youth in Madhya Pradesh. Echoing Mr. Vimal Jat’s earlier remarks, he noted that a one-size-fits-all model cannot effectively address the complex social and cultural landscape of the state. Reflecting on his experiences, Mr. Jacob highlighted three interrelated ideas central to youth development. He spoke about the power of aspiration and agency, stressing that every young person should have a vision for themselves and their community, a dream of addressing challenges such as child marriage and harmful practices. Real change, he said, begins when young people take self-driven

action and work collectively toward transformation. He further emphasized that youth and adolescents must be seen as co-creators rather than passive beneficiaries of development efforts. Their participation in gram sabhas, panchayats, and other governance platforms is vital to ensure inclusive and responsive decision-making. Mr. Jacob also underscored the importance of promoting sexual and reproductive health awareness among young people. Drawing from his earlier work in Rajasthan, he shared how open conversations around menstrual hygiene had significantly shifted community attitudes, fostered mutual respect and understanding. He urged both men and women to view reproductive health as a shared responsibility, essential to building healthy and equitable communities. Concluding his address, he encouraged participants to use the two-day conference as a space for learning, dialogue and self-reflection—an opportunity to strengthen their resolve to become active agents of change in their own communities.

Mr. Anil Gulati-Chief of Field Office (a.i), UNICEF MP



Mr. Anil Gulati, brought a lively and energetic spirit to the session. He began by engaging the audience with a cheer – “How’s the Josh?” – setting a positive tone for his remarks. He emphasized that youth policy without the participation of young people themselves is incomplete. Echoing earlier speakers, he noted that the purpose of conference is to ensure that youth voices influence real policy spaces. Mr. Gulati encouraged participants to identify and prioritize the issues that matter most to them rather than focusing solely on themes defined by others. He highlighted that youth leadership means defining one’s role within the panchayat and mobilizing peers for collective problem-solving. He also underscored the importance of technology, noting that while it brings opportunities, it also poses challenges that youth must learn to navigate intelligently. He spoke about the ongoing revision of Madhya Pradesh’s Youth Policy and stressed the importance of ensuring that the policy moves from formulation

to on-ground implementation. Sharing international examples of youth-led initiatives such as UNICEF-supported film projects, he illustrated how creative mediums can drive powerful change. Mr. Gulati concluded by expressing hope that the conference will continue to grow into a national-level movement amplifying the voice of Madhya Pradesh’s youth.



Day 1 - SESSION 1

Being Young in India - Hopes, Challenges & Possibilities



MODERATOR | Kejal Savla - Wisdom Tree

Objective

The session aimed to explore practitioners' insight on what it means to be young in India today. Capturing the hopes, struggles and everyday negotiations of adolescents and youth from diverse social, economic and cultural backgrounds. Despite being home to one of the world's largest youth populations, many young people, especially those from tribal, rural, and marginalized communities, continue to navigate the complex intersections of aspiration, exclusion and limited opportunity. Through open dialogue and reflection, this session will create space for people to speak about their experience: what inspires them, what challenges they face and the change they envision. Alongside this, practitioners and allies who work closely with youth will share their experiences of supporting young people's journeys. Together, this conversation will help us reimagine a more inclusive, equitable and youth-led

future, where young people are not only heard but are also seen as central actors in shaping the country's path forward.

The session moderated by Ms. Kijal Savla, Co-founder and CEO of Wisdom Tree, the session brought together a dynamic panel comprising Ms. Tarnnum Khan (Synergy Sansthan), Mr. Om Prakash Malviya (Jan Sahas), Mr. Sanjay Sharma (Bal Raksha Bharat), Ms. Vardhana Puri (Paul Hamlyn Foundation), and Mr. Pradeep Ghosh (Ashoka Fellow and Social Entrepreneur). The discussion delved into the intersection of social expectations, aspirations, and systemic barriers faced by young people in India. It drew upon lived experiences, field realities, and policy insights to collectively reflect on what it means to be young in a diverse and unequal society.

Ms. Tarnnum Khan (Synergy Sansthan)



Ms. Khan opened the discussion with a heartfelt reflection on what it means to be young and female in India, especially as a Muslim woman. She illustrated how identity markers like caste, religion, geography, and gender intersect to shape young people's freedoms and choices. Drawing from her field experiences with adolescent girls under the Udaan program, she stressed that youth should not be seen as a homogeneous group but as diverse individuals with unique contexts and needs.

Key Points:

- Youth experience is shaped by multiple identities – gender, caste, religion, and geography.
- Rural and tribal youth face both infrastructural and cultural barriers.
- Empowerment must begin by listening and validating youth voices.
- Youth diversity should be viewed as strength, not inequality.
- Safe and inclusive spaces are essential for self-expression and growth.

Mr. Om Prakash Malviya (Jan Sahas)



Drawing from over two decades of grassroots work, Mr. Prakash spoke passionately about the struggles of marginalized youth, especially around education, migration, and gender-based violence. He emphasized that empowerment is impossible without ensuring physical and emotional safety. Highlighting rising mental health concerns and lack of access to justice, he called for stronger local interventions and skill development opportunities to prepare youth for dignified livelihoods.

Key Points:

- Youth issues extend beyond education – safety, migration, and gender violence are critical concerns.
- Violence and harassment remain major barriers to empowerment.
- Focus needed on skill-building, communication training, and livelihood opportunities.
- Greater awareness of government schemes and mental health services is vital.
- Local support systems like barefoot counsellors can strengthen community resilience.

Mr. Sanjay Sharma (Bal Raksha Bharat- Save the Children India)



Mr. Sharma framed the discussion around the emerging “Gen Z” – a generation of bold, tech-savvy innovators who are redefining engagement. While celebrating their creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, he cautioned against growing impatience and disconnection from civic life. Highlighting the limited youth representation in politics (only 7% of legislators under 40 in Madhya Pradesh), he urged young people to demand inclusion in policy and governance.

Key Points:

- Gen Z's dual nature: innovative yet impatient for instant results.
- Decline in youth participation in governance and public life.
- Poor design of skill programs limits employability outcomes.
- Youth must actively claim their space in policymaking forums.
- Civic participation is both a right and a responsibility.

Ms. Vardhana Puri (Paul Hamlyn Foundation)



Ms. Puri brought a structural and critical perspective, questioning societal definitions of “youth.” She challenged the notion of youth as apathetic, portraying them instead as resilient and overburdened within exploitative systems such as the gig economy. She raised concerns about mental health and the manipulative nature of digital platforms that commodify attention. Ms. Puri emphasized the need for policies that listen to and center youth voices rather than speaking for them.

Key Points:

- Youth must be seen as knowledge-holders, not just beneficiaries.
- Structural challenges: mental health, inequality, and digital exploitation.
- Need for inclusive systems that truly listen to youth.
- Rethinking how policies are designed and whose voices shape them.
- Youth are partners in transformation, not problems to fix.

Mr. Pradeep Ghosh (Ashoka Fellow and Social Entrepreneur)



Bringing a generational and philosophical angle, Mr. Ghosh compared rural and urban youth mindsets and shared insights from decades of mentoring youth movements. He described how technological change and consumerism have reshaped youth aspirations, introducing the “MICE” framework – Money, Incentive, Career, Ego – as central motivators. He also spoke about future generations, including Gen AI and Gen CC (Climate Conscious), emphasizing the need for foresight and empathy in preparing youth for global challenges.

Key Points:

- Distinct motivations across rural, urban, and migrant youth.
- “MICE” – Money, Incentive, Career, Ego – drives modern youth behaviour.
- Changing definitions of success influenced by consumerism and technology.
- Future readiness for challenges like AI and climate change is crucial.
- Society must understand, not control, youth psychology for transformation.

Q&A Session

The Q&A session was vibrant, reflective, and full of meaningful engagement between the audience and the panelists. It began with moderator Kejal inviting participants to share their thoughts, emphasizing that the discussion was not just for the panel but also for the youth themselves to voice ideas and reflections. The first question came from Jhanvi Chauhan from SEAT organization (Khandwa), who raised three interlinked points – the role of parenting in shaping young people’s values and behaviours, the gap in participation between privileged and underprivileged youth, and the need for merit-based opportunities rather than background-based selection. She passionately highlighted how parenting styles influence youth attitudes toward gender sensitivity, crime, and social media, and

questioned why systemic barriers continue to limit capable youth from marginalized backgrounds. Her statement on “reverse brain drains” – where youth choose to stay and serve locally but lack opportunities – resonated strongly with the audience.

Next, Mr. Sushil Srivastava from Jabalpur brought a thoughtful perspective, applauding the panel before raising three important questions. He asked how youth can maintain focus when their priorities are constantly changing, how policymakers perceive areas where youth may lack responsibility, and why youth engagement events are so infrequent when more regular dialogues could ensure continuity and real impact. He emphasized that even if one idea from such conferences is implemented effectively at

the grassroots, it could transform the lives of many young people. Another participant then voiced concerns about growing social issues, particularly in cities like Indore, where he noted that despite its reputation for cleanliness, the spread of addiction and narcotics was alarming. He called for organized youth movements to tackle these hidden problems and the growing inequalities between elites and ordinary citizens.

A parent in the audience added a heartfelt comment, asking what parents could do to ensure their children grow into more aware and responsible citizens. She shared her own experience of raising her six-year-old son – keeping him informed about politics and culture in age-appropriate ways – and highlighted the contrast between rural and urban upbringings. According to her, rural children are often given more responsibility and decision-making power early in life, while urban youth are overprotected and denied real-world exposure even into adulthood.

Responding to these diverse perspectives, Sanjay Sharma offered an emotional reflection on parenting, urging parents to nurture curiosity and freedom in children instead of imposing rigid expectations. He said, “Why are we always trying to make our children into something? Why not just let them live their childhood fully?” He emphasized that true education is not about marks but about curiosity, understanding, and creativity – noting that even

unschooled rural children develop valuable practical skills. The moderator, Kejal, concluded the discussion by tying together the key themes – confusion, parenting, and youth choices. She reframed confusion as a positive sign of opportunity, encouraged parents to guide rather than dictate, and stressed the need for both youth and parent-oriented workshops. She reminded everyone that in life, unlike school, questions come first and answers later – urging parents to help children find those answers together.

Summary

The session offered a panoramic exploration of India's youth experience today—diverse yet interconnected by shared aspirations for dignity, opportunity, and meaning. The dialogue established that being young in India is both empowering and perplexing—a period of energy shaped by structural inequalities, rapid technological change, and social expectation. Each participant highlighted a different aspect: Ms. Tarnnum focused on identity and inclusion, Om Prakash on safety and livelihood, Sanjay on participation and agency, Vardhana on listening and structural reform, and Pradeep on understanding motivation and future trends. The conversation ended with a resonant message: empowering youth requires trust, safe spaces, intergenerational collaboration, and education systems that nurture curiosity rather than conformity.





Day 1 - SESSION 2

From Skilling & Future Readiness to Livelihood & Entrepreneurship



MODERATOR | Nageshwar Panchal- -Mera Gaon Meri Duniya

Objective

The session aimed to reimagine livelihoods for rural, tribal and semi urban youth beyond traditional labour roles, emphasizing entrepreneurship rooted in local knowledge, sustainability and cultural values. It will assess the effectiveness of current schemes like Rural Livelihood Missions and NSTFDC programs in reaching youth equitably. The discussion will focus on enhancing ecosystem linkages such as access to credit, incubation centers, digital platforms and cooperatives. By challenging the dominant narratives around tribal youth, the session will spotlight them as innovators and economic agents. Case studies of youth-led enterprises will be showcased to inspire and inform policy. The goal is to build pathways for resilient, regenerative and youth-driven local economies.

The session moderated by Mr. Nageshwar Panchal (Co-Founder-Mera Gaon Meri Duniya), a community leader and team builder deeply committed to decentralized sustainable change, the panel featured prominent speakers including Mr. Nilesh Dhoble (Transform Rural India Foundation), Mr. Sharique Mashhadi (Dream a Dream), Ms. Bhavana Parmar (Quest Alliance), Dr. Aishwarya Mahajan (M3M Foundation) and Dr. Manoj Jain (Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis). The discussion addressed the gaps and opportunities in aligning skill development with real-world market demands, the importance of ecosystem mentorship, and the need for equitable access to resources to ensure youth can thrive locally and nationally.

Mr. Nilesh Dhoble (Transform Rural India Foundation)

Nilesh emphasized the principle of balancing visionary thinking with rooted, realistic approaches. He advocates for listening deeply to rural aspirations before proposing interventions, building on existing self-help group (SHG) networks, panchayat collaboration, and local entrepreneurship linked to place-based ecosystems. Nilesh illustrated his approach through projects like the WOW Hubs, integrating skill development with dignity and scalability, highlighting localized solutions like women-led e-rickshaw services empowering communities.

Key Points:

- Focus on purpose, people, and planning.
- Deep community engagement and co-design.
- Utilizing existing local networks to create livelihood opportunities.
- Place-based enterprise planning aligned with local realities.
- Mentorship networks as critical for sustained success.

Mr. Sharique Mashhadi (Dream a Dream)



Mr. Mashhadi discussed the emotional and social dimensions of youth readiness. He highlighted that while technical skills are advancing, emotional resilience and mentorship are lagging, especially in marginalized contexts. He identified the need for building safe spaces for empathy, social-emotional learning, and adapting education to nurture collaboration over competition. He stressed systemic inequities as the major barrier to youth empowerment and urged a rethinking of how education systems and social programs nurture intrinsic qualities like empathy and curiosity.

Key Points:

- Building social-emotional skills alongside technical skills.
- Addressing structural inequalities in access and participation.
- Promoting collaboration, not competition.
- Creating mentorship and support systems for emotional resilience.
- Emphasizing empathy as a core leadership skill.

Ms. Bhavana Parmar (Quest Alliance)



Bhavana spotlighted the critical gap in current skill development systems: the lack of systemic and contextual understanding. She emphasized the need for systems thinking and inquiry-based learning rather than rote skills training. Using examples of AI literacy curricula, she illustrated how students often learn “what” but not the “why” behind skills. She argued that building systems thinking and curiosity from early education stages is essential to prepare youth for future uncertainties, especially as technologies evolve rapidly.

Key Points:

- Need for systemic, inquiry-led skill education.
- Bridging the gap between learning and real entrepreneurial needs.
- Building curiosity and reflection as foundational skills.
- Recognizing rapid technological and social change demands adaptive learning.
- Addressing rural-urban inequities in access to quality skill-building.

Mr. Aishwarya Mahajan (M3M Foundation)



Aishwarya described the youth's current challenges, noting their lack of purpose and how they are often used as markets rather than partners. He shared success stories of rural youth entrepreneurship, including women running motorbike repair garages and cooperative enterprises in Ladakh. Aishwarya emphasized the importance of local direction, role models, and collective collaboration over competition to rebuild sustainable local economies, highlighting the importance of indigenous value chains and circular economies.

Key Points:

- Youth are directionless and requiring vision and leadership.
- Examples of rural entrepreneurship creating local economic ecosystems.
- Importance of role models and community recognition.
- Building value chains rooted in collaboration and local resources.
- Revitalizing sustainable, self-reliant village economies.

Dr. Manoj Jain (Atal Bihari Vajpayee Institute of Good Governance and Policy Analysis)



Dr. Manoj focused on policy challenges and gaps in translating skilling initiatives into tangible outcomes. He highlighted the failures in uniform training programs, especially for girls, emphasizing that mentorship must extend to families and communities to change mindsets. He shared successful stories like female drivers for mobile training buses inspiring girls. Dr. Manoj stressed the importance of ecosystem mentorship, community engagement, and culturally sensitive program design to ensure real change, coupled with ongoing monitoring and role model visibility.

Key Points:

- Policy implementation gaps limit skilling outcomes.
- Necessity of family and community mentorship for girls' participation.
- Ecosystem-level engagement for broad societal mindset shifts.
- Use of visible role models to build trust and acceptance.
- Integration of market and beneficiary perspectives in program design.

Q&A Session

The Q&A session was vibrant, dynamic, and deeply rooted in the real experiences of educators, youth workers, and social practitioners from across Madhya Pradesh. The questions raised by participants reflected a collective concern about the quality of education, relevance of skill development, and the systemic gaps preventing youth from realizing their full potential. The panellists, including the moderator and experts, responded with insight, data, and concrete examples from ongoing government and institutional initiatives.

The first question came from Priyanka, representing the Arogya Sangam Foundation, Indore, who emphasized that while "skills" are being widely discussed, the base for skill development – early exposure and curiosity – remains weak. She pointed out that students, particularly in tribal and rural areas, often reach classes 11 and 12 without clarity about their interests or future goals. She questioned whether schools and teachers are adequately trained to identify and nurture children's learning interests early on. Priyanka also highlighted the information gap regarding government schemes, noting that most schools lack displays or digital access points to inform students of available opportunities. Her concern was whether interventions are focusing only on students or also strengthening teachers and systems to build a foundation for meaningful learning.

Following her, Uday from the Udyam Learning Foundation, Bhopal, shared his journey as a government-school student who found entrepreneurship only through external exposure. He now works to integrate entrepreneurship into high school education, helping students create prototypes through small seed funding. His central question was – why can't entrepreneurship education begin earlier, perhaps from grade 9, so that students are ready for real opportunities by the time they reach youth programs.

Another important intervention came from a Synergy Sansathan team member, who raised the issue of migration and local employment. He shared the story of a Jaipur factory offering jobs to village youth couples where one salary was effectively lost to living expenses, leaving no savings or stability. He questioned whether such jobs were truly empowering or simply draining manpower from villages. His suggestion – to promote village-based entrepreneurship that keeps youth rooted, families together, and local economies thriving – resonated strongly with the audience. He described small, locally viable business models like milk parlours and ice parlours as examples of sustainable rural employment.

A Youth participant added a critical digital perspective, questioning where skill development is truly happening. He painted a vivid image – a "village boy fetching grass for his buffalo" – asking if such a child would ever gain employability without systemic change. He challenged NGOs to

go beyond awareness drives and advocate for inclusion of computer literacy and digital education in school curricula. His argument emphasized that unless technology access becomes part of the education system itself, all talk of “digital skills” will remain hollow.

The discussion deepened when one of the participants Sanjeev questioned the lack of systemic space for skilled youth. He highlighted how thousands of UPSC aspirants, despite years of preparation, end up unused assets when they fail to secure government posts. He asked whether the government could absorb such talented youth into research, governance, or policy-making roles – turning their learning into public service.

Responding comprehensively, the moderator addressed several of these concerns with on-ground data and practical initiatives. He shared that a state-wide survey covering 218,000 students across 313 blocks confirmed major information and exposure gaps. To address this, a Digital Public Infrastructure app is being developed to track students’ skills and connect them with schemes, training programs, and career options. The app, beginning from grade 7, would help students make informed choices by grade 10–12 – a critical step since 74% of students in the state don’t complete grade 12.

He further explained that around 2,700 schools in Madhya Pradesh already offer skill-based courses under the National Education Policy (NEP), and coverage will expand gradually. He also highlighted opportunities like the Chief Minister’s Young Professional for Development Program (CMYPDP), which engages young researchers and UPSC aspirants in governance projects for three years. This initiative, along with postgraduate internships and consultancy roles in government departments, provides new pathways for skilled youth to contribute to policy and development.

Addressing concerns about NGOs being seen as “businesses,” the moderator clarified that every system – government, schools, or NGOs – operates on resources and

exchange. What defines legitimacy is intent and transparency, not profit. He affirmed that NGOs fill crucial last-mile gaps that government systems cannot always reach and should not be dismissed cynically.

Panellist Mr. Aishwarya added a forward-looking response, noting that digital learning opportunities are abundant through platforms like the Skill India Digital Hub, LinkedIn Learning, and Coursera – many of them free. She urged youth to take personal responsibility in discovering and learning from such resources. Aishwarya also proposed a new idea – a campaign called #ProudlyMP, showcasing young village entrepreneurs as local role models to inspire others and create a replicable culture of entrepreneurship across the state.

The moderator concluded with a call for collective responsibility and optimism. He urged participants to act where they are, supporting local change instead of dwelling on systemic flaws. “If even 500 of us take responsibility for our own villages,” he said, “this workshop will already achieve its purpose.”

Summary

The session critically explored how to align youth skill development with actual local opportunities and entrepreneurial growth, especially for marginalized and rural populations. Panellists collectively stressed that skill training without community engagement, ecosystem mentorship, and systemic thinking falls short of creating sustainable livelihoods. The discussion underlined that true youth empowerment requires integrating emotional resilience, curiosity, collaboration, and role-model visibility with market-aligned technical skills. It also emphasized culturally sensitive, gender-aware approaches with family and community involvement to transform educational and entrepreneurial landscapes. The rich examples and interactive discourse inspire ongoing collective action to build future-ready youth equipped for dignity, purpose, and leadership in India’s diverse contexts.



Yuva Aagaz Yuva Aawaz



Gender Inequality & Masculinity

Panelists



Amrita Dasgupta



Prarthana Thakur



Ajay Pandit

Moderator



Day 1 - SESSION 3

Gender Inequality & Masculinity



MODERATOR | Manak Matiyani-Feminist Thinker

Objective

The session explored how reimagining masculinity is essential to advancing young people's empowerment and gender justice. It will examine how societal gender norms shape young people's identities and intersect with structural issues like mental health, education and employment. Drawing from lived experiences, the session will highlight gaps in policy that often overlook the emotional realities of young men. Through gender-transformative education, mental health support and community engagement, it will explore pathways to healthier masculinities. The session aims to promote youth-led social change by encouraging young men to reject violence, embrace vulnerability and become allies for equality. It will contribute to a broader understanding of how transforming masculinities is key to inclusive youth development.

This session was moderated by Mr. Manak Matiyani, a seasoned feminist thinker advocating for gender equality through nuanced understanding of gender, sexuality, health, and young people's participation. The panellists included Ms. Amrita Dasgupta (Swayam), Ms. Prarthana Thakur (Nirantar Trust), Ms. Asma Khan (YP Foundation), Ms. Anamta Rayin (Gender Nyay Collective) and Mr. Ajay Pandit (Synergy Sansthan), all of whom brought critical insights on masculinity, gender norms, and social change.

The session was structured to move beyond conventional gender conversations that primarily focus on women's safety and empowerment, bringing men and boys into the

discourse as both subjects shaped by and contributors to patriarchy. The discussion highlighted that from childhood, boys are socially conditioned to suppress emotions, perform masculinity through dominance, and assume roles of responsibility and provider, which can lead to emotional repression and psychological stress. Adolescents internalize these norms early, influenced by familial expectations, peer groups, educational institutions, and media portrayals. The session also contextualized masculinity within structural inequalities, illustrating how economic pressures, caste, religion, and cultural practices reinforce hierarchical behaviours and notions of male privilege. Panellists emphasized that effective interventions require long-term engagement and safe, inclusive spaces where boys can explore emotional literacy, question socialized norms, and develop empathy. By grounding the discussion in real-life experiences of young people, the session underscored the need for contextual, gender-transformative approaches that address both individual behaviours and societal structures.

Mr. Manak Matiyani situated the conversation as part of broader efforts to challenge patriarchy collectively, clarifying that the aim is not "men versus women," but all genders together against patriarchal structures. He highlighted that men are not born violent; rather, they are shaped by socialization processes that reward aggression, emotional suppression, and dominance, while punishing sensitivity and vulnerability.

Ms. Anamta Rayin (Gender Nyay Collective)



Anamta (Arundh) opened the discussion by illustrating how traditional masculinity begins shaping men's lives from early experiences, such as fatherhood. She highlighted that men are often excluded from intimate and formative moments, like being present during childbirth, which limits their capacity for empathy and emotional awareness. This exclusion is normalized by societal structures, preventing men from fully participating in caregiving or developing sensitivity. Arundh emphasized that patriarchal norms constrain both men and women: women are restricted for protection, while men are constrained by the need to assert dominance. She underscored that real societal change requires providing men with the opportunity to express vulnerability and emotions freely. Additionally, Arundh reflected on the language of power, noting how society equates strength with "masculine" traits, while qualities such as compassion

and empathy are undervalued. She advocated for redefining masculinity in a way that promotes emotional literacy and shared responsibility, framing this as essential not only for men's freedom but for gender justice overall.

Key Points:

- Traditional masculinity restricts emotional expression.
- Patriarchy controls girls through protection, men through power.
- Boys need permission to express feelings and see the world differently.
- Masculine power must include empathy and compassion.

Ms. Prarthana Thakur (Gender Educator, Nirantar)



Prarthana focused on how boys and girls internalize gender norms and hierarchies during early adolescence, particularly between ages 10 and 14. Drawing from her work at Nirantar, she described how children interpret the same public spaces differently: boys associate markets with fun and social interaction, while girls perceive fear, harassment, and restrictions imposed by family and society. Adolescents observe role models—older siblings, peers, and neighborhood figures—and emulate behaviors that reinforce dominant notions of masculinity, including aggression and power assertion. Prarthana shared a poignant example of a boy who, influenced by older peers, participated in threatening someone for extortion and experienced deep remorse, demonstrating how early social pressures shape concepts of power and masculinity. She emphasized that interventions must patiently and persistently challenge these

internalized norms, helping boys redefine power in non-violent, empathetic ways. Her contribution highlighted that early adolescence is a critical period for addressing structural and social inequalities that affect both boys' and girls' experiences of safety, agency, and leadership.

Key Points:

- Gender socialization begins from ages 10-14.
- Boys internalize violence and dominance as masculinity.
- Girls experience fear and harassment in public spaces.
- Early intervention can reshape male youth's understanding of power.

Ms. Asma Khan (YP Foundation)



Asma discussed her work with young men and older adolescents, emphasizing that men have often been excluded from gender-focused interventions. Traditionally, programs cast men as perpetrators or allies rather than active participants in understanding and challenging patriarchal norms. She noted that young men frequently experience a fragile sense of masculinity, equating sexual performance with validation and self-worth. In workshops, discussions around pleasure, intimacy, and consent are often difficult because men have been socialized to focus on dominance and sexual prowess. Asma stressed that interventions must combine joy and reflection, allowing boys to recognize both their privileges and vulnerabilities. She also highlighted the importance of context, noting that caste, religion, and cultural background significantly influence how masculinity is lived and expressed. Asma's contribution emphasized

creating safe, structured spaces where young men can explore vulnerability, develop empathy, and critically reflect on structural privilege, all of which are crucial for dismantling toxic masculinity.

Key Points:

- Historical invisibility of men in gender work.
- Fragile masculinity and limited safe spaces for men.
- Cultural and religious complexities.
- Emphasizes joy and reflection in gender conversations.

Ms. Amrita Dasgupta (Swayam)



Amrita traced the evolution of feminist approaches from women-centered activism to inclusive engagement with men. Initially, men were viewed primarily as power holders or perpetrators, but feminist movements recognized that achieving gender justice requires addressing the socialization of men as well. She explained that patriarchy confers unacknowledged privileges to men while simultaneously isolating them emotionally. Amrita highlighted that men's work must complement, not replace, women's work. Effective engagement involves long-term, in-depth interventions that address men's emotional needs, mental health, and social pressures, alongside continued focus on women's empowerment. She also noted the role of media and popular culture in reinforcing aggression and toxic masculinity, arguing for alternative male role models who demonstrate empathy, sensitivity, and equity. Her insights underscored the need

for programs that balance addressing male vulnerabilities with promoting women's rights, showing that patriarchy harms all genders, and equality benefits everyone.

Key Points:

- Evolution of feminist movement towards men's inclusion.
- Patriarchy isolates men despite privilege.

- Need for counselling, mental health support for men.
- Challenge to regressive men's rights activism.
- Celebrate empathetic and equitable male role models.

Mr. Ajay Pandit (Synergy Sansthan)



Ajay reflected on youth work and the gaps in engaging young men meaningfully in gender discussions. He emphasized that youth programs often treat boys as performers rather than active participants in reflection, focusing on appearances and social roles rather than genuine introspection. Ajay highlighted the importance of context, noting that rural and tribal youth face unique challenges where youthhood is short-lived and heavily burdened by survival responsibilities. He stressed that gender discussions cannot rely solely on urban-centric frameworks; they must be localized, contextual, and long-term. Ajay also highlighted the linguistic bias in youth programming, where terms like "youth" often evoke male imagery, reinforcing patriarchal assumptions. He argued that effective youth work should create inclusive, reflective spaces for all genders, helping young people understand privilege, power, and emotional literacy, and fostering transformative engagement that redefines masculinity from the inside out.

Key Points:

- Youth work is underdeveloped and metro-centric.
- Boys face cultural rigidity and lack emotional literacy.
- Engagement must be long-term and contextual.
- Feminist and gender-aware approaches critical.
- Transform masculinity through introspection, not performance.

Q&A Discussion

The Q&A segment brought forward thoughtful reflections from participants on how gender norms shape boys' emotional lives, responsibilities, and identities. Questions highlighted that boys are often discouraged from expressing emotions, leading to internalized pain and unaddressed trauma. Panelists emphasized the importance of creating safe spaces that encourage vulnerability and emotional literacy among boys, recognizing this as essential for healthier gender relations.

Participants also raised concerns about societal pressures that tie masculinity to financial responsibility, dominance, and toughness. Responses underscored that these messages are absorbed early through family and community, requiring interventions that gently reframe power, responsibility, and empathy in non-hierarchical ways. Several questions focused on masculinity as a performance reinforced by cultural traditions and expectations. Panelists noted that patriarchal norms constrain boys too, and encouraged approaches that combine joy, reflection, and contextual understanding, especially across caste, class, and religious identities.

The discussion also explored the inclusion of men in feminist and gender-transformative spaces. Panelists clarified that engaging men should complement—not replace—women's leadership, and must be supported by long-term, context-specific strategies that address men's emotional needs while advancing gender justice. Participants shared examples from schools and communities, asking how cultural practices can support gender equality. Panelists agreed that such lived examples can be powerful tools for reshaping perceptions among young people.

A final concern was raised about youth programs becoming male-centered. The session concluded with a reaffir-

mation that gender-transformative youth work must remain holistic, inclusive, and attentive to the needs of all genders, focusing on challenging patriarchal norms rather than shifting attention away from girls. Overall, the Q&A deepened the dialogue by foregrounding lived experiences and reinforcing the need for sensitive, inclusive, and reflective approaches to transforming masculinities.

Summary

The session deeply explored how masculinity is formed and experienced in India's social fabric. Panelists presented diverse perspectives highlighting emotional repression, power structures, and societal norms shaping men and boys. The dialogue stressed early intervention, empathetic mentorship, and sustained community work as keys to fostering healthy masculinity. It emphasized the dual need to liberate women from patriarchal constraints while also freeing men from rigid gender roles. The session called for holistic, inclusive youth work grounded in honest reflection, political awareness, and mutual respect across genders.

STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE

YUVA AAGAZ
YUVA AAGAZ



Day 1 - SESSION 4

Intersectional Youth Identities



MODERATOR | Mohsin Khan- Ansh Happiness Society

Objective

The session aimed on youth who experience multiple and intersecting forms of marginalization—such as gender, caste, disability and geography. It will address the challenges these youth face in accessing leadership, education and employment opportunities. Discussions will emphasize the importance of creating safe, inclusive and discrimination-free spaces for youth participation. The session will promote targeted interventions like mentorship, fellowships and localized skill-building programs tailored to specific needs. It also calls for integrating intersectional perspectives into policy design and decision-making bodies. Through participatory approaches, the session will advocate for systemic change that is inclusive, equitable and reflective of diverse youth realities.

The session opened as a vibrant and thought-provoking platform that brought together a diverse group of panellists—each rooted in lived experience and grounded in community realities—to explore the layered and intersecting identities that shape the lives of young people in India today. Set against a backdrop of persistent social inequalities and rapidly shifting cultural landscapes, the discussion aimed to unpack how caste, class, gender, sexuality, language, and tradition converge to influence opportunities, aspirations, and everyday experiences. The session sought not only to highlight the structural barriers faced by marginalized youth but also to illuminate the ways in which they negotiate, resist, and redefine

power in their own terms. By centering stories from Dalit, tribal, and transgender communities, and by interrogating how institutions often echo the very hierarchies they aim to challenge, the session positioned itself as an honest and necessary conversation about identity, dignity, and justice. With a strong emphasis on youth voice, creative disruption, and collective reflection, the session set the tone for a deeply engaging dialogue that invited participants to rethink assumptions, confront uncomfortable truths, and imagine more inclusive and equitable futures.

The session was moderated by Mohsin Khan (Ansh Happiness Society), who introduced the panel as a group of individuals representing the complex, overlapping layers of youth identity in India. The discussion centered on how multiple factors such as caste, gender, religion, class, and digital identity intersect to shape diverse experiences of opportunity and exclusion for young people across rural and urban contexts. The panel included Satyam Srivastava (Azim Premji Foundation), working on policy and rights; Sonal Kapoor, founder of Protsahan India Foundation, which rescues and rehabilitates marginalized girls; Savita Sohit from Muskaan, working on multilingual pedagogy and social inclusion; Sunil Ivane of Saanjha Netratva Manch, promoting tribal youth leadership; and Gayatri Gyan, a transgender rights advocate and founder of the LGBTQIA+ collective Queermitra.

Mr. Satyam Shrivastava (Journalist & Author)



Mr. Shrivastava highlighted that intersectionality is not a new invention; it has always existed in society, but today's youth are increasingly conscious and assertive in naming and challenging these overlapping structures of power. He emphasized that identity is fluid and contextual, shifting with social spaces – a person may simultaneously be a writer, a villager, a father, and a citizen, and youth too navigate multiple identities that shape their interactions with the world. To illustrate this, he shared a powerful real-life case of a Dalit woman sarpanch whose constitutional authority often came into conflict with entrenched caste hierarchies, revealing how legal power is insufficient when social power structures remain unchanged. Through such examples, Satyam underscored how caste, class, and gender combine to produce layered vulnerabilities that affect individuals differently. Yet he celebrated the courage of young people who challenge

norms and “break traditions,” framing this as creative disruption necessary for societal evolution. At the same time, he warned that the rapid pace of digital exposure can fragment young people's sense of self, leaving them overwhelmed by multiple influences. He concluded by reminding the audience that real thinking requires stillness and reflection – something many youths lack, not by choice but because survival pressures leave them with no room to pause.

Key Points:

- Identities are multilayered, context-dependent, and evolving.
- Intersectionality compounds oppression but also sparks social transformation.
- Youth are creative disruptors reshaping societal norms.

Ms. Sonal Kapoor (Founder, Protsahan India Foundation)



Sonal examined how power structures often disguise themselves as “tradition,” reinforcing caste hierarchies, patriarchy, and social exclusion in subtle yet pervasive ways. She explained that genuine intersectional work at the grassroots rarely fits neatly into structured NGO logframes because real change is slow, emotionally demanding, and often built on relationships rather than checklists. Sonal also pointed out that civil society organizations often replicate the same power imbalances they seek to dismantle, making internal accountability as important as external advocacy. She raised critical concerns about performative activism, where optics replace genuine transformation, and stressed the need for integrity and responsibility in social justice spaces. Using everyday examples, she noted that dignity violations do not only occur in extreme situations – they unfold in ordinary places like Aadhaar centers, where

marginalized individuals face humiliation due to systemic biases. Amid these challenges, she offered a powerful message: joy itself is an act of resistance. According to her, when joy disappears from the struggle, the oppressor gains ground, making it essential to reclaim happiness, hope, and community as part of movement-building.

Key Points:

- Power hierarchies pervade even civil society spaces.
- Intersectional work requires confronting uncomfortable truths.
- Meaningful accountability to communities—not just donors—is crucial

Ms. Savita Sohni (Muskaan, Bhopal)



Savita Sohni shared her personal journey of emerging from a Dalit community where even the pursuit of higher education was treated as an act of defiance. For her, safe learning spaces played a transformative role – they not only expanded her understanding of the world but also provided intellectual freedom and emotional grounding, enabling her to question oppressive norms. Savita highlighted how marginalized communities, such as Pardhi children, are burdened with stereotypes that limit their opportunities and shape how society perceives them. She emphasized that identity profoundly influences everyday experiences – from access to safety and respect to the simple possibility of being treated as an equal. For Savita, education and identity are inseparable; learning spaces must incorporate representation, pride, and affirmation so that marginalized students see themselves reflected and valued.

She illustrated this through the story of a Gond boy whose smile upon passing Class 10 symbolized not just academic achievement but the triumph over generational barriers and structural discrimination. Through her reflections, Savita made it clear that nurturing voices from the margins requires dignity, recognition, and the courage to reclaim one's narrative.

Key Points:

- Intersectionality is an everyday lived experience.
- Safe spaces and listening foster critical thinking and inclusion.
- Identity shapes access to education and dignity.

Mr. Sunil Ivane (Saanjha Netratva Manch)



Sunil focused on how school dropout rates among tribal youth are deeply rooted in structural inequalities tied to caste and class. He explained that lack of exposure to systems – such as not knowing about sports academies or educational opportunities – creates invisible yet powerful barriers that prevent tribal children from accessing pathways available to their privileged peers. Another major concern he raised was linguistic erasure: tribal children are often forced to abandon their mother tongues in order to succeed in mainstream education, resulting in the loss of cultural identity and emotional connection to their heritage. Sunil highlighted that acceptance in these systems often comes at the cost of assimilation, a painful process where children must shed parts of themselves to be deemed “fit” for progress. This creates a dual burden for tribal youth, who face invisibility within the education system due to lack of

representation and misrecognition within society due to stereotypes about their identities. His insights revealed how language, culture, and systemic inequality intersect to shape educational outcomes in profound ways.

Key Points:

- Educational attainment linked to intersecting social factors.
- Language assimilation impacts culture and self-expression.
- Youth navigate complex realities of belonging and invisibility.

Ms. Gayatri Gyan (Founder, QueerMitra)

Gayatri Gyan offered an in-depth look into the experiences of trans youth, explaining that gender policing begins very early in childhood, long before a child develops a clear sense of identity. She noted that many trans youths face rejection within their own families, pushing them to leave home or seek refuge within hijra communities, which function as survival networks in the absence of social acceptance. Due to stigma and exclusion from schooling, many trans persons end up in unsafe or informal occupations, leaving them vulnerable to exploitation. Gayatri shared real incidents of violence – including police harassment and denial of medical care – to highlight how systemic discrimination shapes the everyday lives of trans individuals. She also discussed how colourism and transphobia intersect, even within creative fields like music, creating additional layers of marginalization. Stigma not only limits employment opportunities but

also affects mental health and one's sense of belonging. Importantly, she emphasized that the trans community itself is diverse – encompassing trans women, trans men, gender-nonconforming youth, and many identities beyond the binary – and that any meaningful conversation must recognize this internal diversity rather than treat the community as a monolith.

Key Points:

- Childhood gender policing and stigma lead to trauma and exclusion.
- Trans and gender-nonconforming youth face compounded discrimination.
- Community acceptance is limited and often tied to survival mechanisms.

Q&A Discussion

The Q&A session brought forward a rich set of reflections on identity, discrimination, social power, and youth-led change. Participants raised concerns about navigating multiple identities, challenging oppressive traditions, and supporting marginalized children in schools. Speakers emphasized that identity is fluid, and young people need moments of stillness and reflection to understand themselves amidst digital and social pressures. They also noted that harmful practices justified as “tradition” must be questioned with respect and firmness, beginning with introspection within NGOs and institutions themselves.

Questions around discrimination in schools highlighted the need for representation, sensitive teaching practices, and systemic changes that affirm Dalit and tribal identities rather than expecting children to fit into rigid norms. The discussion on dropouts underscored the role of linguistic erasure, cultural disconnect, and lack of exposure, with panellists calling for multilingual education and inclusive pedagogy. Participants also sought guidance on supporting trans youth facing family rejection and violence. Speakers stressed that safety, housing, dignity, and mental health support must precede education and employment discussions, and that policies must reflect the diversity within trans communities. The emotional toll of social justice work emerged as another concern; panellists emphasized sustaining joy, community, and small victories as essential forms of resistance.

The session also explored the limits of legal empowerment when social hierarchies remain unchanged, illustrated through cases where elected representatives from marginalized groups faced everyday obstruction. The impacts of colourism on trans and gender-diverse youth were also raised, highlighting layered discrimination within creative

and professional spaces. Finally, speakers encouraged young people to use “creative disruption” – small, strategic, collective acts of questioning and storytelling – as safer pathways to challenge harmful norms without risking direct confrontation. Overall, the Q&A reinforced the importance of reflective, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches to youth empowerment and social transformation.

Summary

The session underscored that intersectionality is an essential framework to understand the multiple layers of identity shaping youth's experiences of exclusion and empowerment in India. It illuminated the ways caste, gender, class, language, and digital realities intertwine to create unique vulnerabilities and strengths among young people. True progress requires slow, grounded, accountable activism that listens deeply to lived experiences, embraces complexity, and fosters both individual dignity and collective transformation. The panel called for multi-dimensional strategies and sustained community-rooted efforts to build a just, inclusive society where every aspect of youth identity is recognized and valued.



Day 1 - SESSION 5

Growing Up in a Digital World



MODERATOR | Gautam Gauri- Diksha Foundation

Objective

The session aimed to explore how digital technologies, including AI, can be harnessed to empower youth and drive social change in Madhya Pradesh. It emphasizes building digital literacy, ethical technology use and capacity-building for innovation across sectors like education, health and climate. A key focus will be on using technology to amplify youth voices and enable meaningful civic participation. The session will also address critical topics such as cyber safety, responsible online behaviour and digital empathy. Participants will reflect on how youth can shape the digital world with accountability and creativity. The goal is to promote a digital culture that is inclusive, safe and grounded in youth-led innovation.

The session was moderated by Gautam Gauri (Diksha Foundation) and featured insightful perspectives from distinguished panellists including Ms. Sadhana Uikey

(Youth Representative), a prominent social media influencer and activist from Seoni ; Kiran Admache from Cicada Creations, a digital storyteller from the Gond community; Ms. Anadi Tiwari, an award-winning radio jockey expanding into digital media; Mr. Alok Palsikar from Codincity Digital Technologies, an IIT Bombay engineer with international IT experience; and Mr. Anirban Choudhury, head of Digital Transformation at ILSS Delhi. The discussion explored how digital platforms, when used intentionally, can be powerful tools for activism, cultural preservation, education, mental health awareness, and technological empowerment especially for rural youth. Panellists emphasized responsible digital literacy, combating misinformation, preserving indigenous knowledge, and harnessing AI for social good and inclusion.

Ms. Sadhana Uikey (Social Media Influencer and Activist, Sikada, Seoni)



Sadhana shared her transformation from a casual social media user to an impactful activist mobilizing for justice in marginalized communities through platforms like Instagram and Facebook. She highlighted her campaign raising awareness for unreported sexual violence cases and stressed the urgent need for digital literacy to counter fake news and misinformation in tribal and rural areas. She encourages youth to use social media for empowerment, knowledge, and community-building rather than passive entertainment.

Key Points:

- Social media can amplify marginalized voices and mobilize youth.
- Digital literacy is essential to discern truth and misinformation.
- Social media must be used purposefully for education and activism.
- Challenges of algorithmic manipulation and information overload.

Ms. Kiran Admache (Filmmaker and Digital Storyteller, Cicada)



Kiran detailed her work documenting and preserving the Gond tribe's rich cultural heritage using film and audiovisual tools. Digital media helps archive oral traditions, ecological knowledge, language, and community rituals at risk of vanishing. For her, digital storytelling strengthens cultural identity and sparks community action, transforming passive memory into active social engagement.

Key Points:

- Film and digital media preserve oral and cultural heritage.
- Documenting disappearing traditions fosters pride and awareness.
- Stories catalyze community reflection and collective action.

Ms. Anadi Tiwari (Radio Jockey and Digital Media Producer)



Anadi discussed radio's resilience and evolution by integrating with digital platforms, extending its reach while retaining trustworthiness. Radio continues to deliver critical local information and engage communities interactively via social media, especially in rural areas. She showcased successful radio campaigns leading to public health improvements and policy responses.

Key Points:

- Radio remains relevant by blending with digital outreach.
- Local radio provides trusted real-time information.
- Digital expansion increases interactivity and youth engagement.
- Radio catalyzed behaviour changes in rural sanitation and de-addiction.

Mr. Anirban Choudhury (Head, Centre for Digital Transformation, ILSS Delhi)



Anirban emphasized technology for social good, assisting nonprofits to apply digital tools ethically, targeting real social problems. He shared his experiences how AI could personalize education, foresee mental health issues, and aid inclusion. He stressed capacity building on appropriate technology use, and advocated for culturally sensitive, sustainable digital transformations.

Key Points:

- Ethical use of technology in social sector is critical.
- AI applications include personalized learning and preventive healthcare.
- Capacity building for NGOs in digital tools.
- Technology must be purposeful, not trendy.

Mr. Alope Palsikar (Codincity Digital Technologies IT and Digital Transformation Expert)



Alok shared historical and future perspectives on technology's impact on employment, highlighting AI as both disruptive and opportunity-creating. He illustrated AI's potential to level rural-urban divides through agricultural tech, remote diagnostics, and new job categories. Alok encouraged youth to embrace continuous learning to adapt to evolving tech landscapes.

Key Points:

- Technological revolutions disrupt but open new job avenues.
- AI can democratize access to knowledge and opportunities.
- Rural areas benefit from AI in agriculture and healthcare.
- Preparation and adaptability are key for youth employment.

Q&A Session

The Q&A session was an engaging and insightful dialogue that explored how Artificial Intelligence (AI) and digital technology can shape India's future across healthcare, education, and society. Anirban explained how the AI for Bharat Mission is making technology linguistically inclusive and highlighted AI's potential in healthcare for prevention and accessibility – from early detection of mental and cardiac issues to sign-language-based communication tools and telemedicine in rural PHCs. Raghavendra, an audience member, raised concerns about digital dependence weakening family bonds. The panellists agreed that while social media has isolated people, balance and mindfulness – not rejection – are the solution. Anadi likened technology to a double-edged sword, Anirban compared screen addiction to overeating sweets, and Sadhana advised fixed screen schedules and family interactions to rebuild emotional connections. Further, a student asked about AI in education, to which Alok shared examples like Physics Wallah and digital archives that make learning interactive and multilingual. Lastly, on AI's impact on children's thinking, Anirban stressed that AI should assist, not replace, human creativity and effort. Overall, the session emphasized using technology with responsibility, empathy, and balance – ensuring it remains a tool for inclusion, learning, and human connection rather than dependency.

Summary

The session illuminated the potential and pitfalls of digital technology in young lives. Panellists illustrated how social media, film, radio, and AI can empower marginalized communities, preserve culture, and enhance education

and health if used with responsibility and digital literacy. Emphasizing inclusion, cultural sensitivity, and ethical technology application, the discussion underscored technology as a tool for connection, knowledge, and social change rather than isolation or misinformation. The panel inspired commitment to promote balanced, informed digital engagement that uplifts rural and urban youth alike, shaping a hopeful, inclusive digital future.

STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE

YUVA AAGAZ YUVA AAWAZ

Youth Power Reimagined
From the Margins to
the Mainstream -
A just society is
one where no young
dream is overlooked.

28th & 29th August 2023
Ravindra Bhawan, Bhopal

Yuva Aagaz Yuva Aawaz

Youth in the Face of Climate Crisis

Panelists



Lokendra Thakkar
FPCO, Bhopal



Rita Banerji
Green Hill



Ashok Patel
Youth Representative

Moderator



Kirti Jain
DASA



Nidhi Tewari
Arthon



Nidhi Jamwal
Journalist



Day 1 - SESSION 6

Youth in the Face of Climate Crisis



MODERATOR | Roshni Jha-Dasra

Objectives

The session aimed to position youth as proactive leaders in climate action, not just passive victims of environmental change. It will explore how the climate crisis affects youth mental health, leading to rising levels of climate anxiety. The conversation will focus on the role of education, Social and Emotional Learning (SEL) and resilience-building to manage eco-anxiety and foster activism. Participants will discuss individual and collective strategies for addressing climate change through policy, technology and community initiatives. The session also advocates for embedding youth voices in environmental governance. By framing the climate crisis through emotional, structural and policy lenses, it aims to build a holistic, youth-led climate movement.

The session featured an array of experts and youth leaders with diverse experiences in environmental activism, policy, journalism, and community engagement. The discussion was framed against the backdrop of a rapidly escalating climate crisis and its disproportionate impact on young people. Climate change in India, particularly in rural and tribal regions, manifests not only as environmental degradation but also as economic, educational, and emotional distress. Ashok Patel, a young Adivasi leader

from Harda, Madhya Pradesh, illustrated this reality by sharing firsthand experiences of deforestation, sand mining, declining water tables, and recurrent floods along the Narmada River. These environmental changes have disrupted livelihoods, displaced families, destroyed agricultural productivity, and hindered educational opportunities, underscoring the multidimensional effects of climate change on youth.

The session was moderated by Mr. Vishnu Jaiswal (Co-founder, Synergy Sansthan), who has nearly two decades of experience working in civic education and youth leadership, particularly among rural, tribal, and semi-urban communities. The session brought together an expert panel to discuss the multifaceted impacts of the climate crisis on young people, their responses, and how they can be empowered as climate leaders. Panellists included Mr. Lokendra Thakkar, an environmental planner with over 32 years of experience at EPCO; Ms. Rita Banerji, founder of the green hub Fellowship and Dusty Foot Foundation; Mr. Ashok Patel (Youth Representative), a young Adivasi leader from Harda; Ms. Nidhi Jamwal, a seasoned environmental journalist; and Ms. Nidhi Tiwari, a researcher specializing in climate and gender at Arthan Cares

Mr. Ashok Patel (Youth Representative, Synergy Sansthan)



Ashok Patel provided a compelling, first-hand account of the multifaceted impacts of climate change on his community in Harda, Madhya Pradesh. Drawing on his personal experience growing up along the Narmada River, he described environmental degradation caused by deforestation, sand mining, and declining water tables, which have directly affected local agriculture and livelihoods. He illustrated how these changes have triggered a cascade of social and emotional consequences, with floods and resource scarcity disrupting education, displacing families, and eroding the confidence and aspirations of young people. Ashok's narrative highlighted that climate change is not only an ecological problem but also an emotional and economic challenge, especially for youth whose dreams and life trajectories are repeatedly disrupted. His testimony underscored the urgent need for localized, youth-led interventions that enable communities to adapt while fostering resilience, agency, and leadership among young people.

Key Points:

- Climate change's directly impacts tribal livelihoods and education.
- Emotional and economic toll on youth due to environmental disasters.

Ms. Nidhi Tiwari (Researcher, Arthan Cares)



Nidhi provided a data-driven perspective that contextualized youth experiences within broader climate realities. She highlighted alarming statistics, noting that 94% of Indian youth feel affected by climate change, while 80% report disruptions to their educational and professional opportunities due to environmental crises. Nidhi pointed out the growing prevalence of extreme events—heatwaves, floods, and erratic rainfall—and linked these to rising mental health challenges, including climate anxiety among young people. Despite the seriousness of these impacts, she emphasized the duality in youth experiences: although many feel anxious and overwhelmed, they are simultaneously resilient, proactive, and capable of leading change within their communities. Nidhi's insights bridged lived experiences with research evidence, demonstrating that effective youth engagement must consider both emotional well-being and actionable participation in climate initiatives.

Key Points:

- 94% of Indian youth feel climate impact; 45% experience climate anxiety.
- Climate crises exacerbate mental health challenges.
- Youth simultaneously anxious and ready to act.

Ms. Nidhi Jamwal (Environmental Journalist)

Nidhi Jamwal focused on the emotional and psychological dimensions of climate change, particularly among children and youth. Drawing on personal observations, she highlighted the emergence of climate anxiety in homes and schools, sharing stories of children internalizing environmental crises to the extent that it affects their daily habits and mental health. She emphasized the urgent need for structured support systems, including counselling and safe platforms for youth to discuss and process climate-related fears. Additionally, Nidhi stressed the importance of evidence-based interventions, arguing that collecting community-level data is critical for designing policies that effectively address climate impacts. Her contributions reinforced the necessity of combining emotional support with practical, data-informed strategies to enable youth to engage meaningfully in climate action.

Key Points:

- Climate anxiety begins early, even in homes and schools.
- Need for youth-friendly mental health support and dialogue spaces.
- Grassroots data essential for effective climate policy.

Ms. Rita Banerjee (Founder, Green Hub Fellowship & Dusty Foot Foundation)

Rita shared insights from her decade-long experience leading the Green Hub Fellowship, a program that empowers youth from marginalized and tribal communities to use visual storytelling as a tool for climate awareness and social change. She illustrated how training youth in documentary filmmaking fosters deep observation, empathy, and care for their environment, enabling them to connect with both ecological and social realities. Rita highlighted that storytelling not only allows young people to document and communicate environmental issues but also bridges generational knowledge, bringing elders and youth together in collaborative learning. She emphasized that such initiatives nurture youth leadership, create collective action, and strengthen local networks for sustainable climate interventions, demonstrating that creativity and community engagement are essential for youth-led climate solutions.

Key Points:

- Youth use storytelling to build ecological awareness and inform policy.
- Bridging traditional and contemporary ecological knowledge.
- Climate solutions need holistic ecosystems-based approaches.

Mr. Lokendra Thakkar (Environmental Planner, EPCO)

Lokendra brought an institutional and policy-oriented perspective, emphasizing the importance of reframing youth as agents of change rather than victims of climate crises. While acknowledging the challenges posed by information overload and climate fatigue, he encouraged simplicity and actionable solutions, such as tree planting, reducing energy consumption, recycling, and engaging with local communities. He stressed that small, consistent actions could cumulatively lead to meaningful environmental impact and that youth leadership is best demonstrated by translating awareness into local initiatives. Lokendra highlighted examples of grassroots innovations and youth entrepreneurship, asserting that empowerment lies in turning small, everyday actions into broader movements that inspire change across communities.

Key Points:

- Youth as key agents to repair ecological damage.
- Simplicity in climate action reduces paralysis.
- Lifestyle changes and youth consultations vital for policy impact.

Q&A Session

The Q&A segment deepened the discussion on youth leadership in climate action by addressing practical pathways for involvement, inclusivity and local innovation. Participants asked how youth can influence climate policy, and panelists stressed the need for informed advocacy, participation in youth assemblies and contributions to State and National Action Plans. They highlighted that even lifestyle choices by young people can shape broader policy directions.

Storytelling emerged as a powerful tool for climate communication. Speakers emphasized that visual media and narrative-based documentation help bridge generational gaps, amplify local ecological knowledge and influence public discourse. Youth were encouraged to begin locally, stay informed, build supportive networks and use creative platforms—videos, social media or community projects—to share their stories. The conversation also explored eco-entrepreneurship opportunities. Examples included upcycling waste, ecosystem restoration and developing livelihood products rooted in local resources. Young people were encouraged to identify local challenges and design climate-resilient solutions that integrate environmental and economic goals.

Questions on climate justice emphasized the need for inclusive decision-making spaces. Panelists noted that youth—especially girls and marginalized groups—are often

excluded from planning processes and must be supported to voice their concerns collectively in advocacy platforms.

Finally, addressing resistance to eco-friendly practices, speakers underscored the importance of knowledge-sharing, respectful dialogue and integrating community traditions into climate solutions. They stressed that context-specific approaches and participatory processes are essential for shifting mindsets and ensuring long-term acceptance of sustainable practices. Overall, the Q&A highlighted the power of youth agency, local innovation, and collective voice in shaping a just and sustainable climate future.

Summary

This session vividly connected the lived realities of climate-affected youth to broader systemic challenges and opportunities for youth leadership in climate action. It underscored the importance of grounding policy in community knowledge, supporting youth mental health, and leveraging storytelling for ecological awareness and empowerment. Panelists shared inspiring examples of youth-driven solutions blending tradition with innovation and advocated simple, inclusive lifestyle shifts. The discussion highlighted youth as essential agents of change whose voices and actions are critical to addressing India's urgent climate crisis.





Day 1: SESSION 7

Reclaiming Public Spaces



MODERATOR | Vishnu Jaiswal- Synergy Sansthan

Objectives

The session delved into the ways in which young people, especially young women and gender-diverse individuals encounter exclusion and marginalization in both physical and digital spaces. The session will help us to unpack systemic barriers and explore community-driven approaches to reclaiming safe, inclusive spaces. We will also highlight inspiring initiatives from various geographies where youth are asserting their presence and rights in public spaces, challenging dominant narratives and shaping new possibilities. The session seeks to spark reflection, build solidarity and encourage collective action and allyship, laying the groundwork for environments that promote belonging, safety, resilience and rights-based engagement for all young people.

The session explored how privatization, social exclusion, and safety concerns have increasingly limited youth participation and visibility, while also highlighting strategies to create inclusive, safe, and empowering spaces where youth can engage, express themselves, and assert their rights. The session was moderated by Roshni Jha from Dasra and panellists for this section were Sarthak (Lawyer and Activist), Tamanna Tanwar (Youth representative), Waseem Iqbal (AAS), and Samiksha Jha (Martha Farrel Foundation) shared diverse insights from activism, rural and urban contexts, youth empowerment, and child protection.

Roshni anchored the session with clarity, energy, and a deep understanding of the complexities around public spaces and youth experience. She opened the panel by setting an inclusive tone, making the audience feel welcomed and prepared for a dialogue grounded in lived realities. From the very beginning, she emphasized that public spaces are not only physical locations but also symbolic arenas where dignity, safety, and democratic participation take shape. Throughout the discussion, she used thoughtful prompts and linking statements that ensured each speaker's contribution added new layers to the conversation. For instance, after Haseem's inputs, she smoothly transitioned to Samiksha by contextualizing her work and connecting it with the theme of dignity and participatory approaches. Similarly, before Wasim's turn, she highlighted the importance of solutions and digital literacy in shaping youth access to safe public spaces, preparing the audience to listen with a solutions-oriented mindset. Roshni consistently made efforts to integrate the audience into the conversation inviting them to prepare questions right from the first round. She balanced the discussion by ensuring young speakers, practitioners, and senior professionals all received space to express themselves. Her closing remarks reflected her strong belief in collective responsibility, emphasizing that while reclaiming public spaces is essential, organizations working for youth remain siloed, and there is a need for shared platforms and shared visions.

Mr. Sarthak (Youth Activist, Lawyer and Paralegal Trainer)



Sarthak offered a grounded and socio-legal perspective shaped by his extensive work with young paralegals, climate youth leaders, and industrial workers. Drawing from these diverse engagements, he highlighted how they lived experiences of young people reveal the complex and evolving nature of public spaces today. According to Sarthak, public spaces cannot be understood merely as physical locations. For him, public space refers to any environment without a single owner space where access, mobility, dignity, and development opportunities are negotiated every day. He explained that the daily journey of a young person from home to school, college, transport, and workplaces collectively forms the public ecosystem that shapes their growth and participation. He extended this concern to institutional and civic spaces, observing that universities, public offices, and workplaces spaces meant to support questioning and democratic engagement have increasingly become sites of fear.

Key Points:

- Public spaces are increasingly privatized and regulated.
- Exclusion based on class and neighbourhood privilege is widespread.
- Youth claim space in noisy, visible ways seeking belonging.
- The challenge is to guide youth energy toward constructive ownership.

Ms. Tamanna Tanwar (Youth Representative and Rural Youth Activist)



Tamanna offered a deeply reflective and experience-based understanding of how young people, especially girls and marginalized youth, interact with public spaces. She began by explaining that public spaces must be viewed not only as physical locations but as social systems shaped by access, behaviour, and structure. Through her lens, a public space becomes meaningful only when individuals can occupy it without fear, judgment, or restriction. Tamanna emphasized that these barriers are not isolated incidents, but part of a layered system shaped by cultural norms, gender expectations, safety concerns, and institutional neglect. Ultimately, she stressed the need for safe, inclusive, and judgment-free environments where young people regardless of gender or background can gather, learn, express themselves, and participate in community life.

Key Points:

- Rural public spaces often unsafe and inaccessible, especially for women.
- Social norms restrict girls' freedom and visibility.
- Awareness of rights is critical for claiming space.
- Basic amenities are political and essential, not luxuries.

Mr. Waseem Iqbal (Youth and Child Protection Advocate, AAS)

Wasim brought a deeply reflective and systemic perspective to the conversation, grounding the discussion in the lived experiences of young people who navigate public spaces with fear, hesitation, and self-doubt. He opened with a poignant couplet by poet Wasim Bareilvi “Dukh apna gar humein batana nahi aata, tumko bhi toh andaaza lagana nahi aata” to highlight a fundamental truth: young people often struggle to articulate their challenges, but the larger and more troubling issue is that systems do not know how to listen, even when those struggles are expressed clearly. Drawing from his extensive field experience, Wasim described everyday situations that reveal how public spaces shape young people's self-worth. He stressed that public spaces are shrinking not only physically but emotionally and politically. Wasim emphasized that solutions must go beyond infrastructure. He concluded with a powerful reminder: if society keeps disregarding the voices of young people, public spaces will continue to be occupied by fear and authority rather than freedom and participation.

Key Points:

- Communal public spaces are shrinking under urban privatization.
- Shared caregiving and dialogue are key foundations of democratic youth spaces.
- Safe, non-formal, creative spaces enable youth self-awareness and digital literacy.
- Youth empowerment requires reclaiming physical and digital commons.

Ms. Samiksha Jha (Maratha Farrel Foundation)

Samiksha's contribution brought a sharp, reflective, and critical lens to the discussion on public spaces. She began by explaining that the very theme of “Reclaiming Public Spaces” had troubled her from the start not because it was incorrect, but because it was incomplete. According to her, young people, children, and elders should not be reclaiming only public spaces; they should be reclaiming all spaces where they live, learn, work, speak, and express themselves. This included learning spaces, workplaces, community spaces, digital environments, and even institutional spaces where youth voices are often minimized or excluded. She also broadened the definition of public space to include institutions like schools, colleges, and panchayats. Samiksha concluded by reminding the audience that reclaiming public spaces is a deeply political act. It requires courage, responsibility, and collective action especially from youth, who carry the energy and imagination to reshape the public sphere.

Key Points:

- Gender barriers pervade even private and educational spaces.
- Educational institutions often suppress dissent and democratic dialogue.
- Reclaiming spaces requires respect for diverse, grassroots knowledge.
- Participation must be inclusive, local, and grounded.

Q&A Session

The rapid round Q&A session brought forth crisp yet powerful reflections from the participants, each offering a practical and action-oriented perspective on reclaiming public spaces and strengthening community responsibility. Sarthak emphasized the importance of accountability, stating that true empowerment lies in making both government and private systems answerable to the people they serve – reclaiming power through transparency and participation. Waseem focused on collective action through the revival of neglected public spaces, suggesting that identifying unused infrastructure and reopening it for community engagement could gradually restore public ownership and social trust. Tamanna shifted the focus

inward, urging individuals to start change within their immediate surroundings – by making their neighbourhoods safer, cleaner, and more inclusive, reminding everyone that real transformation begins with personal initiative rather than complaints. Samiksha beautifully reinforced this with the metaphor of a “library story,” symbolizing that when each person fulfils their own circle of responsibility, it inspires others to do the same, creating a ripple effect of positive change.

Summary

The session “Reclaiming Public Spaces for Youth” highlighted the urgent challenges posed by privatization,

social exclusion, and safety deficits that shrink accessible, democratic spaces for young people. Panellists showcased how public space is not only geographic but institutional, digital, and emotional, shaped by intersecting identities and power dynamics. Inclusive access, gender sensitivity, awareness of rights, and participatory governance emerged as critical components of reclaiming public space in India. Ultimately, reclaiming youth public

space requires collective responsibility, local activism, community trust, and reimagining participation beyond tokenism to genuinely empower the diverse voices and needs of youth today.



Cultural Night- Abhivyakti

At the end of Day 1, the workshop transitioned into a vibrant cultural evening titled “Cultural Night – Abhivyakti.” The event offered a refreshing space for youth to express the creative and celebratory dimensions of their lives beyond discussions and sessions. Young participants showcased their talents through dance, music and group performances, reflecting the richness of their local cultures and personal narratives. The evening also featured invited artists who captivated the audience with folk music, solo acts and ensemble performances, creating an atmosphere of joy, connection and shared cultural pride. “Abhivyakti” not only highlighted the artistic abilities of young people but also reaffirmed the role of creative expression in building confidence, solidarity and community.



PERFORMERS

Kala Samvad

Samtar Band – Shedo

Paigam Group

Kavish Seth





Day 2 - 30th August 2025

As the workshop enters its second and concluding day, the programme is designed to deepen reflection, amplify youth voices, and consolidate the insights emerging from Day 1. The morning opens with an engaging **Youth Space**, where initiatives such as Udaan, YRC, HumRahi, and MP Youth Voices showcase their journeys, innovations, and impact—setting an inspiring tone for the day by centering the agency and creativity of young change-makers. This momentum continues into a thoughtful **Fireside Conversation** between Naghma Mulla, CEO of EdelGive Foundation, and Raghu Maharishi of Synergy Sansthan, offering a grounded dialogue on the role of philanthropy, trust, and long-term investment in strengthening youth-led development.

The discussions then transition into **Round III of parallel thematic sessions**, each addressing a core dimension of youth engagement in today’s rapidly evolving social landscape. Participants explore issues of

Active Citizenship, Democracy & Youth Participation; the transformative power of Youth, Creative Action & Social Change; and the urgent need to Rethink Youth Mental Health & Well-being. These sessions allow participants to dive deeper into structural challenges while identifying pathways to strengthen youth leadership, resilience, and civic voice.

In the afternoon, the convening gathers for a critical **Plenary Session on “Role of Policy, Philanthropy & Practice: Investing in Youth-led Change,”** drawing together perspectives from policymakers, practitioners, and donors to understand how supportive ecosystems can nurture scalable and sustainable youth initiatives. This collective reflection flows into the **Youth Agenda for MP 2025–2030**, where regional groups engage in focused discussions and present concrete priorities, demands, and recommendations shaping the vision for the coming years.





Day 2

Fireside Conversations

with Naghma Mulla (CEO EdelGive Foundation)

Moderated by Raghu Maharishi (Co-founder Synergy Sansthan)

The conversation aimed to inspire youth by exploring leadership, social change, women's empowerment, and the evolving role of young people as changemakers. Through personal narratives, practical insights, and reflective dialogue, the session sought to demonstrate how individual transformation, purpose-driven work, and empathetic leadership contribute to meaningful social impact. The objective of the conversation was to inspire and guide youth in understanding leadership, social change, and women's empowerment. The session aimed to demonstrate how personal growth, purpose-driven action, and empathetic leadership can drive meaningful transformation in society. It sought to provide practical insights on navigating challenges, building resilient organizations, leveraging privilege responsibly, and fostering a mindset where youth can become changemakers who align their individual values with collective progress.

Session Overview

The Fireside Conversation began with a gentle musical prelude and poetic reflection, setting a warm and introspective tone for the discussion. The session was moderated by Mr. Raghu Maharshi, who skillfully steered the dialogue with depth and empathy. The conversation was with Ms. Nagma Mulla, CEO of EdelGive Foundation – a distinguished leader recognized among India's Top 100 Women in Finance (2019) and awarded FICCI Woman of the Year in Philanthropy (2022). The session also featured interactive inputs from the audience and several young participants who engaged with Nagma during the Q&A segment. The conversation centred around leadership, social change, women's empowerment, and the evolving role of youth as changemakers, exploring both personal and institutional dimensions of transformation.

Ms. Nagma Mulla (CEO, EdelGive Foundation)

Ms. Mulla shared her remarkable journey from being a Chartered Accountant to becoming one of India's most respected social leaders. She began by narrating her early years – growing up in a conservative joint family, where education and career choices were driven more by societal expectation than personal desire. Though she excelled professionally, she felt disconnected from her work, realizing that success without meaning is hollow. After taking a break as a homemaker, she decided to restart her career and approached this phase with humility and courage – personally delivering resumes and engaging with people across all levels until she secured a role at Edelweiss. This turning point led her to the world of philanthropy and purpose-driven work. At EdelGive, she became deeply aware of the privilege that shaped her life and recognized a responsibility to use it meaningfully. She spoke candidly about how society conditions women to prioritize others' needs – using the example of who eats first at the dining table – and emphasized that leadership for women often means fighting invisible battles of bias and expectation. Nagma defined true leadership as walking through open doors and holding them open for others to follow.

She also discussed the evolution of philanthropy – moving away from charity toward capacity-building. Under her leadership, initiatives like Grow Fund and Grow Plus were created to strengthen grassroots organizations by funding institutional needs such as HR, finance, and infrastructure – the often-overlooked foundations of sustainability. For youth, she stressed financial literacy and responsible use of social media for self-education. She concluded with a powerful thought that anger, if channeled purposefully, can become a force for change.

Key Points:

- Transitioned from corporate finance to social sector out of a search for meaning.
- Emphasized that privilege should translate into responsibility.
- Spoke about gendered conditioning and invisible biases faced by women leaders.
- Defined leadership as uplifting others while progressing oneself.
- Advocated for philanthropy that builds institutions, not dependency.
- Highlighted the importance of financial literacy among youth.
- Encouraged channelling anger into purposeful, constructive action.

Raghu opened the session by invoking the poem “Tu kisi rail si guzarti hai, main kisi pul sa thar-tharata hoon,” using it as a metaphor to describe the power of human presence to inspire and move others. He framed the conversation around the idea of changemakers – people who bring meaningful transformation both within and around them. Through thoughtful questions, he guided the dialogue from Nagma's personal journey to her professional insights, enabling an inspiring and emotionally grounded exchange. In Response to the one of the question Ms. Gayatri Chauhan from Synergy Sansthan shared that a changemaker is someone who begins by changing themselves and then inspires transformation in others. She emphasized that real change is internal first – it is about adopting new thinking and actions that positively influence one's surroundings. Following her, one of the academicians Dr. Husna Baig added that a changemaker is a leader who doesn't walk alone but takes people along, guiding communities toward a better direction. He emphasized that the power of leadership lies not in authority but in collective responsibility and empathy. Their reflections anchored the discussion in the understanding that social change is both personal and relational.

Key Points:

- Set a reflective and poetic tone for the conversation.
- Engaged the audience by asking, “What does changemaker mean to you?”
- Framed the discussion around transformation, resilience, and leadership.
- Facilitated audience interaction and youth engagement.
- Change begins within oneself and radiates outward.
- Leadership is about guiding others, not dominating them.

Q&A Session

The audience engaged with Ms. Mulla through insightful and practical questions, reflecting their curiosity about leadership, investment, and social work.

- **Vaibhav** asked about the meaning of investment – both financial and personal. Naghma responded that investment is not just about money; it is also about time, effort, and continuous learning. She advised starting small but with discipline and awareness.
- **Pawan Sharma (Guna)** sought guidance on how NGOs can approach funders. Naghma recommended building authentic relationships, seeking referrals from existing funders, and organizing small funder-network meetings for visibility.
- **Janardan (Harda)** asked how small, rural youth-led NGOs could become visible in the social sector. Naghma introduced The Hub, an upcoming EdelGive initiative to support such organizations with financial, HR, and technology tools.
- **J.P. Verma** raised the issue of sustaining volunteer motivation. Naghma advised balancing passion with practicality – encouraging young leaders to keep side jobs initially while building their organizations.
- **Neetu (Gram Roots Collective Foundation)** asked about challenges faced by women in leadership roles. Naghma said that women leaders often face emotional

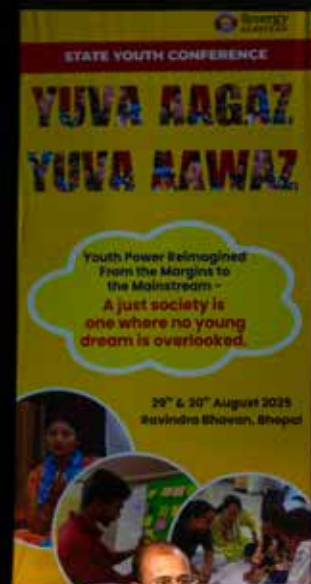
and mental tests daily, and she urged them to protect their “mental real estate” – not allowing others’ opinions to occupy their peace.

Summary

- The Fireside Conversation with **Ms. Naghma Mulla**, moderated by **Mr. Raghu Maharshi**, was an inspiring exploration of leadership, social change, and personal evolution. The discussion traced Naghma’s journey from the world of finance to philanthropy, highlighting her belief that true success comes when privilege meets purpose. The session reflected on gender sensitivity, internal motivation, and the importance of building systems rather than short-term programs.

The Q&A session deepened the conversation, connecting ideals with practical guidance for youth, NGOs, and emerging leaders. In essence, the session’s core message was that leadership is not about walking ahead alone but walking together – building systems, nurturing others, and turning awareness into meaningful action. It reinforced that every individual has the potential to be a changemaker by aligning personal values with collective growth.





Yuva Aagaz Yuva Aawaz
Active Citizenship, Democracy & Youth Participation

Synergy SANSTHAN

Panelists

- Dr. Savitha Babu**
Samsikka
- Amman Madan**
AIM Training University
- Priya Krishnamurthy**
Children's Movement for Civic Awareness
- Vikram Ahake**
Mayor (Chhindwara)
- Shrdha Kumar**
Samarthan

Moderator

- Ritesh Gour**
Synergy Sansthan



Day 2: SESSION 8

Active Citizenship, Democracy, and Youth Participation



MODERATOR | Ritesh Gour- Synergy Sansthan

Objective

The session aimed to emphasize the importance of civic education, democratic literacy and active participation for youth, particularly from tribal and rural regions. It will explore how young people can reclaim democratic spaces through informed dialogue, activism and local governance. In an era of polarization and misinformation, the session will advocate for inclusive civic platforms and mentorship programs. Youth-led examples of democratic engagement—ranging from protest to policy advocacy—will be highlighted. It aims to reframe democracy as a lived, everyday experience rooted in justice, voice and belonging. The session will contribute to building a participatory, youth-led vision of democratic renewal.

The session was a dialogue-driven discussion focusing on strengthening democratic values and youth involvement

in governance. The session was moderated by Mr. Ritesh Gaur, Fellowship Lead at the Synergy Sansthan's Jan Pratham Fellowship Programme, who is known for his work in social development and civic education. The discussion featured an eminent panel comprising Mr. Vikram Ahake, Youth Representative and Mayor of Chhindwara; Ms. Priya Krishnamurthy, Founder and CEO of the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness (CMCA); Dr. Savita Babu, Co-Executive Director of Samvada; and Dr. Shraddha Kumar, Programme Director at Samarthan. Together they shared insights on how young citizens can play a transformative role in democratic processes.

Mr. Vikram Ahake (Youth Representative Mayor, Chhindwara)



Mr. Vikram Ahake, the youngest Mayor of the Chhindwara Municipal Corporation, began his talk by sharing his life journey from a small tribal village to the political arena. He recounted his early motivation to create change through social service and his determination to enter politics despite financial hardships and limited support. His narrative reflected the values of perseverance and self-belief. Vikram emphasized that youth participation in democracy must move beyond voting to active engagement in policymaking and governance. He spoke about the need for recognition of young changemakers who contribute to social good, arguing that societal appreciation can unlock youth potential. In his view, bridging the communication gap between the administration and rural communities is key to promoting inclusivity. He also urged for civic education that fosters empathy, respect, and civic responsibility from childhood, encouraging young people to internalize citizenship as a lifelong practice.

Key Points:

- Bridging administrative and community communication gaps.
- Early value-based education in civic responsibility.
- Encouraging youth recognition for social impact work.
- Promoting active youth inclusion in policy and governance.
- Inspiring youth from humble backgrounds to pursue political leadership.

Ms. Priya Krishnamurthy (Founder and CEO, CMCA)



Ms. Priya Krishnamurthy's address centered on how civic awareness begins with lived experiences, not textbooks. Using examples from her organization, the Children's Movement for Civic Awareness, she explained how schools can serve as laboratories of democracy. Priya described Civic Clubs run by CMCA where students practice democracy by debating issues, initiating solutions, and volunteering for civic causes. She criticized the overemphasis on rote civics education, which focuses on memorizing facts instead of cultivating critical thinking. She argued that children and youth must experience democratic participation—asking questions, expressing opinions, and working collectively to understand responsibility. Her vision stressed that fostering curiosity and courage in the classroom can build confident, empathetic young citizens who make a difference beyond schools, creating a pipeline of active, responsible adults.

Key Points:

- Civic learning should be experiential, not theoretical.
- Civic Clubs help students apply democratic principles in real life.
- Empathy, courage, and critical thinking are core democratic traits.
- Civic behavior starts at home and in schools through open dialogue.
- Transformational learning fosters lifelong active citizenship.

Dr. Savita Babu (Co-Executive Director, Samvada)



Dr. Savita Babu approached the topic from a socio-political and psychological perspective. She shared how youth are often viewed merely as the nation's future, while their present challenges and voices go unheard. In her analysis, youth often face systemic barriers—based on class, caste, gender, and geography—that restrict their agency. She emphasized that active citizenship requires questioning power relations and societal hierarchies. Through Samvada's initiative, the "Yuva Gram Sabha," she demonstrated how rural youth can exercise their voice independently in governance processes. She highlighted the need for collective spaces where youth could link personal struggles (education, employment, identity) with wider structural inequities. Dr. Savita's message was clear: fostering active citizenship among youth demands inclusive education, empathetic listening, and a systemic shift in attitude toward the young as equal actors in democracy.

Key Points:

- Youth must be recognized as agents of change in the present.
- Active citizenship begins with questioning inequality and power.
- Need for inclusive education systems connecting self and society.
- "Yuva Gram Sabha" empowers rural youth to voice opinions freely.
- Transformation requires society to listen rather than lecture youth.

Dr. Shraddha Kumar (Programme Director, Samarthan)



Dr. Shraddha Kumar highlighted the practical and structural aspects of democracy through her experience in strengthening grassroots governance. She shared that democracy's strength lies in daily practice, not in periodic elections. Drawing from her work at Samarthan, she described how Panchayats and community committees can make governance participatory when citizens engage regularly. Explaining that true democracy requires both upward and downward accountability, she stressed the importance of micro-democracy—empowering citizens to make local decisions collectively. Dr. Shraddha also discussed technology's role in facilitating transparency through the Panchayat Darpan platform and training of Soochna Mitras (Information Volunteers). Her perspective reinforced that true citizenship is an everyday act of participation, decision-making, and empathy within the smallest units of governance.

Key Points:

- Democracy should be practiced daily, not every five years.
- Strengthening Panchayati Raj and local governance for real inclusion.
- Promoting micro-democracy through local participation.
- Youth can drive accountability via digital and civic innovations.
- Encouraging everyday citizenship fosters transparency and resilience.

Q&A Session

The Q&A session that followed the youth leadership panel was dynamic, insightful, and deeply engaging, reflecting the curiosity and awareness of the young audience. Participants raised a wide range of thought-provoking questions – from issues of digital ethics to democracy, education, and active citizenship. Pradeep Ghosh began by voicing concerns about the misuse of social media and artificial intelligence, leading to digital fraud and impersonation, and asked how responsible youth should respond to such challenges. He also questioned the role of young people in safeguarding democracy in an era marked by polarization and weakened institutions. Diksha Sharma from Balaghat followed with two powerful questions – one to Dr. Shraddha about the effectiveness of Gram Panchayat-level monthly social audits in promoting transparency and accountability, and another to Mayor Vikram Ahake on the lack of minimum educational qualifications for politicians despite education being a prerequisite for even basic government jobs. Darshan, another participant, directed a question to Vikram Ahake about his personal initiatives since 2014 toward

realizing the vision of India@2047, asking for concrete short- and long-term goals beyond political narratives. He also posed a broader question to all panellists about uniting rural youth across caste and religious divides to promote social transformation.

From Rewa, a representative of the Yuva Ekta Kalyan Sangh raised a heartfelt question about how politics, once seen as social service, has now become distant from ordinary youth due to barriers of money and power. She asked Mayor Vikram for advice to aspiring young changemakers who feel excluded from the political system and urged him to serve as a role model for socially committed leadership. As the moderator, Ritesh, managed time amidst a spirited audience, one final question came from a female participant who asked all panellists to define active citizenship in today's fast-changing social and technological world, with a follow-up to Dr. Priya about how young people can choose the right role models.

Responding to these layered questions, Dr. Priya from CMCA defined active citizenship as the ability to "feel the need for change, believe in it, act upon it, and inspire others to do the

same,” emphasizing empathy, critical thinking, and social understanding as core values for the future. She also noted that being a good citizen and a good individual are not conflicting ideas – India’s constitutional and cultural values are deeply interconnected. Mayor Vikram Ahake addressed several questions collectively, distinguishing between being a leader and a politician, highlighting that true leadership comes from standing up for what’s right, regardless of one’s position or title. He supported the idea of educational qualifications for public representatives and shared his optimism about India achieving the India@2047 vision ahead of time through consistent effort and goal-oriented action. He encouraged youth to not only dream but to act – transforming aspirations into reality through determination and unity. Dr. Savita Babu from Samvada focused on bridging social divides and combating polarization, urging young people to question their own prejudices and hold power accountable. She framed social audits as everyday acts of citizenship – not just official exercises – and underscored the need for awareness and vigilance in the face of digital and AI-related risks.

Summary

The crux of the discussion lies in emphasizing the transformative power of youth as active agents in shaping democratic governance and social development in Madhya Pradesh. The session highlighted the need to move beyond tokenistic youth inclusion and foster genuine engagement through participatory dialogue, inclusive policies, and experiential civic education, particularly focusing on tribal, rural, and marginalized communities. Panellists stressed overcoming social barriers and building grassroots institutions like Panchayats to anchor democratic participation at community levels. The importance of balancing youth rights with responsibilities, fostering leadership, and leveraging technology to empower youth was underscored. Ultimately, the discussion called for collective action, urging youth to contribute beyond individual interests, actively shaping an inclusive, just, and sustainable future for their communities and the nation.





Day 2: SESSION 9

Youth, Creative Action & Social Change



MODERATOR | Ritesh Gohiya-SHEDO

Objective

The session aimed to explore the transformative power of creative expression as a tool for youth empowerment, particularly among tribal and marginalized communities. It promotes art as a medium to reflect local identity, reclaim culture and voice personal and political narratives. Drawing from traditional and contemporary practices, the session highlights how youth can use creativity for advocacy and healing. It seeks to bridge the gap between indigenous wisdom and modern artistic methods, enabling young people to participate in cultural discourse. The discussion will support the development of inclusive creative spaces. Ultimately, it positions art as a vital pathway for self-expression, empowerment and social change.

The session was grounded in a broader exploration of art as a transformative force, tracing its relevance from historical movements like the Bhakti tradition to

contemporary grassroots activism. The session moderated by Mr. Ritesh Gohiya, founder of the Social Health and Education Development Organisation (SHEDO) in Harda, Madhya Pradesh, explored how art and innovation serve as transformative tools for youth-led social change. Ritesh emphasized the session's collaborative and co-creative nature, highlighting the importance of spaces that nurture innovation through diverse art forms, technology, and community expression. The distinguished panellists brought expertise from different creative practices, including Aarti Shukla from Love Matters India using storytelling for SRHR awareness, Vijay Ramtek from Paigam reviving tribal tattoo art, Anurag Hoon from Manzil Mystics combining music with education and livelihood, Kavish Seth the creator of the Noori instrument integrating innovation with expression, and Fahad Khan from Antaral Theatre employing inclusive theatre for social empowerment.

Ms. Aarti Shulka (Communication Professional, Love Matters India)



Aarti brought a powerful perspective on the transformative capacity of storytelling, emphasizing that narratives often succeed where logical persuasion fails. She shared how her work at Love Matters India uses diverse and youth-friendly formats—digital storytelling, Bollywood references, memes, poetry, and visual art—to open conversations on sensitive SRHR topics. Aarti explained that fear-based communication around sexuality and rights typically creates silence and shame, whereas empathy-driven stories invite dialogue and reflection. Through examples of campaigns, including those addressing discrimination and everyday challenges faced by transgender individuals, she demonstrated how art becomes a language for young people to express what they otherwise hesitate to say. She asserted that without art, social communication work would lack emotional depth and connection, reaffirming the idea that stories serve as catalysts for social transformation.

Key Points:

- Transformative power of storytelling to address taboo issues.
- Using digital media and creativity to engage youth on SRHR.
- Art as the essence of dialogue and empowerment.

Mr. Vijay Ramteke (Paigam & Johar Field School, Balaghat)



Vijay's talk focused on the revival of the traditional Godna tattoo art of the Gond and Baiga tribes, highlighting its cultural, spiritual, and medicinal value. He described how this ancestral art form, once fading due to modernization and lack of livelihood opportunities, is being reimagined through innovative mediums such as T-shirts, sarees, accessories, and souvenirs. Sharing the story of a tribal girl who confidently embraced her identity abroad after encountering Godna-inspired work, he illustrated how cultural pride can be reignited through meaningful innovation. Vijay emphasized that while many tribal youths move away from traditional art due to economic insecurity, bridging heritage with contemporary markets can restore dignity and livelihood opportunities. He advocated for community-led branding, intellectual property protection, and cultural tourism as pathways for sustainable development grounded in indigenous knowledge systems.

Key Points:

- Revitalization of traditional tribal tattoo art and its significance.
- Bridging cultural heritage and contemporary fashion.
- Building pride and economic sustainability for tribal communities.

Mr. Anurag Hoon (Musician and Educator, Manzil Mystics)



Anurag spoke passionately about music as a transformative force in education and livelihood, rooted deeply in his own journey from being a struggling student to becoming an educator and artist. He highlighted how Manzil Mystics developed India's first structured curriculum that integrates music with social learning, creativity, and youth empowerment. According to him, music goes far beyond performance—it becomes a tool for reflection, storytelling, and personal growth. Anurag stressed that India's entertainment industry is massive yet faces a shortage of trained and professional talent, presenting a significant opportunity for youth. He encouraged young artists to adopt an entrepreneurial approach by learning essential skills such as billing, budgeting, production, and digital media. Through real cases of young people who built thriving careers in music, he showed how artistic professions, when structured with the right guidance, can become sustainable and respectable livelihood options.

Key Points:

- Music as education and social advocacy.
- Bridging livelihood and creative expression.
- Need for building formal structures in music education and employment.

Mr. Kavish Seth (Musician and Creator of Noori Instrument):



Kavish offered a deeply philosophical perspective on creativity, originality, and innovation. Reflecting on his unconventional path from IIT to a career in music, he described creativity as a process driven by curiosity, emotional need, and lived experiences. He simplified the concept of innovation by stating, "When you need something and don't have it—you create it," referencing his invention of the musical instrument Noori, which merges engineering precision with artistic soul. Kavish cautioned that rigid institutional frameworks often suppress true innovation, which actually emerges from local challenges and individual experimentation. He also touched upon the rising influence of AI in creative fields, acknowledging its potential as a democratizing tool while asserting that emotional authenticity—the ability to convey lived human experiences—remains uniquely human. His reflections encouraged young creators to embrace introspection, vulnerability, and experimentation as pathways to originality.

Key Points:

- Innovation as creative problem-solving rooted in context.
- Music as a platform for democratic expression.
- AI democratizes creation but human feeling remains essential.

Mr. Fahad Khan (Founder, Antara Theatre):



Fahad's contribution highlighted theatre as a powerful medium of community engagement, emotional exploration, and social critique. Drawing from his early experiences of watching village performances, he underscored that theatre's strength lies in its inclusivity—it uses the body, voice, movement, and emotion, making it accessible to all. Fahad emphasized that transformation often begins not during the public performance but within rehearsal rooms where actors confront their fears, biases, and inner conflicts. He shared examples of theatre productions addressing themes such as communal harmony and tobacco addiction, demonstrating how performance can spark difficult conversations. In today's climate of shrinking expressive freedom, he advised creators to rely on metaphor, satire, and symbolism to communicate strong messages without confrontation. His insights positioned theatre as both a mirror to society and a safe space for collective reflection.

Key Points:

- Theatre as inclusivity, dialogue, and social reflection.
- Rehearsal dialogue as transformative.
- Art awakening awareness and motivating change.

Q&A Session

During the Q&A session, the audience raised thoughtful questions that expanded the conversation on art's deeper societal impact and challenges faced by young artists. Goldie, an artist, asked a series of critical questions about the meaning behind artistic expression, managing creative tensions, building collective spaces for artistic exchange, and translating societal challenges into creative opportunities. She also questioned why philanthropic and social sectors have not sufficiently invested in art despite its historic role in reflecting societal truths. The panel acknowledged these as central concerns, emphasizing the need for more inclusive platforms like an "Art Alliance for India" that could foster cross-disciplinary learning and collaboration. Jhanvi Chauhan raised issues of fear of free expression amid growing online trolling and asked how young artists can navigate this climate while still preserving cultural roots that are increasingly commercialized and disconnected from their origins. Another participant from Balaghat raised the complex issue of patenting and protecting indigenous knowledge and local arts, citing examples of commercial exploitation of tribal handicrafts and medicinal plants, and sought ideas for safeguarding such heritage, especially through networks like Synergy.

Responding to concerns on practical support, Saumya shared the struggles emerging artists face in accessing platforms and opportunities. Anurag addressed this by highlighting the lack of formal pedagogy and ecosystems in music, urging artists to adopt entrepreneurial mindsets alongside performance skills. In a poignant contribution, Tausif confessed how artists' livelihoods are often undervalued even by communities and NGOs, where payment is tokenistic or absent, undermining sustainability. Kavish reinforced this view, stressing the creation of economically safe spaces where artists can earn dignified incomes and gradually expand their circles of expression and support.

Aarti differentiated between expression for its own sake, often prone to trolling, and expression that adds social

value and addresses real knowledge gaps, promoting constructive dialogue rather than confrontations. Fahad offered practical advice on speaking through indirect language and metaphor under oppressive circumstances, tracing this tradition in Indian and European theatre history as a method to safely express dissent and truth.

Vijay emphasized the importance of local awareness and agency in protecting indigenous art from exploitation, advocating for controlled sharing and reciprocity. Shaq, a veteran artist, closed reflections by framing art as an essential human need deserving of investment by communities and society, akin to sustaining religious spaces.

Moderator Ritesh concluded the session by affirming that art nourishes happiness, connection, and meaning, advocating for expanded spaces and recognition of art as a continuous process of community-building rather than isolated spectacles. This Q&A surfaced crucial challenges and insightful solutions related to fostering creativity, sustaining artistic livelihoods, navigating cultural preservation, and promoting free, responsible expression amid societal constraints.

Summary

This session illuminated art's role as a vital practice for building identity, community, and social justice, moving beyond mere entertainment. Panellists showcased how diverse art forms—storytelling, tribal tattooing, music, invention, and theatre—serve as powerful vehicles for youth-led social transformation. The discussion underscored the need for expanded spaces of expression, institutional recognition of art's economic value, and protection of cultural heritage. Ultimately, the session envisioned a creative ecosystem that connects tradition and modernity, emotion and technology, empowering young artists as agents of sustained social change in Madhya Pradesh and beyond.



Day 2: SESSION 10

Rethinking Youth Mental Health & Wellbeing



MODERATOR | Aditi Mishra- Jumbish

Objective

The session aimed to broaden the discourse on youth mental health by moving beyond conventional treatment models to explore community-rooted, inclusive solutions. It will question whether existing strategies are truly addressing youth needs and highlight grassroots efforts that offer local, culturally relevant support systems. Gender-sensitive policy design, peer networks and social-emotional learning will be key areas of discussion. The session will emphasize resilience-building and participatory mental health frameworks that reflect young people lived experiences. It also aims to advocate for policies and programs that are responsive, equitable and youth-centred. This inclusive approach aspires to lay the groundwork for a sustainable and transformative mental health ecosystem.

The session brought together practitioners, psychologists, community workers, and mental health advocates to unpack the layered and complex realities of young people's emotional lives in India. The discussion highlighted that youth mental health cannot be separated from the social, economic, and cultural environments in which young people grow up. With increasing social pressures, academic competition, digital overload, gender expectations, and widespread stigma, mental health challenges among youth are rising sharply.

The session aimed to critically examine these issues through a psychosocial and intersectional lens—moving beyond individual symptoms to the larger contexts of caste, gender, class, sexuality, nutrition, childhood experiences, and systemic inequities. The panel provided an opportunity for honest reflections on how families, schools, communities, and institutions shape youth mental wellbeing, and emphasized the need to create supportive ecosystems that combine care, dignity, and structural change.

The session was moderated by Ms. Aditi Mishra (from Jumbish) and explored the complex interplay of social, cultural, and structural factors shaping youth mental health in Madhya Pradesh. The panel included a distinguished group of experts and practitioners: Alok Tripathi from CRY (Child Rights and You), Mohammad Nawazuddin from the Mariwala Health Initiative, Monika Kumar from Manas Foundation, Harikkeerthan Raghuram from Sangath, and Alok Benjamin from Heartbeat Foundation and counsellor working with children in conflict with the law. The discussion focused on destigmatizing mental health, embedding psychosocial support within communities, leveraging youth participation in research, and addressing mental health through an intersectional lens addressing factors such as patriarchy, gender normativity, caste, and neurodivergence.

Mohammad Nawazuddin (Program Manager, Mariwala Health Initiative)



He opened the discussion by emphasizing how deeply hidden youth distress often is, especially within families and schools where adults lack the awareness or skills to recognize mental health challenges. They highlighted how Indian society still treats emotional struggles as taboo, making it difficult for young people to seek support. Drawing attention to the influence of public figures like Aamir Khan and Deepika Padukone, the speaker noted that celebrity advocacy has played a major role in normalizing mental health conversations. However, they pointed out that counselling remains expensive and inaccessible for most youth, creating a stark gap between awareness and actual support. Using simple everyday scenarios, they demonstrated how nonjudgmental listening can be lifesaving. Their central message was clear: while structural improvements are necessary, immediate change begins with building a culture where youth are heard with empathy and without judgment. Nawaz brought an

intersectional and ecosystem-based perspective, urging the audience to understand mental health not as an individual deficit but as a product of social structures. Nawaz argued for integrating mental health within broader education, livelihood, and community development systems to address root causes rather than symptoms.

Key Points:

- Mental health interventions must account for broader social systems.
- Youth should be co-creators of mental health programs.
- Structural change is essential alongside clinical support.

Ms. Monika Kumar (Clinical Psychologist, Manas Sansthan)



Monika provided a strong gender lens to the conversation, describing how cultural expectations and patriarchal norms silence the emotional lives of young people—particularly girls. She explained that because discussing emotional pain is stigmatized, psychological distress often gets expressed through physical symptoms like headaches, body aches, or fatigue, leading to misdiagnosis or dismissal. Citing alarming statistics, she reminded the audience that suicide remains the second leading cause of death among Indian youth, and that teachers and parents often lack even basic awareness of signs of emotional distress. Monika further highlighted how early marriage, domestic violence, restricted mobility, and lack of safe spaces severely undermine young women's mental health. She stressed the importance of creating environments where youth feel safe to express themselves and seek help without fear of judgment. To illustrate the lived experience of emotional vulnerability, Monika

shared her own story of feeling linguistically and culturally inferior while studying in elite institutions, showing how deeply such internalized barriers affect first-generation learners. Through this personal narrative, she reinforced the need for compassionate and culturally sensitive mental health interventions. Monika focused on community-led mental health support systems and described the “Se” program, which trains youth as peer counsellors or “barefoot counsellors.” She explained that these young community members often understand local realities better than formal experts and are therefore more effective in building trust.

Key Points:

- Silence and stigma dominate cultural attitudes toward mental health.
- Psychological distress often presents as physical symptoms.
- Peer-led, community-based mental health interventions are effective.

Mr. Alok Tripathi (Senior Program Leader, CRY)



Alok expanded the dialogue by focusing on the formative role of early childhood development in shaping long-term mental health outcomes. He explained that mental health does not begin during adolescence—it begins in the womb, and the first 1000 days of life are critical for cognitive, emotional, and neurological development. Drawing from NFHS-5 data, he highlighted the high rates of stunting, wasting, and underweight children in Madhya Pradesh, emphasizing that poor nutrition in early years has lifelong consequences, including emotional instability, learning challenges, and vulnerability to mental health disorders. Alok argued that a weak early childhood ecosystem—characterized by inadequate nutrition, limited stimulation, and poor caregiving practices—creates a foundation for later mental health vulnerabilities. He emphasized the need for strong interlinked systems that support parents, improve nutrition, and foster early learning environments. In his view, improving youth mental health requires

investment long before children reach adolescence, beginning with robust support for mothers, infants, and young children.

Key Points:

- Early childhood nutrition and stimulation are vital for mental health.
- Systems must empower caregivers for sustainable impact.
- Mental health is shaped by foundational developmental factors.

Mr. Hritikirtan Raghuram (Researcher and Advocate, Sangat):



Hritikirtan offered a powerful framework for understanding youth mental health through five structural determinants: patriarchy, compulsory cisgenderism, binary gender norms, compulsory heterosexuality, and neuro-normativity. They explained how patriarchy not only restricts girls' agency but also prevents boys from expressing their emotions, trapping all genders into harmful expectations. Compulsory cisgenderism and binary gender norms erase trans and non-binary youth, creating constant identity-based stress. Similarly, compulsory heterosexuality forces LGBTQ+ youth to hide their identities, leading to chronic distress. Neuro-normativity, they noted, pathologizes autistic, ADHD, and dyslexic youth instead of supporting their diverse needs. Through a small physical demonstration—pinching a participant—they illustrated a simple but profound point: pain must be stopped at its source, not merely soothed. Their message was that the solution is not to “fix” young people but to dismantle the oppressive

systems that harm them. Their talk reframed mental health as a collective social responsibility rather than a personal burden.

Key Points:

- Democratizing research through youth co-leadership.
- Lived experiences are valuable research knowledge.
- Shift from "research on" to "research with" youth.

Mr. Alok Benjamin (Counsellor for Juvenile Justice)



Alok shared insights from more than 13 years of counselling youth in conflict with the law, highlighting how systemic neglect, poverty, and early exposure to violence shape behavioural challenges. He explained that most children in juvenile homes have extremely high Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) scores, including experiences of abuse, abandonment, and family instability. These early traumas, he said, frequently lead to emotional dysregulation, aggression, and survival-based behaviours that the justice system often mislabels as "criminal tendencies." Alok advocated for a shift from punitive approaches to care-based counselling, which recognizes trauma as the root cause. He shared moving examples of how young offenders transform when they receive trust, stability, and compassion rather than punishment. His contribution underscored that youth who enter the justice system are not "problem children" but children with problems—problems largely created by their environments. His perspective called for systemic reform in both child protection and mental health support.

Key Points:

- Trauma and systemic neglect drive juvenile delinquency.
- Rehabilitation requires humane, persistent care.
- Transforming youth requires societal investment and acceptance.

Q&A Session

The audience Q&A session was marked by a deep, reflective exchange that broadened the conversation on youth mental health, family relationships, and community accountability. Abhishek from the Arogya Sangam Foundation opened the discussion with a powerful question about the lack of parent-centric programs in NGOs, arguing that early emotional acknowledgment within families could prevent much of the trauma children face later in life. Responding to this, Alok Tripathi from CRY explained that their organization follows a holistic family-based approach, treating the family as a single unit rather than focusing solely on children or mothers. He highlighted CRY's Parent Engagement Module, which includes husbands, in-laws, and elders in conversations around sexual and mental health, helping reduce isolation and prevent domestic violence.

A female participant then shared a personal and thought-provoking observation, questioning why assertive self-expression – like saying "please don't pinch me" – is often viewed as weakness. She emphasized the need for early dialogue with parents to understand the roots of such beliefs, including harmful practices like child marriage, and to challenge them through open communication. Suresh Patel from Kabir Jan Vikas Samuh followed by cautioning that while parents are often held accountable for children's challenges, constant blame can lead to guilt and depression. He advocated for a balanced approach where youth also learn to take responsibility for their mental and emotional well-being.

Aakash, representing an NGO from Neemuch, raised a pressing issue about the Banchhada community in Madhya Pradesh, where girls are often coerced into sex work by their families. His question focused on strategies to empower youth within such marginalized communities to break these entrenched cycles of

exploitation. Another audience member from Gwalior expanded the conversation to include body image and mental health among middle-class youth, pointing out that while discussions often center on malnutrition, issues like bullying and social rejection based on appearance also cause deep psychological harm. Responding again, Alok Tripathi noted that malnutrition and anaemia are widespread across social classes, affecting even 60% of Indian women, and emphasized that the real issue lies not in genetic differences but in how society weaponizes those differences through pressure and discrimination.

Summary

The discussion on youth mental health highlighted the complexity and urgency of addressing mental well-being among young people, emphasizing that mental health is deeply intertwined with social, cultural, and structural factors. Panellists illustrated that stigma, silence, and lack of access to affordable counselling continue to create significant barriers to mental health support, especially for marginalized youth. They pointed out the critical need for systemic change that includes training parents, teachers, and community members to be empathetic, nonjudgmental listeners—offering psychological first aid and early support. The importance of recognizing mental health as a communal and ecosystem challenge, rather than an isolated individual struggle, was a consistent theme. Participants emphasized embedding mental health in community programs and education, involving youth as co-creators in research and program design, and shifting focus from treatment to prevention. The discussion underscored how patriarchy, caste, gender norms, binary expectations, and neurodivergence serve as social determinants that impact mental health outcomes. The session concluded by advocating for holistic, participatory, and inclusive approaches that build resilience, dignity, and joy across the diverse youth populations of India.



Day 2: SESSION 11

Role of Policy, Philanthropy & Practice: Investing in Youth led Change



MODERATOR | Neha Buch

Objective

The session explored what it takes to build and sustain youth-centric ecosystems that recognize young people not merely as beneficiaries but as changemakers and co-creators of solutions. Anchored in the belief that meaningful investment in youth-led change is both urgent and transformative, the session will unpack the intersecting roles of public policy, philanthropic institutions and on-ground practice in enabling this shift. Through dialogue with key stakeholders, we will examine how strategic support—financial, political and social, can be aligned to foster inclusive leadership, agency and long-term impact. The conversation will also reflect on gaps, opportunities and bold ideas to reimagine systems that centre youth voices, especially from marginalized geographies and identities.

The session was moderated by Neha Buch, a leadership and organizational development expert with over two decades of experience across development and corporate sectors. It focused on shifting the narrative from youth as beneficiaries to youth as co-leaders in social change. The panel featured four eminent speakers: Yashveer Singh, Co-founder of Ashoka Young Changemakers; Amod Khanna, from IPE Global and senior development consultant associated with institutional and climate initiatives; Rishabh Lalani, Founder and CEO of Kohomorehbee Consulting and Vishnu Jaiswal, Co-founder and Program Director at Synergy Sansthan. They collectively explored

how policy frameworks, funding ecosystems, and institutional practices can be strengthened to authentically invest in youth-led change, ensuring greater trust, inclusivity, and long-term collaboration.

Neha Baj played a pivotal and anchoring role throughout the session, shaping its flow, depth, and engagement. Her moderation was not simply about facilitating conversation; it was a thoughtful act of weaving together diverse perspectives, ensuring intellectual coherence, and maintaining an inclusive, reflective environment for both panelists and participants. Neha opened the session with warmth, informality, and an energetic presence that immediately set a comfortable tone for everyone in the room. Her introduction framed the significance of the session by highlighting the centrality of youth-led change in the contemporary socio-development landscape. She skillfully contextualized the conversation, helping participants recognize that this panel was not merely an exchange of opinions, but a critical dialogue on the evolving role of young people in shaping social transformation. Throughout the discussion, Neha consistently grounded the conversation in core themes **intergenerational leadership, youth-led transformation, democratization of organizational spaces, and the interplay between policy, philanthropy, and practice**. Her ability to keep these key ideas at the center enabled the session to stay focused and relevant, ensuring that the discussions aligned with the broader vision of fostering youth-led change.

Mr. Yashveer Singh (Co-founder, Ashoka Young Changemakers)



Yashveer's contribution centered on reframing youth not as passive beneficiaries but as active co-leaders of social transformation. He emphasized that historically, young people have driven every major social, political, and cultural movement across the world. His insights illuminated the idea that youth possess a unique combination of imagination, courage, and defiance of the status quo, making them powerful architects of change. Yashveer also highlighted the pervasive problem of tokenistic youth engagement. In many development programs, youth are involved symbolically or for visibility, rather than being given real decision-making authority. He strongly argued that true youth-led work means integrating young people into the design, strategy, and leadership layers of any program. He concluded by emphasizing the need for systemic changes organizational structures, policies, and leadership practices must shift to recognize the agency and capability of young people.

Key Points:

- Youth must be treated as co-creators, not implementers.
- Early experiences of changemaking foster lifelong agency.
- Institutional reform requires shared power and trust.

Mr. Amod Khanna (Development Expert from IPE Global)



Amod provided an institutional and structural perspective on youth leadership. He began by highlighting a striking contrast: while government structures allow young individuals (such as district collectors aged 27–30) to hold power, civil society organizations tend to be led by older individuals, often 45–60 years of age. This disparity is rooted in organizational culture, lack of succession planning, and the tendency of founders to hold on to leadership roles for decades. He emphasized the necessity of creating a leadership pipeline within NGOs. Without structured pathways for young people to move into decision-making roles, youth-led change remains a slogan rather than a reality. His model of three-tier leadership senior, middle, and emerging youth leadership offered a practical framework for institutional transformation. Amod also addressed important legal and administrative challenges. In India, dissolving

a trust or society is extremely difficult, which complicates organizational renewal. This makes planned leadership transition even more important but often ignored.

Key Points:

- NGOs must institutionalize three layers of leadership succession.
- Youth leadership emerges from lived experience, not age.
- Real inclusion demands listening, not just representation.

Mr. Rishabh Lalani (Founder & CEO, Kohmorehbee Consulting)

Rishabh approached the conversation from a philanthropic and resource-mobilization perspective. He began by acknowledging the innate capacity of young people to question and challenge existing norms. According to him, the ability to disrupt and innovate is embedded in youth identity itself. He presented a candid analysis of why youth-led organizations struggle to secure funding. Most capital is held by older, established donors whose priorities often reflect life-stage concerns such as retirement, health, climate anxiety, or systemic risk emerging from AI or economic shifts. Youth-led work does not automatically resonate with these priorities unless a compelling narrative is built. He stressed that philanthropy is fundamentally relational, not transactional. Trust, shared values, and personal connection are the real foundations of funding partnerships. He also encouraged youth organizations to understand donor motivations deeply whether they stem from personal beliefs, legacy, emotional experiences, or social responsibility.



Key Points:

- Build empathetic relationships between donors and youth organizations.
- Include youth leaders in funding boards for shared decision-making.
- Long-term, flexible funding fosters authentic impact.

Mr. Vishnu Jaiswal (Co-founder & Program Director, Synergy Sansthan)

Vishnu grounded the discussion in the lived realities of rural and tribal youth leadership. He described how Synergy's journey began with young people from marginalized communities who, despite limited exposure, displayed immense creativity, resilience, and leadership potential once given opportunities. He emphasized that youth leadership is a long-term investment it takes 5–7 years for young people to mature into confident leaders, especially in under-resourced settings. However, most funding frameworks support only short-term (1–2 year) projects, which do not align with the time required for authentic youth leadership development. Vishnu critiqued the “issue-centric funding model,” where donors focus on specific themes like nutrition or education but fail to recognize adolescence or youthhood as a legitimate issue requiring dedicated investment. He argued that youth is not merely a delivery mechanism it is the center of transformation. One of his strongest points was the importance of ownership. Youth thrive when they have autonomy over ideas, processes, and strategies. Programs that impose rigid templates fail to inspire young leaders.



Key Points:

- Youth-led transformations take 5–7 years of consistent investment.
- Local leadership thrives when funders trust community pace and processes.
- True participation is co-ownership, not token consultation.

Q&A Session

During the Q&A session of the panel opened several pertinent questions from the audience were addressed by the panellists. One audience member inquired why youth representation isn't made mandatory at all government levels, noting that youth voices should be included during policy drafting rather than afterward. A related question raised was why reserved seats for youth don't exist in Parliament, highlighting the age gap between decision-makers and young constituents. In response, Rishabh Lalani emphasized the importance of transparent merit-based representation, avoiding nepotism.

One of the participants, Asma questioned the top-down nature of funding flows, where youth-led organizations

often have to conform to donor requirements that do not align with grassroots realities. She asked whether philanthropy can instead adapt to community contexts and value the emotional truths behind data. Moderator Neha Bhasin responded that representation without real power is symbolic, and shared power requires confronting discomfort and moving beyond superficial gaps to genuine dialogue and co-ownership.

There was also an audience reflection on the necessity of context-specific youth policies, given the varied challenges in urban, rural, and tribal areas. Amod Khanna noted the complex dynamics of funding, explaining that while Indian CSR contributions are significant, they are often treated as business costs, not moral investments. He cautioned that

funders' money isn't inherently good or bad—alignment with social values is what matters most.

Neha emphasized that funders are diverse, with some understanding ground realities deeply. She stressed that relationship-building and empathy—rather than frustration—are key to co-creating trust-based giving.

In closing reflections, each panellist offered a powerful takeaway: Vishnu (Synergy Sansthan) called on youth to recognize their role in shaping systems; Yashveer Singh (Ashoka) stressed centering youth in change; Amod Khanna urged continual challenge of stereotypes; and Rishabh Lalani encouraged pushing forward despite denial or obstacles.

This Q&A effectively highlighted the complexities of embedding youth in leadership and decision-making authentically. It surfaced the need for transparent, meritocratic youth representation, donor sensitivity to grassroots realities, shared power over tokenism, and sustained relationship-building. The session underscored

that real youth-led change requires systemic shifts in policy, philanthropy, and practice grounded in trust, inclusion, and courage.

Summary

The session concluded with a shared call to reimagine the ecosystem for youth-led change by democratizing power, reforming funding models, and placing trust in young leaders. Yashveer emphasized intergenerational partnerships, Rishabh proposed youth representation in philanthropy boards, Vishnu advocated long-term investment and mutual accountability, and Amod urged breaking stereotypes through policy and practice transformation. The overarching sentiment was that youth are not passive participants but active architects of social change. Real youth-led transformation will succeed only when funders, policymakers, and practitioners move from control to collaboration, from consultation to co-creation – investing in the courage, creativity, and leadership of India's young changemakers.





Day 2: SESSION 9

Youth Agenda for MP 2025–2030



MODERATOR | Ajay Pandit- Synergy Sansthan

The session aimed to co-create a comprehensive, youth-centered development agenda for Madhya Pradesh for 2025–2030 by bringing together diverse regional perspectives. It sought to reposition youth as central stakeholders in development, address their key concerns such as livelihood, identity, gender, mental well-being, climate action, and leadership, and highlight the importance of authentic youth ownership, intergenerational collaboration, and investment in youth-led initiatives. It formed a crucial segment marking a transition from two days of deep thematic dialogues to a collective envisioning exercise for the “Youth Agenda for Madhya Pradesh 2025–2030.”

The session was moderated by Ajay Pandit, Co-Founder and Director from Synergy Sansthan. It focused on building a comprehensive youth-centred development agenda rooted in insights from extensive regional meetings involving over 89 organizations representing CSOs, academia, research institutes, NGOs, government representatives, youth activists and social workers and nearly 300 youth participants. The session highlighted the importance of repositioning young people as central stakeholders in development, addressing their core concerns such as livelihood, identity, gender, mental well-being, climate action, and leadership. Ajay emphasized a youth-centred lens on gender and the critical need for authentic youth ownership of initiatives, urging investment and trust in youth-led organizations.

The session unfolded as a dynamic and participatory dialogue, weaving together lived experiences, reflective insights, and collaborative problem-solving. It began with Ajay presenting key learnings from the regional dialogues, setting the tone for a deeper exploration of identity, gender, and youth agency. Moderators and youth participants were then invited to engage with three guiding questions that encouraged them to imagine stronger youth-centered systems, articulate the collective efforts needed, and propose sustainable process pathways for the future. The session featured a diverse group of contributors—including feminist educators, youth workers, creative practitioners, and grassroots organizers—each enriching the dialogue from their unique vantage points. Discussions ranged from gendered experiences of public spaces and inequities within education systems to the potential of creative industries, decentralized learning ecosystems, and intergenerational mentoring. The structure encouraged open exchange, grounded in real-life stories and regional insights, ensuring that the conversation remained rooted in the everyday realities of young people. The session concluded with collective recommendations and reflective closing statements, emphasizing the interconnected nature of gender justice, identity, political expression, creativity, and youth empowerment.

Ms. Ajay Pandit (Moderator, Synergy Sansthan)



Ajay opened the session by situating the two-day conference within the broader framework of a statewide, participatory process that began with extensive regional consultations. He emphasized that youth should not be viewed merely as beneficiaries or implementers of development programs but as central stakeholders capable of shaping policies and initiatives. Highlighting key insights from the consultations, he noted that young people had repeatedly raised issues of identity, gender expression, mobility, and mental well-being, with many young women describing their first victory simply as finding the courage to voice their opinions. Ajay also drew attention to the intersection of youth and climate leadership, portraying youth not just as implementers but as critical thinkers and problem-solvers in addressing challenges like climate change. He stressed the need for youth ownership in development processes, advocating for structures and programs that enable young voices to emerge and

flourish, rather than silencing them. Additionally, he highlighted the importance of applying a youth lens within gender work, pointing out how social norms rapidly transform a young woman’s identity from “youth” to “responsibility,” underscoring the urgency of creating enabling spaces for agency and expression.

Ms. Nidhi (Youth Mentor)

Nidhi contributed a nuanced understanding of youthhood, arguing against rigid age-based definitions. She explained that youthhood should be seen as a continuum rather than a strict cutoff at 30 years, where individuals in the 30–37 age range can simultaneously mentor younger youth and continue learning from more senior mentors. This perspective emphasized intergenerational collaboration, reinforcing that knowledge transfer and mutual support are crucial for sustaining youth initiatives. She also highlighted the potential of leveraging younger administrative officers—ages 27 to 30—as allies in scaling youth-centered programs, suggesting that structured partnerships with these young leaders could help extend the reach and impact of development initiatives across districts. Her reflections underscored the importance of seeing youth not as a fixed category but as an evolving phase capable of contributing across age groups.

Artist Speaker (Youth Advocate)

The participant built on insights from the arts and innovation panel, emphasizing that youthfulness is more a mindset than an age bracket. He noted that many older artists retain remarkable energy, creativity, and capacity for engagement, which can complement younger artists’ innovations. The discussion focused on bridging generational divides through shared creativity and fostering intergenerational mentorship within artistic ecosystems. The speaker also advocated for

a shift from conventional job-based thinking toward skill- and interest-based livelihoods, highlighting that artistic passion should be recognized as a legitimate source of income. Citing examples from performances by Kavish Bhai and Manzil Mystics, he illustrated how art can drive social impact and activism. His contribution reinforced the idea that nurturing creativity and recognizing non-traditional pathways are critical for youth empowerment and sustainable livelihoods.

Youth Representative (Field Practitioner)

A youth representative highlighted the application of the Positive Deviance approach, identifying those young people who thrive despite adverse conditions and replicating the factors that enabled their success. He emphasized that this methodology allows practitioners to address both structural and attitudinal barriers, fostering replicable models for broader youth engagement. Beyond social practices, he underscored the importance of political participation, arguing that disengagement leaves decision-making in the hands of less capable actors. Quoting Plato, he asserted that youth must actively engage in governance and leadership if they wish to influence societal outcomes. His reflections connected grassroots innovation to political consciousness, emphasizing that meaningful youth engagement requires both creativity and strategic participation in public life.

Mr. Manas Mishra (Youth Participant)

He used a vivid metaphor to describe youth as growing trees, with organizations, families, and leaders representing soil, water, and sunlight. He argued that for youth to flourish fully and reach their potential, they must be provided with space, patience, and the right nurturing environment. Without such support, young people risk being stunted, like bonsai trees—decorative but unable to grow naturally. This contribution emphasized the need for developmental approaches that prioritize creating enabling environments rather than imposing rigid structures. True youth-centered work, he suggested, focuses on long-term growth, resilience, and freedom to explore, allowing young people to develop naturally while benefiting from guidance and support.

Young Woman Participant

A young woman participant highlighted the critical role of families in shaping youth engagement, particularly for girls. She shared that middle-class families often discourage young women from participating in activism or unconventional careers, favoring stable, traditional jobs instead. To address this barrier, she suggested that future conferences and consultations actively involve parents, allowing them to witness and support youth aspirations. By creating dialogues that include families, she argued, youth engagement could become more sustainable, as parental support directly influences young people's confidence, decision-making, and ability to pursue socially meaningful initiatives. Her insights underscored the importance of integrating familial engagement into youth-focused programming to create holistic support systems.

Q&A Session

The Q&A session highlighted three major themes. First, participants emphasized that youth-centered development must be grounded in the lived realities of young people, requiring decentralization, flexible program design, and the use of informal community spaces where youth naturally engage. Meaningful participation, creative facilitation, and respect for youth agency emerged as core principles.

Second, the discussion underscored the need for collective, cross-sector efforts to advance youth-centered approaches. This includes stronger partnerships between youth-led and adult-led organizations, engaging young government officers to institutionalize innovations, promoting creative and skill-based livelihoods, encouraging political participation, and ensuring inclusion across caste, gender, class, and geography. The central idea was to enable youth autonomy, not manage or restrict it.

Finally, participants proposed several follow-up processes to sustain momentum post-consultation. Key recommendations included annual youth–parent dialogue forums, regional youth leadership labs, cross-institutional art collectives, youth policy advocacy groups, and community-based action incubators leveraging Positive Deviance and design thinking. These mechanisms aim to create structured, long-term platforms for youth-led innovation, leadership, and influence.

Summary

The session showcased a vibrant, diverse array of youth perspectives and expert insights, focusing on co-creating a youth-driven development agenda for Madhya Pradesh for 2025–2030. The discussions underscored the necessity of decentralizing youth work, infusing optimism, bridging generation gaps, and redefining livelihoods beyond conventional frameworks. Emphasis on nurturing ecosystems and transformative spaces, coupled with building mutual accountability among youth, families, and administrators, emerged as key pillars. This session reinforced that youth empowerment is a collective journey requiring shared ownership, innovative collaborations, and sustained dialogue, setting a strong foundation for the ongoing "Yuva Aagaz" movement and youth-led transformations in the state.



Day 2: Closing Plenary Reflections & Way Forward

The session aimed to consolidate insights from the conference, reflect on key learnings, and chart actionable steps for youth-led social change in Madhya Pradesh. It focused on transforming feedback into collective action, fostering shared ownership, decentralizing leadership, and building sustainable, regionally driven youth ecosystems for 2025–2030.

The final session of the conference was led by Ajay Pandit from Synergy Sansthan, who emphasized that endings are also new beginnings. The session was a platform

for reflection and planning, featuring insights from Amod ji from IPE Global, a veteran mentor advocating for movement-based change; Sachin Jain of Vikas Samvad, who highlighted the importance of mutuality and collective harmony; and R N Syag, a youth leader from Synergy Sansthan, who outlined a detailed youth agenda for Madhya Pradesh for 2025-2030. The discussion focused on transforming feedback into action by fostering shared ownership, decentralizing leadership, and creating sustainable, regionally driven youth ecosystems.

Mr. Amod (IPE Global)



Amod praised the vibrant discussions and audience engagement, emphasizing the need to prioritize discussions on core youth issues such as safety, mental health, and digital literacy. He called for rethinking event formats to encourage youth voices and proposals for post-event follow-ups. Amod advised that leadership and ownership of youth initiatives must shift from individual organizations to regional clusters and involve shared responsibilities to ensure sustainability.

Key Points:

- Strengths: vibrant discussions, active audience participation.
- Key needs: focus on real youth issues, more dialogue-driven spaces.
- Strategy: post-meetings, shared ownership, decentralization.

Mr. Sachin Jain (Vikas Samvad)



Sachin Jain reflected on the importance of mutuality within society, likening community unity to a healthy human body. He urged moving beyond tolerance to active mutual respect and emphasizing the interconnectedness of youth with the older generations. He emphasized that ideas, not just events, should unite people and that dialogue, openness, and self-awareness are vital for social evolution.

Key Points:

- Society as a body needing harmony.
- Mutual respect over passive endurance.
- Youth as connectors across generations.
- Ideas and dialogue drive genuine change.

Mr. RN Syag (Youth Leadwr, Synergy Sansthan)



R N Syag presented a comprehensive youth roadmap for Madhya Pradesh through regional collaboration, creating transformative spaces, and developing ecosystem leaders. His focus was on building local networks, encouraging youth participation at all levels, and cultivating shared ownership in long-term youth movements. Key initiatives include forming regional clusters, fostering youth-led spaces, and promoting collective identity and principles.

Key Points:

- Build regional youth collaborations.
- Foster spaces for creative, independent youth action.
- Develop ecosystem leaders with transformative skills.
- Promote inclusive, collective ownership of youth agendas.
- Create a shared identity and long-term vision.

Attendees reflected on the importance of realistic engagement models, art and storytelling for strengthening bonds, and nurturing youth-led change grounded in local context. Questions explored how to intensify youth participation and build trust across sectors. Panellists highlighted the importance of continuous, shared efforts and innovative initiatives like local community projects to create tangible social impacts. The session underscored the necessity of transforming reflections into actionable,

collective movements focused on local ownership, inclusive participation, and sustainable leadership. It called for decentralization, regionally driven collaboration, and a focus on core issues like safety, rights, and social cohesion. Emphasizing shared values such as trust, love, and mutuality, the session reaffirmed that youth-led social change is an ongoing process rooted in deep listening, integrated effort, and collective responsibility – a continuous journey from reflection to movement.

Participating Organizations

The workshop was enriched by the presence of an extraordinary and diverse coalition of organisations committed to youth leadership, social justice, community development, and transformative change. From grassroots collectives and women's groups to national networks, academic institutions, and global development agencies, over a hundred organisations—including Abhedya, Azim Premji University, CASA, Centre for Integrated Development, Green Hub, Mahashakti Seva Kendra, Milaan, Narmada Bachao Andolan, Pravah, Queermitra, SHEDO, The YP Foundation, TISS, Udhyam Learning Foundation, UN Women, UNFPA, and many others—have come together to co-create a shared learning space. Their work spans a wide spectrum: youth empowerment, gender justice, environmental action, mental health, livelihood generation, creative expression, grassroots mobilisation, and rights-based advocacy. The collective participation of such varied institutions, foundations, student bodies, social movements, and community-led organisations reflects the strength of Madhya Pradesh's and India's youth ecosystem—demonstrating that meaningful, sustainable change is possible when diverse actors unite around a common purpose: enabling young people to thrive, participate, and lead. Below list of organization become of participant of two-day workshop.

S. No.	Name of the Organization
1	Abhedya
2	Ahinsa Welfare Society
3	Arman Foundation Society
4	Azad Yuva
5	Azim Premji University
6	Badlav Ki Pahal
7	Barkatullah University
8	BSSS College
9	Buniyaad Social Development Society
10	CASA
11	Centre for Integrated Development
12	Chaitanya Wise
13	Child India Trust
14	CICADA Creations
15	CIVICACT Foundation
16	Dainik Bhaskar
17	Dongor Foundation
18	EKA
19	Ekta Foundation Trust
20	Ekta Graminjan Sahayog Sanstha
21	Gender Nyay Collective Samiti
22	Green Hub
23	Gram Roots Collective Foundation
24	Harda Family
25	Hawabagh College
26	Help Foundation
27	Kalpna Mehta's Jumbish Society for Well-being
28	Kabir Jan Vikas Samooh
29	Kala Samvad Foundation
30	Samaj Kalyan Paryavaran Samiti
31	Laxmi Narain College of Technology
32	Lok Kalyan Bhumika Samiti
33	Lupin Human Welfare and Research Organisation

S. No.	Name of the Organization
34	Mahashakti Seva Kendra
35	Mahatma Gandhi College of Law
36	Manthan Foundation
37	Mera Gaon Meri Dunia
38	Milaan Be The NGO
39	Musht Samaj Seva Samiti
40	Nagrik Adhikar Manch
41	Narmada Bachao Andolan
42	National Service Scheme (NSS)
43	Naya Jeevan Foundation
44	Niswarth Seva Samiti
45	Pahal Jan Sahyog Vikas Sansthan
46	Paigam Organization
47	Pahar Foundation
48	Partnering Hope Into Action Foundation (Phia)
49	Parhit Samaj Seva Sanstha
50	Paryavaran Mitra
51	Piramal Foundation
52	Pm College of Excellence, Govt. Hamidia College, Bhopal
53	Pravah
54	Prasoon
55	Prithvi Gramin Vikas Sansthan
56	Quality Education Center
57	Queermitra
58	RAWS
59	Ready to Help Foundation
60	Rehti Jagrati Mahila Sansthan
61	REWA Foundation
62	Rudraksh Human Welfare Foundation
63	Rural Advancement to Combat Hunger with Nutrition Awareness Foundation
64	Sampark Samaj Sevi Sanstha
65	Samta Vikas Sansthan

S. No.	Name of the Organization
66	Samavesh
67	Samvedna
68	Sangath
69	Sarita Shiksha Evam Gramin Vikas Samiti
70	Sarvoday Vindhya Vikas Samiti
71	Sarthak Education & Social Welfare Society
72	Sarthak Foundation
73	Sajha Netritva Manch
74	Savitri Bai Phule Fatima Sheikh Initiative
75	SHEDO
76	Sooraj Vikas Samiti
77	Society for Maximising Agriculture and Rural Technology
78	Spandan
79	Spandan Chahak Foundation
80	Sardar Patel Vishwavidyalaya
81	Swavalamban Foundation
82	Sapno Ki Udan Samajik Samiti
83	Sacha Prayas Samiti
84	Shivpuri Youth Forum

S. No.	Name of the Organization
85	Sathee Anusandhan Avem Samaj Kalyan Sangathan
86	The Arogya Sangam Foundation
87	The Summer Stitch
88	The YP Foundation
89	TISS (Tata Institute of Social Sciences)
90	Udhyam Learning Foundation
91	Udaan Welfare Foundation
92	Udayan Care
93	Umang Jansewa Welfare Foundation
94	UN Women
95	UNFPA
96	Vikalp Samajik Sanstha
97	Vikramaditya Yuva Parivartan Seva Samiti
98	Yuva Shakti Sangathan
99	Yuva Vikas Mandal
100	Yuvisam Foundation (Nishchaye)
101	Young Thinkers' Forum
102	Zenith - Society for Socio-Legal Empowerment

Partner Organizations for Regional Consultations

Twelve partners across six region brought deep local insight, community trust, and youth engagement experience to the process, ensuring that the voices captured truly reflected the lived realities of young people. In Harda, the consultations were anchored by Shedo Sanstha, while in Vidisha, Rudraksh Welfare Society and Sarthak Peoples (ESW) led the efforts. The Gwalior region was supported by Shivpuri Youth Forum, Zenith, and the Centre for Integrated Development (CID), whereas Jabalpur's discussions were facilitated by Paigam Organization and Nagrik Adhikar Manch. The Ujjain consultations were strengthened by Mera Gaon Meri Duniya (MGMD) and Buniyad Welfare Society, and in Satna, Sunita Welfare Society (SWS) and the REWA Foundation (Rural Empowerment Women and Agriculture Foundation) played key roles. Together, these regional partners created inclusive, participatory, and youth-driven spaces that formed the backbone of the Youth Agenda process.

Region	Partner Organizations
Harda	Shedo Sanstha
Vidisha	Rudraksh Welfare Society
	Sarthak Peoples (ESW)
Gwalior	Shivpuri Youth Forum
	Zenith
	Centre for Integrated Development (CID)
Jabalpur	Paigam Organization
	Nagrik Adhikar Manch
Ujjain	Mera Gaon Meri Duniya (MGMD)
	Buniyad Welfare Society
Satna	Sunita Welfare Society (SWS)
	REWA Foundation (Rural Empowerment Women and Agriculture Foundation)

Annexure 1: Agenda of Conference

INAUGURAL SESSION & CONTEXT SETTING (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)		
10:00 am to 10:10	Guest and dignitaries felicitation	
10:10 am - 11:20 am	Welcome and context setting (Overview of Youth Centric Development and brief about SYNERGY Sansthan)	Vimal Jat- CEO (SYNERGY SANSTHAN)
10:20 am to 11.00 am	Addresses from the dignitaries and guests:	Shri Vishwas Kailash Sarang, Honourable Minister, Sports & Youth Welfare, Cooperative, Govt. of MP John Kingsly (IAS) NVDA, Govt. of MP Anil Gulati, Chief of Field Office (a.i), UNICEF MP Sunil Jacob, UNFPA, MP Pratibha Srivastava, WHH
11:10 am - 11:30 am	Tea break (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	
11:30 am - 01:00 pm (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Plenary Session Being Young in India - Hopes, Challenges & Possibilities	Moderator Kejal Savla, Wisdom Tree Panelists Omprakash Malviya, Jan Sahas Vardhna Puri, Paul Hamlyn Foundation Sanjay Sharma, Bal Raksha Bharat Pradeep Ghosh, OASiS Social Innovation Lab Tarannum Khan, Synergy Sansthan
01:00 pm - 02:00 pm	Lunch (LALIT ART GALLERY)	
ROUND - I		
Parallel Discussions		
2:00 pm - 03:30 pm (Anjani Sabhagrah)	Panel Discussion 1 From Skilling & Future Readiness to Livelihood & Entrepreneurship	Moderator Nageshwar Panchal, Mera Gaon Meri Dunia Panelists Sharique Mashhadi, Dream a Dream Bhawna Parmar, Quest Alliance Dr. Aishwarya Mahajan, M3M Foundation Dr. Manoj Jain, AIGGPA (Bhopal) Nilesh Dhoble, Transform Rural India Foundation
02:00 pm - 03:30 pm (JAY JAYWANTI BOARD ROOM)	Panel Discussion 2 Gender Inequality & Masculinity	Moderator Manak Matiyani, Activist Panelists Amrita Dasgupta, Swayam Prarthana Thakur, Nirantar Trust Asma Khan, YP Foundation Anamta Rayin, Gender Nyay Collective Ajay Pandit, Synergy Sansthan
02:00 pm - 03:30 pm (MALKAUSH MEETING HALL)	Panel Discussion 3 Intersectional Youth Identities	Moderator Mohsin Khan, Ansh Happiness Society Panelists Satyam Shrivastava, Azim Premji Foundation Gaytri Gyan, Queermitra Sonal Kapoor, Protsahan India Sunil Ivane, Sajha Manch Savita Sohit, Muskaan
03:30 pm - 4:00 pm	Tea Break (ANJANI SABHAGRAH AND JAY JAYWANTI BOARD ROOM)	

ROUND- II		
Parallel Discussions		
04:00 pm - 05:30 pm (JAY JAYWANTI BOARD ROOM)	Panel Discussion 1 Youth: Growing Up in a Digital World	Moderator Gautam Gauri, Diksha Foundation Panelists Anadi Tiwari, Radio Jockey Kiran Admache, Cicada Creations Aloke Palsikar, Codincity Digital Technologies Anirban Chaudhury, India Leaders for Social Sectors Sadhna Uikey, Youth Representative
04:00 pm - 05:30 pm (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Panel Discussion 2 Youth in the Face of Climate Crisis	Moderator Kirti Jain, Dasra Panelists Lokendra Thakkar, EPCO (Bhopal) Rita Banerji, Green Hub Nidhi Jamwal, Journalist Climate Change Nidhi Tewari, Arthancares Ashok Patel, Youth Representative
04:00 pm - 05:30 pm (MALKAUSH MEETING HALL)	Panel Discussion 3 Reclaiming Public Spaces	Moderator Roshni Rajiv, Dasra Panelists Joyatri Ray, UN Women Waseem Iqbal, AAS Samiksha Jha, Maratha Farrell Foundation Tamanna Tanwar, Youth Representative
05:30 pm - 06:30 pm	Tea & Snacks (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	
06:30 pm - 08.00 pm (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Cultural Night	Kala Samvad Samtar Band - Shedo Paigam Group Kavish Seth
08:00 pm - 09:30 pm	Dinner (LALIT ART GALLERY)	
Day 2- August 30, 2025		
TIME	PARTICULAR	SPEAKERS
09:30 am - 10:15 am (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Youth Space Showcasing Udaan, YRC, HumRahi & MP Youth Voices	
10:15 am - 11:00 am (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Fireside Conversation	Naghma Mulla, CEO, EdelGive Foundation WITH Raghu Maharishi, Synergy Sansthan
11:00 am - 11:30 am	Tea break (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	
ROUND-III		
Parallel Discussions		
11:30 am - 01:00 pm (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Panel Discussion 1 Active Citizenship, Democracy & Youth Participation	Moderator Ritesh Gour, Synergy Sansthan Panelists Shrdha Kumar, Samarthan Dr. Savitha Babu, Samvada Amman Madan, Azim Premji University (Bhopal) Priya Krishnamurthy, Children's Movement for Civic Awareness Vikram Ahake, Mayor (Chhindwara)

11:30 am - 01:00 pm (MALKAUSH MEETING HALL)	Panel Discussion 2 Youth, Creative Action & Social Change	Moderator Ritesh Gohiya, Shedo Panelists Anurag Hoon, Manzil Mystics Vijay Ramteke, Paigam Arti Shukla, Development Consortium Fahad Khan, Antral Theatre Kavish Seth, Singer, songwriter and poet
11:30 am - 01:00 pm (JAY JAYWANTI BOARD ROOM)	Panel Discussion 3 Rethinking Youth Mental Health & Well-being	Moderator Aditi Mehta, Jumbish Panelists Monica Kumar, Manas Foundation Alok Tripathy, CRY Harikeerthan Raghuram, Sangath Alok Benjamin, Heartbeat Foundation Mohammad Nawazuddin, Mariwala Health Initiative
01:00 pm - 02:00 pm	Lunch	
02:00 pm - 03:30 pm (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Plenary Session Role of Policy, Philanthropy & Practice: Investing in Youth-led Change	Moderator Neha Buch, Vyaktitva Panelists Rishabh Lalani, Kohmorehbee Consulting Amod Khanna, IPE Global Yashveer Singh, Ashoka Young Changemakers Vishnu Jaiswal, Synergy Sansthan
03:30 pm - 04:00 pm	Tea Break (ANAJANI SABHAGRAH)	
4:00 pm - 5:00 pm	Youth Agenda for MP 2025-2030 Regional Group Discussions & Presentations	
5:00 pm - 6:00 pm (ANJANI SABHAGRAH)	Closing Plenary Reflections & Way Forward	RN Syag, Civic Act Foundation Ajay Pandit, Synergy Sansthan Sachin Jain, Vikas Samvad Samiti

STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE

YUVA AAGAZ YUVA AAWAZ

Youth Power Reimagined
From the Margins to
the Mainstream -
A just society is
one where no young
dream is overlooked.

29th & 30th August 2025
Ravindra Bhavan, Bhopal

STATE YOUTH CONFERENCE

YUVA AAGAZ YUVA AAWAZ

Youth Power Reimagined From the Margins to

Dates: 29th & 30th August 2025
Location: Ravindra Bhavan, Bhopal



Synergy
SANSTHAN

to the Mainstream

25
nopal

Synergy
SANSTHAN

2030 तक
कोई युवा
पीछे न
छूटे।

29th & 30th August 2025
Ravindra
Shop





Synergy
SANSTHAN

Maharana Pratap Colony
Harda, Madhya Pradesh
461331

<https://www.synergysansthan.org/>