

"युवा आगाज़, युवा आवाज"

" Youth Power Reimagined-From the Margins to the Mainstream"

29th-30th -August, 2025 Bhopal

Background:

The United Nations' Youth 2030 Strategy emphasizes the need for meaningful youth participation in policymaking and decision-making. It envisions a world where young people's rights are upheld and their full potential is realized as leaders and changemakers. In India, states like Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Maharashtra and Rajasthan—home to over 52% of the national youth population (Youth in India 2022)—must be prioritized to realize this vision. However, youth in these regions face interlinked challenges: unemployment, gender inequality, mental health concerns, environmental crises and the socio-economic impacts of rapid urbanization and digitization.

Addressing these issues requires a paradigm shift—seeing youth not merely as recipients, but as active co-creators of development. With the right platforms, partnerships and resources, they can lead transformative change through community-rooted, youth-led solutions. Key questions must guide this shift: How can youth participation move beyond tokenism? How do we create cross-sectoral partnerships that expand leadership opportunities? And how can youth be better equipped to shape the systems that define their future?

Launched by Synergy Sansthan in 2024, the **"Yuva Aagaaz, Yuva Awaaz"** conference ([Conference page - link](#)) emerged as a pivotal platform to elevate youth voices and leadership across Madhya Pradesh. The inaugural edition brought together over 250 tribal, rural and marginalized youth with institutional stakeholders to co-develop a shared youth development agenda rooted in local realities. It emphasized the value of participatory, youth-led processes in influencing policy and practice. The conference aimed to deepen collective understanding of the challenges and opportunities facing young people, particularly in underserved regions, while emphasizing the importance of participatory, youth-led approaches in shaping policy and practice. It highlighted critical issues such as gender justice, skill development and the need for youth-centred planning at all levels. By fostering collaboration between youth leaders, civil society, policymakers, academics, philanthropists and CSR representatives, the event catalysed meaningful dialogue on addressing 21st-century challenges, ranging from inequality and exclusion to climate and employment. The conference powerfully demonstrated that when youth are engaged not as recipients but as leaders and co-creators, they can drive inclusive, just and transformative change within their communities and beyond.

Building on this foundation, the 2025 edition aspires to deepen impact and scale, under the theme: **"Youth Power Reimagined – From the Margins to the Mainstream."** It will further amplify grassroots youth voices, foster multi-stakeholder collaboration and co-create a forward-looking Youth Agenda 2025–2030. Through inclusive dialogue, the event aims to transform youth engagement from peripheral participation to central leadership in development discourse.

This edition will amplify grassroots youth voices—particularly from tribal, rural and marginalized communities, ensuring their inclusion in shaping development discourse. The conference aims to bridge the gap between young people and key actors in governance, civil society, academia and the private sector, through inclusive and participatory dialogue. It moves beyond traditional approaches that view youth as passive recipients, instead recognizing them as proactive leaders and co-creators of change.

The event will spotlight youth-driven solutions and promising interventions addressing local and regional challenges in Madhya Pradesh. It will serve as a platform for peer learning, networking and collaborative problem-solving to strengthen the state's youth ecosystem.

By grounding discussions in lived experiences and local contexts, the conference aims to translate insights into concrete, actionable strategies that reflect the aspirations and potential of Madhya Pradesh's youth. We invite civil society organizations, researchers, CSR representatives, practitioners, philanthropists, media and students to

join us in this vital effort. Your participation will be instrumental in shaping a comprehensive and transformative roadmap for youth empowerment and inclusive development across the state.

About Synergy Sansthan:

Established in 2006, *Synergy Sansthan* is a youth-led community-rooted organization working across rural tribal and semi urban districts of Madhya Pradesh to empower adolescent and young people and promote inclusive development. With a steadfast commitment to youth leadership, gender justice and social equity, Synergy has created transformative spaces where young people are not only heard but actively lead change within their communities.

Operating in over 20 districts including Harda, Khandwa, Khargone, Barwani, Guna, Vidisha, Raisen, Bhopal and Indore, the organization extends its impact through strategic partnerships across the state. Synergy has positively influenced over 2.5 lakh youth through its work in education, livelihoods, gender empowerment, active citizenship and social justice. Rooted in the belief that young people are powerful agents of change, Synergy fosters platforms for them to lead, innovate and transform. Its flagship programs—Udaan Fellowship Program, Youth Resource Centre (Yuvalaya) and HumRahi—emphasize long-term engagement, participatory governance and building inclusive, youth-centric ecosystems. These initiatives address critical themes such as mental health, gender equity, democratic participation and skill development. Looking ahead, Synergy is poised to scale its grassroots efforts, aiming to influence over 1 million lives by 2030. The Yuva Aagaaz, Yuva Awaaz 2025 conference is a natural extension of this journey. Drawing on nearly two decades of field experience, the conference sub-themes—ranging from education and livelihoods to SRHR, climate change, citizenship, digital inclusion and gender—reflect Synergy’s deep engagement with youth realities. Through dialogue, collaboration and grounded strategies, Synergy continues to catalyze a future led by youth one that is just, inclusive and sustainable.

Objectives:

The Conference will be held for two-days in Bhopal to discuss and deliberate on various aspects pertaining to youth development with specific objectives as follows.

- ❑ To amplify the voices and leadership of youth from grassroots, tribal and marginalized communities by centring their lived experiences in development discourse.
- ❑ To facilitate meaningful engagement between young people and multi-sector stakeholders, fostering inclusive, youth-driven strategies for social and systemic change.
- ❑ To co-develop an actionable Youth Agenda 2025–2030 for Madhya Pradesh, rooted in the aspirations, challenges and insights of its diverse youth population.

Sub-Themes

1. Being Young in India-Hopes, Challenges & Possibilities

This session will 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.

2. Gender Inequality and Masculinity

This session explores 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.

3. Reclaiming Public Spaces

This session will delve 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.

4. Rethinking Youth Mental Health and Well-being

This session seeks 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's 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.

5. Youth: Growing Up in a Digital World

This session will 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.

6. Youth in the Face of Climate Crisis

This session positions 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.

7. Youth, Creative Action and Social Change

This session explores 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.

8. Intersectional Youth Identities

This session focuses 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.

9. From Skilling and Future Readiness to Livelihood and Entrepreneurship

This session reimagines 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.

10. Active Citizenship, Democracy and Youth Participation

This session will 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.

11. Youth-Centric Ecosystems: Role of Policy, Philanthropy & Practice, investment in youth led change

This session will explore 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.

Expected Outcome

The conference aims to generate a youth-driven development narrative grounded in the lived experiences of tribal, rural and marginalized young people. It will facilitate cross-sectoral dialogue, producing actionable insights that inform the co-creation of Madhya Pradesh's **Youth Agenda 2025–2030**. By sharing best practices and emerging approaches, the event will help develop an indigenous knowledge base for youth empowerment. It also seeks to foster stronger multi-stakeholder collaboration and institutional accountability. Ultimately, the conference envisions catalysing a more inclusive, responsive and youth-centred development ecosystem in the state.