



# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOUNG CHANGE MAKER

## A BIOGRAPHY OF PRAVAH

*Assessing Pravah's Impact*

5<sup>th</sup>  
SPACE

...making the  
other 4 count



# PRAVAH Programs: An Overview

2013 marks PravaH's 20th anniversary. In 1993 PravaH started its first school program – Positive Me – with the objective of building youth leadership for social change. Since those early days, PravaH has spawned a number of programs reaching out to hundreds of young people as well as youth facilitators, teachers, young social entrepreneurs and youth organizations.

## 1994: From Me To We (FMTW)

A leadership and life skills training for **adolescents in school**.

## 1995: FUN Camps

An experiential program to sensitize **adolescents in schools** to various facets of rural life and inspire them to act for change.

## 1996: Students Mobilization for Learning through Exposure (SMILE)

A learning and leadership journey **for college students** that focuses on self-exploration and social change.

## 1999: The World is My Classroom

A training program to enable **teachers** to design and facilitate life skills and leadership programs in schools.

## 2001: Global Xchange (GX)

An inter-cultural exchange program for **young people** from UK and India.

## 2005: Change Looms

A Learning and Leadership Journey that supports **young social entrepreneurs** to strengthen their initiatives through capacity building, mentoring and networking opportunities.

## 2007: Youth for Development (YfD)

An internship program for **young people** who want to experience the development sector and develop their leadership skills.

## 2007: Streaming Initiatives

Strategic partnerships with **youth organizations** across the country to design and implement youth development programs.

## 2009: Learning Voyages

Consultancies and comprehensive trainings designed as voyages for **organizations and facilitators** in the field of youth development and instructional design.

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# INSIDE-OUT YOUTH LEADERSHIP: A UNIQUE LENS

# THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF A YOUNG CHANGEMAKER

Based on the insights gained over the last 20 years, Pravah has developed a unique approach to youth development embodied by the concept of the 5th space<sup>1</sup>. Traditionally, there are four socially legitimized spaces in a young person's life: family, friends, livelihoods and leisure. The 5th space builds leadership skills of young people -- skills that will help them to learn more about themselves, to build meaningful relationships, and to impact the world around them. The 5th space invests as much on



personal transformation as it does on social transformation. While impacting society, young people also get impacted and it is these moments in a young person's life that, if facilitated properly, hold the potential to become truly transformative experiences. Moreover, the 5th space makes the other 4 count too! A young person who belongs to a 5th space would not only be an active citizen, but also a caring family member, a sensitive friend, a diligent student, a good team player, an ethical

consumer – in short – a good human being.

We would like to commemorate our 20th anniversary by sharing some highlights of an impact assessment study conducted in 2012. This impact assessment sets out to discover how the 5th space at Pravah and its partners have impacted young people's lives and made the other 4 count too. It also looks at how Pravah has contributed to the development of youth-led organizations and enabled them to impact their communities.

This is as much an assessment of Pravah's work as it is a reflection by young people about their journeys and the impact Pravah and its partners have had on them. It spans a long slice of the growing years of a young person – starting from school through college to a young social entrepreneur and youth facilitator. This booklet is an autobiography as it includes voices of young people sharing their stories of change. At the same time, it is a biography of Pravah because it gives a collective, quantitative assessment of the impact Pravah and its partners have had over the last 20 years.

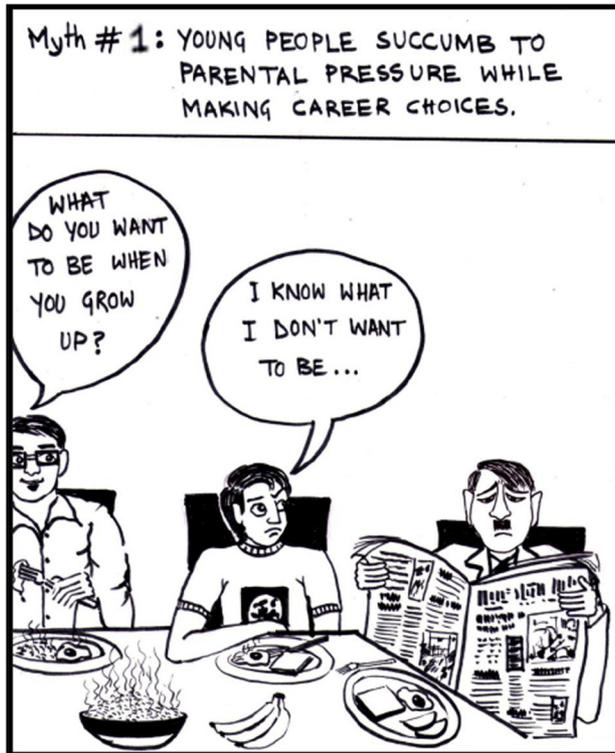
- The total outreach per year is approx. 8000 young people through Pravah and 30 social entrepreneurs / youth organizations supported and mentored by Pravah.
- **Deepti Priya Mehrotra - the lead consultant – designed the impact assessment with a core team from Pravah and New Concept.**
- Data was collected through interviews, field visits, FGDs and a desk review.
- **A youth survey was carried out using comprehensive questionnaires.**
- The sample size for this study was 224 - 122 alumni from different programs of Pravah across the years and another 102 alumni from Pravah partners – **SAHER (Mumbai), Patang (Orissa) and Thoughtshop Foundation (Kolkata).**
- **Over 90% of the sample comprised of alumni who participated in programs in the last decade (2000 – 2010).**
- 21 alumni from the Change Looms and Learning and Leadership journey, who had started their own social initiatives were also included in a separate organizational survey.

The findings support Pravah's hypothesis that the 5th space impacts young people's lives in many ways, including their understanding of themselves, their relationships, their career choices, work satisfaction, performance and lifestyle choices. It also demonstrates that young people who have been through the 5th space are able to contribute to their communities and impact the lives of others in significant ways.

See Patel, A et al. The Ocean in a Drop: Inside-Out Youth Leadership, Sage, 2013.

# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON CAREER CHOICES



**Reality:**  
In fact **77%** of our alumni reported that Pravah and its partners influenced their career choice significantly or quite a lot.



*I gained an insight into rural India, the culture of my people and also to the harsh living conditions they have to adapt to. This sensitized me to the needs of people in rural areas; and to some extent motivated me to take up engineering as a profession, to perhaps work to develop rural infrastructure (telecommunications, roads etc) as an engineer one day.*

~ Karthikeya Ramesh, FUN Camp

# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON PERFORMANCE



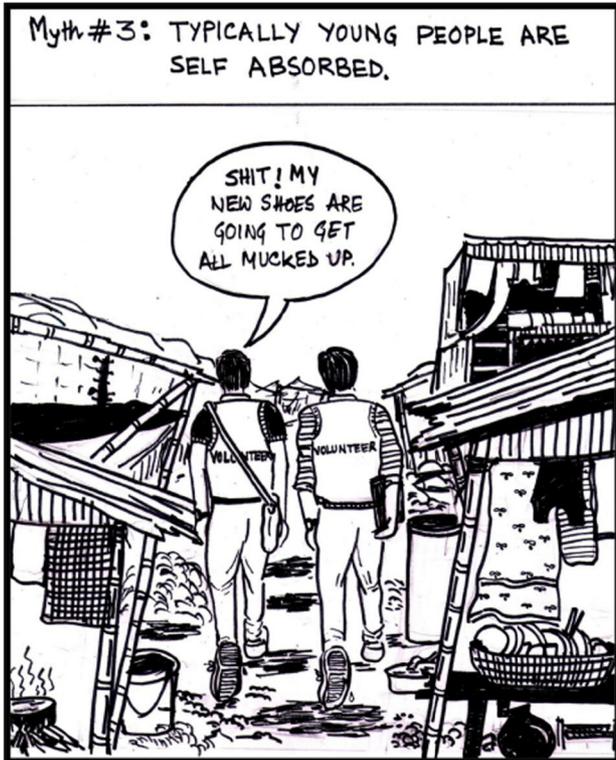
**Reality:**  
In fact **85%** of our alumni who worked in community projects reported that their performance at college/career has improved significantly or quite a lot after completing their journey.



*Pravah enabled me to be honest with myself. For instance in my internship I was asked to come up with an analytical framework, but everything I submitted was rejected. I thought about the problem and identified my own shortcomings, and realized how I had covered this up in the past. My experience taught me how one can look at challenges and discomforts differently. I pushed myself harder, and finally submitted a framework which was appreciated by my supervisor.*

~ Sonal Sharma, SMILE

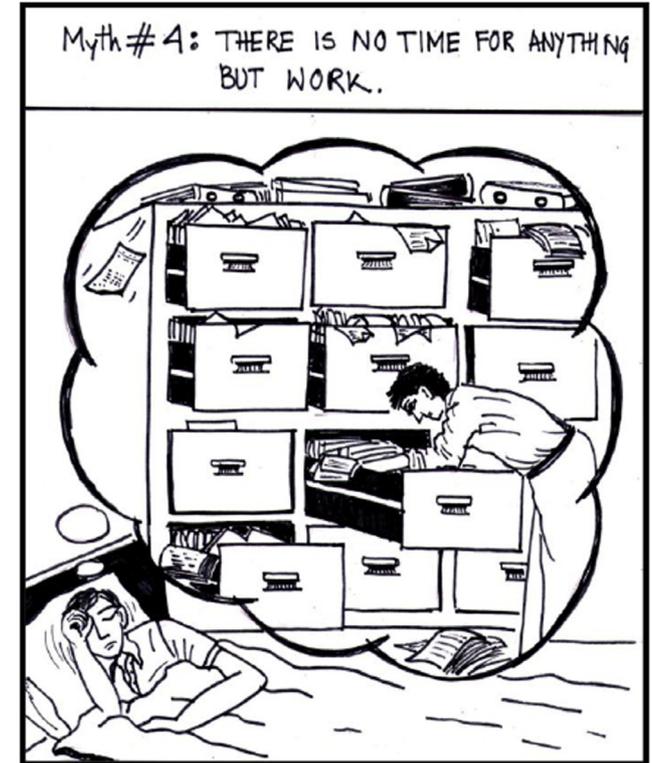
# KEY FINDINGS



**Reality:** In fact **46%** of our alumni chose to work on social issues by **joining civil society organizations.**

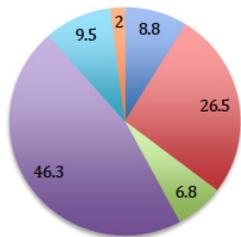
# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON SOCIETY



**Reality:** In fact **3 out of 4** alumni have found time to **dedicate to a social issue** since completing their journey.

WHERE ALUMNI ARE WORKING TODAY:



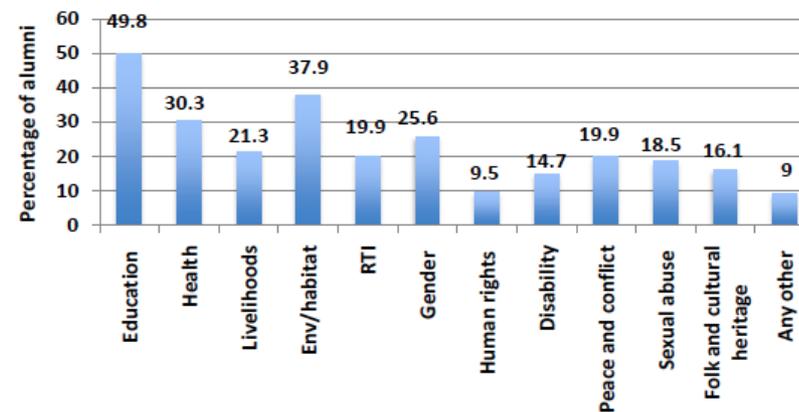
- Government / PSU
  - Private
  - Media
  - Civil Society Organization
  - Self Employed
  - Other
- N = 147



*I co-founded Aaghaaz, an organisation to promote adult and child literacy in my first year at college. It is purely voluntary and completely student-run. If I had not been to Pravah, I would not have believed that it was possible to do so.*

~ Pratchi Mishra, FUN Camp

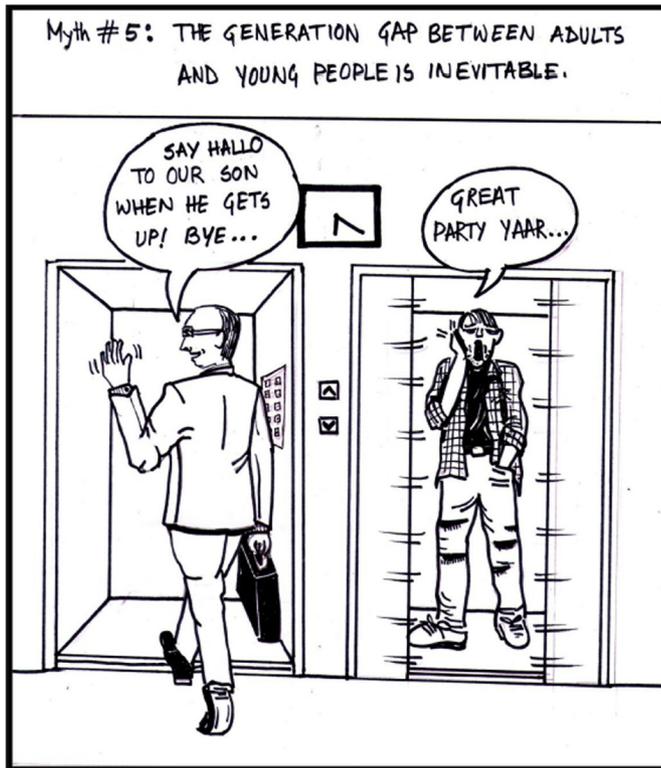
Issues addressed by Alumni (N=161)



A total of **3.75 lakh** people have benefitted as a result of social action by alumni. The average number of people benefitted per respondent per year is **859.**

# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON RELATIONSHIPS



**Reality:**  
In fact **87% of our alumni** felt that Pravah and its partners helped them **improve their relationships** significantly or quite a lot.

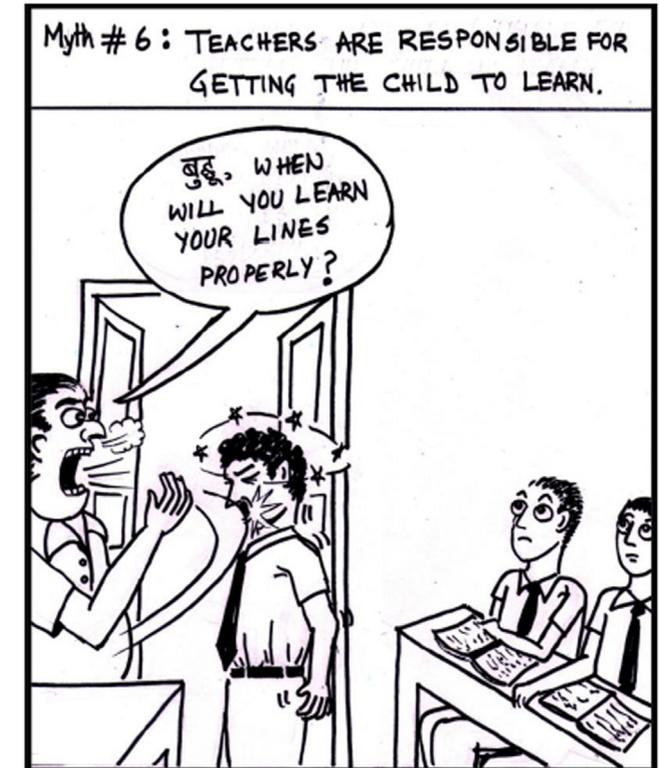


*Before I joined the programme, I did not give much importance to my family and my relationship with my family was negligible and mostly work oriented. Being associated with the Learning and Leadership Journey made me understand the real importance of having strong family ties. It helped me in the process of understanding family relationships deeply and it gave me a chance to reconnect with my friends and family and understand their feelings, and today I am striving to build stronger relationships with them.*

~ Lokesh, Learning and Leadership Journey, CYC

# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON LEARNING ORIENTATION



**Reality:**  
In fact **87% of our alumni** felt that Pravah and its partners helped them become **self-directed learners.**

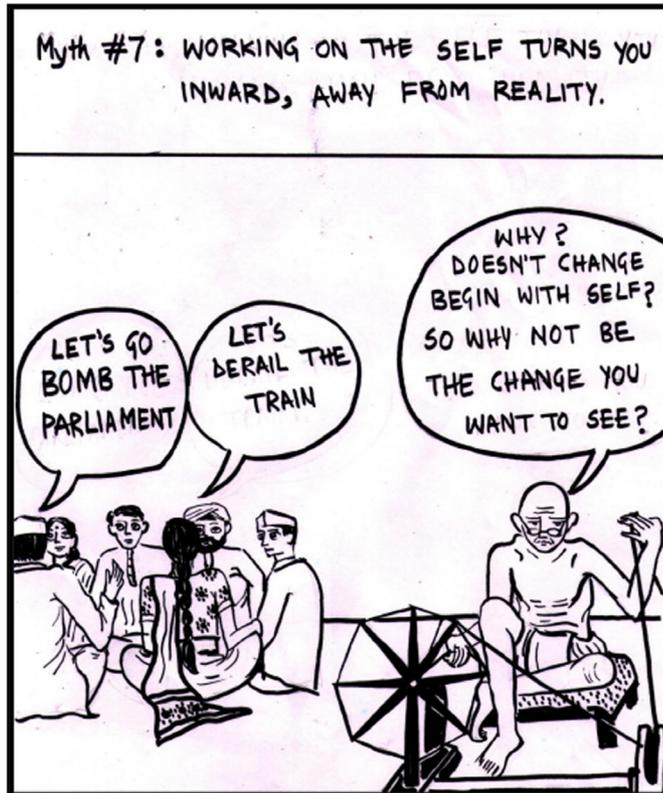


*There are a lot of examples where I have learnt from my mistakes and from my successes. My ability to take a pause and reflect has improved and now it is helping me a lot. For example when I started working, there were lots of questions about me and my capacities and I knew I was not prepared for the journey. But, I believe there are times when you are prepared for the path and there are times the path will prepare you. By this belief I moved on. After that it has been an amazing journey for me. The path is still preparing me, and I am enjoying these experiences in life.*

~ Ashutosh Nandwana, Pravah Jaipur Initiative

# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON SELF



**Reality:**  
In fact **83% of the alumni** felt that acting in the real world helped them to **know themselves deeper.**

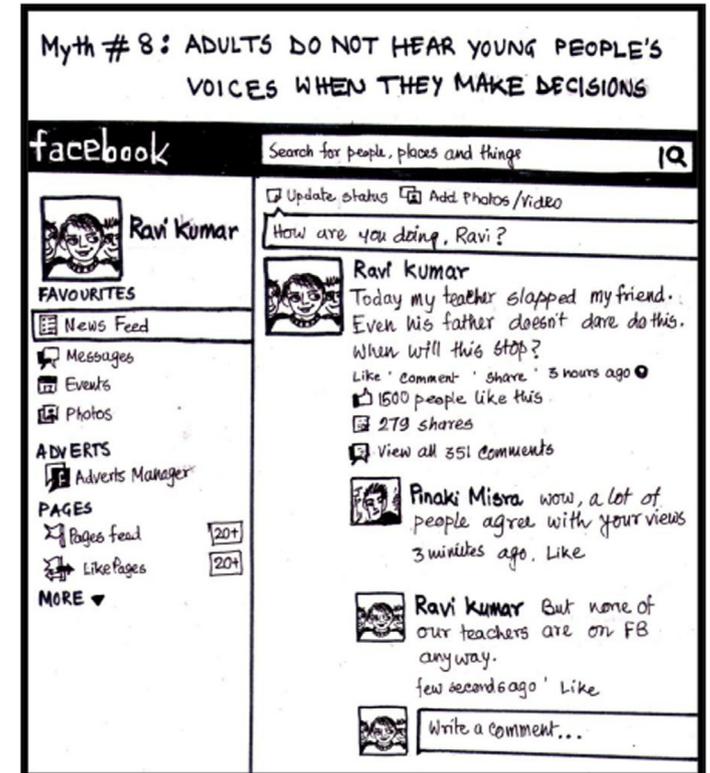


*i would feel trapped earlier in a darkness, .. burdened with the expectations that my family and society have of me. I would delude myself about who i am and the things i want. Now i think about what i want to do instead of what others want from me. The SMILE internship gave me perspective ... and helped me to understand that i deserve to be happy, ... that what matters at the end of the day is what i expect from myself, ... that it is important to form relationships. Earlier i would neither have questions nor the solutions to my issues. At least now i have the questions..*

~ Ankit Fageria, SMILE

# KEY FINDINGS

## IMPACT ON ABILITY TO INFLUENCE ONE'S IMMEDIATE CIRCLE



**Reality:**  
In fact **77% of our alumni** felt that the program had helped them to **influence their immediate circle** significantly or quite a lot.



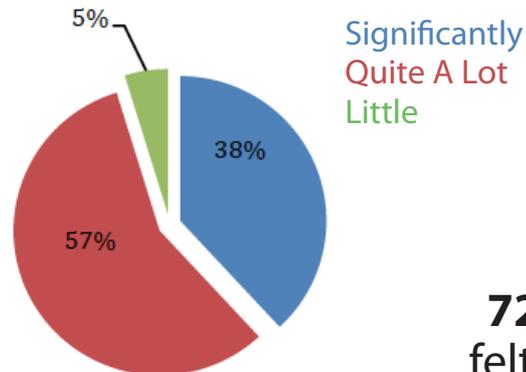
*My father never used to let me eat with lower caste people. When I started to talk about this issue he did not want to listen to me. It took lot of time to make him understand but I did.*

~ Mukesh Kumar, SMILE

# CHANGE LOOMS: THE LEARNING AND LEADERSHIP JOURNEY

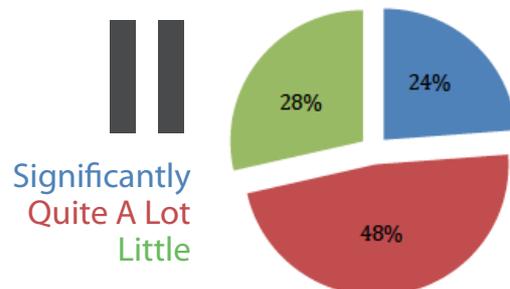
Change Looms supports young people who have started and are running their own independent social initiatives. It provides skill and capacity building, mentoring and financial support, and networking opportunities. Since 2005 Change Looms has engaged with more than 100 start ups and is currently working with 25 organisations across 15 states in India.

An overwhelming **95%** of the CL LLJ respondents felt that they had been able to **strengthen their initiative** after the program.

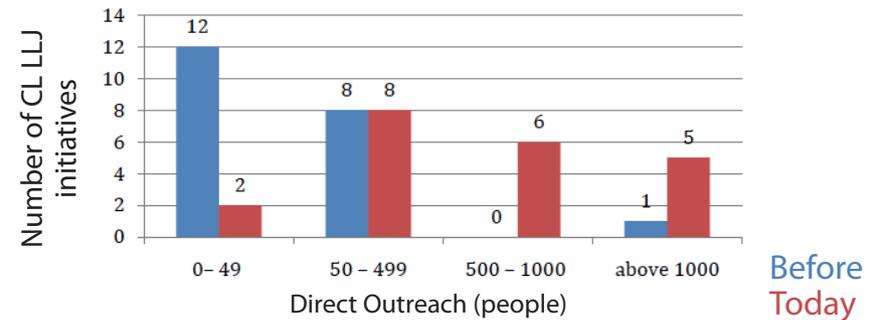


N=21

**72%** of the respondents felt that the program had helped them to **impact their community**.

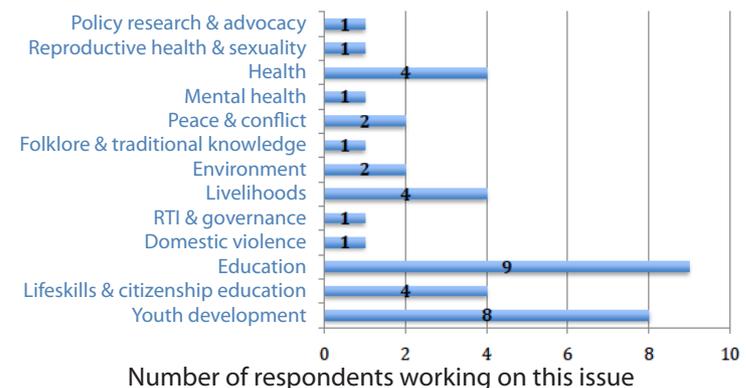


The total **direct outreach** of the CL LLJ initiatives **increased over 6 times** to 18222 people.



**IV** Indirect outreach increased from 3510 (for 15 teams) to 1.5 lakh people.

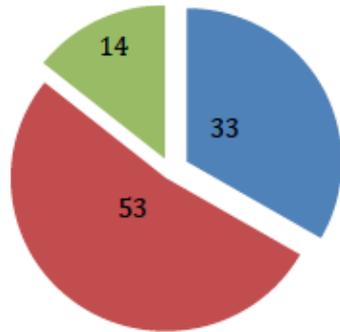
The CL LLJ alumni work on a range of issues with different groups. The majority work with youth and children – mainly on the issue of education and youth development.



**V**

# VI

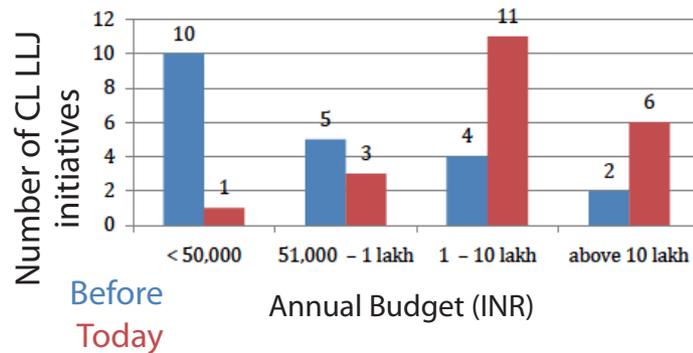
**86%** respondents felt that CL LLJ had **contributed** significantly or quite a lot to the **development of their organization.**



Significantly  
Quite A Lot  
Little

# VII

The average **annual budget increased** more than **6 times** to 14.5 lakh after the CL/LLJ program.

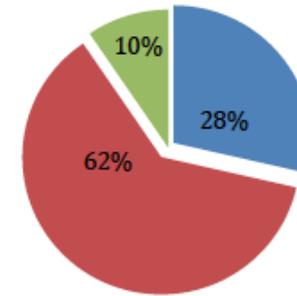


Before  
Today

**CHANGE LOOMS:  
THE LEARNING AND  
LEADERSHIP JOURNEY**

# VIII

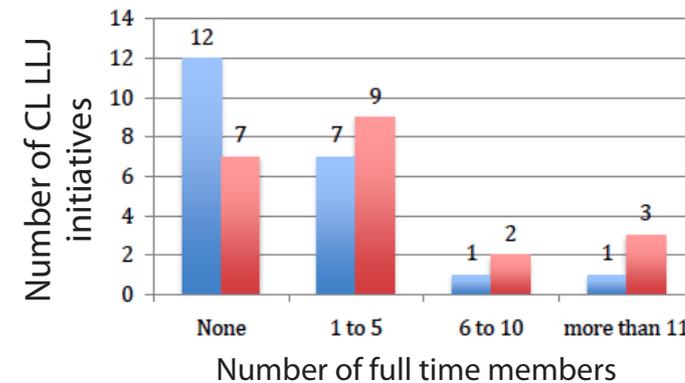
**90%** respondents felt that the program had helped to **build the capacities of their teams** significantly or quite a lot.



Significantly  
Quite A Lot  
Little

# IX

The **total number** of young people working **full time** with CL LLJ initiatives **increased more than 3 times** from 37 to 120.



Before  
Today

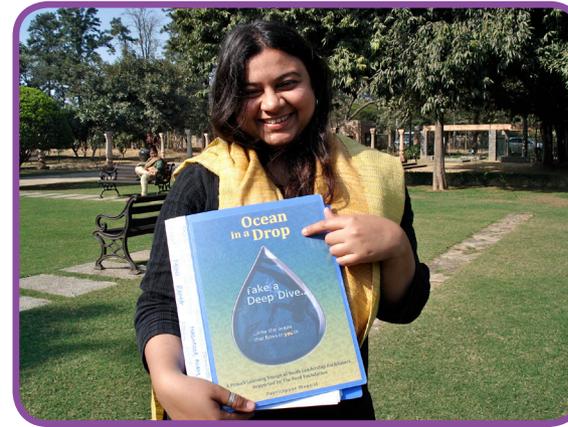
## IN THEIR WORDS: NEHA BUCH, CEO – Direct Interventions, Pravah

When I joined SMILE, I went for a film screening and discussion on Narmada Bachao Andolan. I come from a background where my father belongs to the Gujarat cadre of the civil service. I had been brought up on these notions of how the dam is really brilliant for Kutch and there will be so much water. And then I go into this discussion where I hear completely the opposite story and I exclaim, "Hey hang on a minute! What are you saying?! This is all propaganda. There is so much water coming in." I remember that for the first time I wasn't shut up. No one in this NGO actually told me that what you are saying is crap, that you have to be pro-NBA. Instead, they said, "Sure, you make a great point. Do you have something that can tell that side of the story?" And I said, "Sure, I'll get you a documentary and show you what it's about." And I think that stayed with me.

When I finally went to NBA, all my notions on which I had been raised as a child about NBA – that dams are great, and the NBA does not want to negotiate, etc., just completely changed. It shook me up totally from inside because it was so closely connected with my family. I remember I took those experiences at NBA back home and had so many long debates with my father. And it is quite incredible because today when I talk to him about it, he has moved on his stance too. It's not just about being pro-dam any more. Everything about the dam is not necessarily good and the rehabilitation piece just has to be taken care of. So there has been this huge turn around that impacted also my family.

What I get from this space is the personal connection. I had so many opportunities to have one-on-one discussions, where people have also invested in my learning and growing. There would be many debates and arguments – but there would also be many opportunities and the space to meet people who were very different. I was meeting people from

Neha started  
volunteering in  
Pravah in 2001.  
She is now the  
youngest CEO  
of Pravah.



Deshbandhu college, from Ambedkar college, young people who were not in college, people who were designing, people who belonged to a world that I didn't even know existed and it was so much fun to learn all about this and to start seeing and exploring myself more. I came in with a sense of

under-confidence, with a notion that I have to prove to people how great I am and this place just took that part of me and started chipping away at it slowly and steadily and saying... ok, why does it have to be in comparison with someone else? Why not just be the best of who you are? And what's so bad about you right now in any case? And I was like... Hmmm.... I never thought of it that way!

I have been overwhelmed by the love and the experiences I have had. I have loved every moment of it, which is probably why I continue to be here. Learning how to handle conflicts has been my biggest learning during this journey – be it with my parents, be it here at work with my colleagues and friends. I see conflicts as a part of life. I don't get hassled or stressed about it as much as I did earlier. I also learnt about dealing with things with transparency and honesty. Being genuine, understanding where the other person is coming from and inspiring the same from them. That's how I choose to handle conflicts with others.

Going ahead, my journey is going to be about helping to create 5th spaces and joyful communities within and without - with other young people. Working on ourselves, continuing to fine tune and create more such opportunities for young people and others who work with the young.

## IN THEIR WORDS: **BIDHAN SINGH CHANDRA,** National Campaign Advisor, Greenpeace

When I came to Pravah, I was a quiet person. I chose to remain quiet. I guess it was a fear that if I start speaking, people will get to know where I come from, people will laugh at me... I couldn't even speak fluent Hindi. So in most of the workshops I remained silent. Somewhere along the way, I got involved in theatre. Theatre gave me a space that converted my silence into a fearless voice. When I used to go on the streets on a protest march, or when I used to sing songs in a workshop, I used to sing with a lot of passion. At times like that I never thought that people will laugh at me. And as I sang and did theatre I kept gaining more confidence in myself and who I am. It was also a journey of self-exploration.

I went to URMUL for my exposure visit and on the second day, I had to come back to Delhi... Sonjoy Ghosh who had left his work in URMUL, Rajasthan and moved to Majuli in Assam – had been abducted by the ULFA. Even though I had never met him, I was deeply influenced by him. It was a turning point in my life.

The workshops at Pravah and college at Jamia – this combination gave me a very new and different perspective. I went through a phase of relearning what society had taught me since childhood. I started asking myself, "is this really my own view point or have I been conditioned by my parents and schooling to think this way?"

When I went with SMILE to NBA's Rally for the Valley, the first thing we were told was – Please use your eyes and assess the situation for yourselves. We were invited to build our own perspective on the issue. And that's something I



continue to do even today – I see, feel, discover and research the issue before I arrive at a decision.

After Pravah, when I had joined Greenpeace India, we organized a protest outside the Chief Minister's house against the upcoming port in an eco-sensitive zone in Orissa because they were a threat to the Olive Ridley turtles. By the end of the day, 3 of us were in Tihar jail. I was there for 4 days but I continued singing. And even got the inmates of Tihar singing with me! So I learned that life throws up a range of different circumstances but you have to fight it out.

Today, whether I choose to join an organization or start one, SMILE has given me a confidence, a new way of thinking, the idea that before arriving at any decision, you need to inform yourself, the passion for asking questions, the ability to discern between right and wrong. SMILE had a huge impact on me.

If today I am a part of Greenpeace India and am contributing to the long term, strategic planning of the organization, my skills and the way of work have been greatly influenced by the origins of my journey with Pravah and as a SMILE student.

Bidhan came to Pravah as a SMILE volunteer in 1998. He has been working with Greenpeace India for the last 12 years and has recently been selected for Greenpeace's Future Leadership Program 2013-14 amongst 15 participants globally. He can sing folk songs in 12 Indian languages.

# IN THEIR WORDS: INDERPAL SINGH, Senior Producer - Gustakhi Maaf, NDTV

What I loved about my experience in Pravah is that it gave me the space to do what I wanted to do... whether it was designing a brochure, doing illustrations, acting in a documentary, doing a street play... It was as if someone has stamped your passport with an entry that reads "for any country, no visa required". You can go anywhere you desire and ultimately that is one thing that everyone craves - to be free in their mind and in their thoughts.

After school and when you are in college, it's very crucial that you meet people who understand you and give you the space to be who you are, because that's a time when you are facing a lot of pressure coming from different sources - be it the family, friends or you may be just seeing things around you. I was doing a job in fashion... but it just wasn't me.

IP enrolled into the SMILE program in 1998. Apart from being a senior producer and puppeteer at NDTV, he is also a member of Menwhopause - a Delhi-based rock band.

When I joined SMILE, I wanted to work for a cause and join the army. You know... put your life on the line and sacrifice yourself for the country. But then you eventually start asking, why? Why was it that I wanted to be a soldier? SMILE taught me to ask those critical questions.

Once a journey starts, it doesn't stop, especially when you know what kind of journey it is and then on the way you find answers to a lot of questions about yourself, like for me... I was sensitive about a lot of things, but there were many areas where I was not. For example, you know this whole Northern Indian "Punju" habit of calling someone a Bihari! Later I discovered that my best friends, the people I hang out with, they were all from Bihar and that's when I realized, "Boss! This is not what one should think like. You have to create some balance." I

remember watching the film - "Lesser Humans" and ever since I have never allowed anyone else clean my loo. That may be a very tiny thing, just a gesture - but that movie made it very clear for me.

The best thing I did was to go for the exposure trip. I went to a place called Tilonia in Rajasthan. I took my guitar along because I have always been a musician. In SWRC, Tilonia, I started working with the Communication Resource Team - with the puppeteers. When I came back to Delhi, it knew I had found my passion. It was puppets for me! It is very important for a person to find their passion. You can discover it through various activities or just one short trip - something you love and once you find that, it changes and redefines all the other factors around you.

I believe that life is not about money and how wealthy you are. It's about how you have treated other people, how you've behaved with them and what you feel about them.

After my journey with Pravah, my friends and I decided to go to a school and spend time with the kids there. Eventually it became a small festival where things made by the children could be displayed. I used the skills I had picked up from my exposure, the meetings, the SMILE orientation, or street plays in the space that was created with Pravah and because of Pravah.



This booklet is as much an assessment of Pravah's work as it is a reflection by young people about their journeys and the impact Pravah and its partners have had on them. It spans a long slice of the growing years of a young person – starting from school through college to a young social entrepreneur and youth facilitator. It is an autobiography as it includes voices of young people sharing their stories of change. At the same time, it is a biography of Pravah because it gives a collective, quantitative assessment of the impact Pravah and its partners have had over the last 20 years.

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Asha, New York • Ashoka - Innovators of the Public, India •  
Australian Volunteers International • British Council •  
Church World Services CIVA, UK • DKA Austria • Global Fund for Children (GFC) • India Development Service • Indo-Global Social Service Society •  
Innovations in Civic Participation (ICP) • Misereor •  
National Foundation for India (NFI) • National Youth Foundation, India •  
Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust • Oxfam India • Swiss Development Corporation (SDC) • Tides Foundation, USA • Jagori •  
Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) - UK and India •  
Wipro – Applying Thought in Schools • Youthreach, India

**Credits:**

**Lead consultant:**

Deepti Priya Mehrotra is a grassroots activist, writer and independent researcher. She has assisted organizations including NFI, UNICEF, UNFPA, Christian Aid and Action Aid with research, evaluations, strategic planning and program development. She is also the founder of Sampurna Trust, New Delhi.

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**Illustrator:**

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Monisha Vemavarapu is a Pravah Global Xchange alumna and a freelance graphic designer.