



**YOUTH FOR  
SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT**  
citizens of today and tomorrow

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 2024-27



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# ABOUT YSD

Youth for Social Development (YSD) is a development organisation working with the duty bearers and rights holders to enhance the quality of life for both urban and rural underprivileged populations in the state of Odisha, India. Our interventions are primarily in the fields of governance and entitlements, including, health, education, water, sanitation, housing, and climate change. We prioritize the well-being of resource-poor and marginalised communities, with a special emphasis on Dalit and Adivasi populations, as well as children, youth, and women, who form the cornerstone of our initiatives.

Working together to avail basic services, empowering the communities on the margin and nudging the local governments and elected representatives – through research, advocacy and training – constitute the core of our approach.

## Vision

We envision a just, equitable and sustainable society where everyone has access to social, economic and democratic rights and the capacity to achieve their full potential and lead a dignified life.

## Mission

Our mission is to facilitate a holistic sustainable social and economic development of marginalized communities in urban and rural Odisha through participatory community action and people's empowerment.

## Core Values

- Social justice and equity
- Integrity, transparency and accountability
- Participation and cooperation

# INTRODUCTION

Youth for Social Development (YSD, hereafter) is a social purpose organisation dedicated to catalysing holistic development of the most marginalized in the state of Odisha. Daunting poverty and marginalisation of the Adivasis and Dalits in the Southern and Western parts of Odisha, the lack of entitlements and basic amenities – Primary Health Care, Public Distribution System, schools, electricity, potable water and roads – coupled with the scarce reach of government schemes and welfare measures, prompted us to set up Youth for Social Development in 2005.

Odisha remains predominantly rural (83.3%) with 32.6% of its people living below the poverty line. It stands 11th in population and 8th in area, nationally. The state has the third highest Scheduled Tribes (indigenous) population in India. Odisha is among the India's six most impoverished states with abysmal developmental indices.

63% of its population remains multi-dimensionally poor (Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative 2011). The drop-out rate at the Upper Primary level is 7.3% and at the Secondary level it is 27.3% as against the national average of 3% and 12.6% respectively (pib.gov.in).

Odisha has been placed under Akanshi-2 grade by scoring 517.1 out of 1000 points in the latest Performance Grading Index (PGI 2.0) report released by the Union ministry of Education for the year 2021-22, which is dismally low.

Health expenditure has remained low (Rs.2949, \$46 per capita); compared to other states, the out-of-pocket expenditure here is 76%, which is among the highest in India (NSSO, 75th round, 2019).

The Infant Mortality Rate among tribal children under 5 was 66.2 per 1,000 live births in 2021; the rate of anaemia among pregnant women was 61.8% (2019-21), while the national rate stood at 52.2%, (NFHS 5).

People in Ganjam district have been vulnerable to severe climate disasters. There have been 16 'natural disasters' in the last 12 years.

The coastal district of Ganjam, situated on the coast of the Bay of Bengal, is prone to extreme weather events, including cyclones, drought, floods and erosion.

The frequency and magnitude of erosion in these areas has also increased in recent years--a phenomenon attributed to increased frequency of cyclones and floods along the coast, and this in turn is due to markedly rising temperatures.

Floods have occurred in the years 1990, 1995, 2003, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2012, 2013, 2014 and 2018--noticeably, the frequency has been escalating through the 2000s. Rainfall between the peak rain months of July and September has been erratic, show data from 2009 to 2022.

It ranged from 225.96 mm of rain in 2017 to more than double of that (458.59 mm) in 2019.

The number of rainy days in Ganjam ranged from 55 days in 2015 and 2020 to 78 days in 2012 (IndiaSpend, 29 May, 2023).

Aware that historically people's participation in the public affairs has been quite low in the region, YSD works with both, the right bearers and the duty providers. Making people and communities on the margin more aware and equipped to work with the local government and support the latter to become more sensitive and responsive towards the former has been central to our approach.

Our deep community connect, enabling people to participate in their own development, working together with the community (especially children, adolescent and youth) and the duty bearers at village, panchayat, block, district and state levels; participatory methods of unpacking policy and budgets; strengthening people-government partnership; holistic intervention for a sustainable impact have been the kernel of our philosophy and work.



The disadvantaged and unreachd – Dalits, Adivasis, women, persons with disabilities, vulnerable children and youth rendered voiceless and often unaware of their entitlements – are our primary partners. To bolster the democratic efforts at the grassroots and to improve both the supply and demand sides of service provision and realisation of entitlements, YSD shall continue to work very closely with the children and youth, the young citizens from the villages, tribal hamlets and urban slums of Odisha.

We shall endeavour to improve the realisation of basic amenities, civic rights and locally available government welfare schemes to the people who need them the most.

A recent report from the UN's Special Rapporteur on extreme poverty and human rights captures the *raison d'etre* of our focus succinctly:

Social protection is an investment that societies make to enhance resilience against shocks, create an inclusive economy and achieve multiplier effects for the realization of human rights.

Despite its potential, however, social protection benefits often go unused even though they are designed to protect individuals throughout their lives, a phenomenon known as “non-take-up”. The phenomenon of non-take-up affects millions around the world. It results in a waste of public resources and it significantly undermines the effectiveness of social protection in reducing poverty and inequalities.

The Special Rapporteur urges all States to address non-take-up as an urgent policy priority. Reducing non-take-up is within reach: it requires recasting social protection as a human right rather than charity, coordinating actions to provide targeted information about social protection measures, simplifying application procedures and involving those who experience poverty in the design, monitoring and evaluation of social protection schemes [emphasis ours].

In somewhat a similar vein, the NitiAayog of India has prepared a thoroughly detailed document seeking to localize development goals state-wise.

This is informed by the government's commitment to 'leave no one behind'. Given the geographic and demographic diversities, localised approaches towards planning, budgeting, implementation, and monitoring are fast emerging as the most significant path to follow. YSD shall look to leveraging these as a strategic priority.

To move in this direction, we shall focus on the following themes for programmatic interventions:

- Education and Health
- Citizenship and Governance, especially focusing on policies related to, and procurements of, social protection, basic amenities and entitlements
- Climate change and disaster risk reduction

India's struggle to provide basic education to all its children is well documented. Despite steady progress in enrolments after the introduction of the Right to Education Act in 2009, problems of low attendance and unsatisfactory learning remain pervasive.

YSD believes that low levels of learning perpetuate poverty and intergenerational marginalisation.

Odisha too has witnessed a steady progress in enrolment for the children in the 6-14 years age group. It has gone up from 88% (2018) to 92.1% (2022). But the learning remains a challenge. Children in Std III who can read Std II level text has decreased from 34.9% in 2018 to 26.7% in 2022 in government schools. Similarly, children in Std III who can do at least subtraction has been decreased from 28.1% in 2008 to 26.8% in 2022. The infrastructure continues to be abysmal in the government schools of Odisha. There is no drinking water available in 8.4% of school; 15.9% school have unusable toilet facilities; merely 8% schools have separate toilet facilities for girl students; 10.1% schools that have separate toilets for girls keep the toilet locked; 41% schools don't have library facilities; and in 82.5% schools there is no computer available for children to use.[1]

[1][http://img.asercentre.org/docs/ASER%202022%20report%20pdfs/State%20pages/6%20pages\\_English/odisha\\_19.pdf](http://img.asercentre.org/docs/ASER%202022%20report%20pdfs/State%20pages/6%20pages_English/odisha_19.pdf)

YSD shall continue to work closely with the community, local government and elected representatives to collectively change this situation for better. Building on the assistance from the technical experts in the field, YSD shall continue to improve the teaching-learning eco-system in partnership with schools, teachers and students, without wavering from its commitment to making systemic changes, including improving inclusion and governance. We realise the strategic significance of impacting both the education seeking behaviour in the community and the quality of delivery at the school level.

### **Alignment with Sustainable Development Goal**

Currently our work relates to the Sustainable Development Goal 1-no poverty, Goal 3-good health and wellbeing, Goal 4-quality education, Goal 5-gender equality, Goal 6-clean water and sanitation, Goal 11-make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable, Goal 12- responsible consumption and production, Goal 13-take urgent action to combat climate change and its impact, and Goal 16- promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.



# APPROACH

At YSD, we believe that a holistic intervention can produce a sustainable long-lasting change. Symptomatic, episodic and narrowly-defined interventions usually don't have life beyond the project cycle. Enabling the rights holder to be aware, motivated and empowered must go hand in hand with sensitizing and energizing the duty bearer.

To create a critical mass, aware and equipped to avail its entitlements, we must develop projects that are co-designed with, and driven by, the people. We should aspire to develop a system and culture that sets priorities through an iterative process with the community.

Research and advocacy shall continue to inform our programmes. To intensify integrated and sustainable development of disadvantaged communities, YSD shall continue to strengthen the policy space with its studies, research and audits. The purpose is to work closely with the government, capacitate officials and elected representatives where required, to improve the entire delivery system linked to social welfare and justice.

# VERTICALS

## 1. EDUCATION AND HEALTH



## **A. Education- foundation learning:**

Focus: Elementary and Secondary Level (6-18 years, Std-I-V)

To ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, we work with children from the most disadvantaged backgrounds, including those living in slums and remote rural and tribal areas, and children with disabilities. We seek to improve both the demand (education seeking behaviour) and the supply side (public school education system) of education and learning.

### **Context:**

The role of education in minimising intergenerational marginalisation and poverty is globally accepted. The right to education could become a fundamental right for the Indian citizens only in 2009, that too just for the students in the age group of 6 to 14 years. The Act has brought about significant changes, especially in the realm of enrolment.

Many parents from extremely resource-starved backgrounds had already begun sending their children to the school wherever the Mid-day meal was functional since 2002. Along with the debate about the quality of education being provided in government schools, there were several concerns including teacher-student ratio, quality of teachers, on the job teacher training avenues, and so on. Though the Act had the provision for school education to be free and compulsory, in reality, a substantial percentage of students do not receive education for free. Non-provision of other essential items, such as text books, uniforms, transport, add to the financial burden on households. The situation has turned grimmer since the Pandemic and the following lockdowns. The Indian government imposed one of the longest school closures globally as it went through multiple waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. This had disproportionate impact on children from the resource-poor families.

To make matters worse, as it were, in October 2020, the state government of Odisha shut down 433 schools, 425 Primary and 8 Upper Primary schools, in Ganjam district alone. This was apparently due to 'poor enrolment'. In several instances, to cut cost, the government merged Upper Primary schools with the High schools in the area. This has severely impacted education of children in the district. The distance between the habitation and a High School is invariably much more than the distance between a hamlet and its nearest Primary school. Parents of young children in Primary schools are apprehensive of letting their young ones walk to schools now located faraway. The number of school dropouts has increased in almost every village. Secondly, since schools across the country closed for around 2 years since the lockdown in March 2020, multiple studies, and experiences of field-based organisations, have shown that there has been significant learning loss among children.

### We shall focus on:

- Foundation Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)
- Social- emotional Learning (SEL)
- Social Leadership skills
- Leveraging technology in learning

Working with government schools and teachers, we shall run '*Community Educational Learning and Support Centre*' programme to achieve these objectives. We seek to impact the entire eco-system for a sustainable change:

- a. Improve education seeking behaviour
  - Work with children, parents and the community
- b. Improve the delivery system
  - Work with the school and teachers
  - Work with the local government structures
  - Work with leading technical partners in the space of foundational education
- c. Strengthen the support system
  - Provide support to the community and community facilitators
  - Provide support to parents to better their income; minimize child labour, prevent gender-based biases and discrimination

## **B. Kishori Shakti- adolescent empowerment programme:**

Designed to enable children and youth (10-19 years) to take charge of their lives, this programme focuses on employability skills, life skills, health, hygiene and nutrition, protection from socially harmful practices and gender-based violence. We seek to inculcate in participants a deep social awareness and empathy about dignity and equality, rights and responsibilities as a citizen of India and a member of our immediate community. Skills like communication, participation, critical thinking, problem solving, negotiation and decision making are imparted to participants so that they could fully - effectively and meaningfully - participate in their lives.

### **We shall focus on:**

- Life skills, informed decision making, problem solving, creative and critical thinking, effective communication, building healthy relationships, social awareness and empathy, emotional intelligence and resilience.
- Employability skills, teamwork, leadership, financial and digital literacy, career guidance, coping with stress and conflict, basic workplace discipline and safety; making youth market ready and linking them with livelihood opportunities.
- Creating a process that equips young people to start the journey from ‘being people’ to ‘becoming pro-active citizens’; providing citizenship education that includes understanding democratic values, civic and human rights, and taking leadership in their community to resolve societal problems.

## C. Child Friendly Eco-System

In an extremely challenging environment, child rights are often compromised the most. We shall continue to build an enabling environment for children and young people so that they are able to explore and realise their potential. We shall facilitate the engagement of all the key stakeholders in ensuring child rights friendly spaces – family, village, panchayat, city and district. The overall aim will be to collectively build and sustain an eco-system where children's survival, development, protection and participation are ensured and celebrated. One of the key strategies will be to involve the duty bearers in co-creating a sensitive and responsive eco-system.

## We shall focus on:

- Developing a child-friendly gram panchayat, city and district model (design indicators, prepare micro plan and build capacity of all the concerned stakeholders)
- Engaging stakeholders in the planning process and enhancing their capacities to implement and monitor
- Working with families and communities to build informal support system o increase children's participation and provide platform/s to share their thoughts
- Working closely with the local and city governments to improve policy implementation and to allocate adequate budget towards building child-friendly spaces.



# VERTICALS

## 2. CITIZENSHIP AND GOVERNANCE



## Strategic Objectives

YSD shall aim to create a participatory dialogic space between the citizen and the government to strengthen social justice processes, to enhance service provision, policy making, and empathetic and responsive governance locally and at the state level in Odisha.

We believe that an aware citizenry and responsive government working together will strengthen the eco-system for a life with dignity to all. It starts with expediting the processes of ensuring social protection and basic services – like water, sanitation, housing, health, and education for the most vulnerable sections –that are pivotal for a life with dignity.

## Major Steps

- **Strengthening people-government partnership:** Facilitating training of service providers, frontline workers, and local elected officials
- **Awareness Building:** Making people aware of their entitlements and responsibilities, government schemes and processes to avail them; training, capacity enhancement, and the development of required tools to ensure social accountability and engagement
- **Enabling people to avail entitlements:** To institutionalise change and to ensure a sustainable path of development, it is crucial to empower people, both in terms of enhancing their awareness and boosting their skills and abilities to work with the duty providers to benefit from government's schemes and policies.
- **Policy and Budget Analysis:** Using participatory methods of unpacking policy and budgets, collectively conducting social audit through report card, score card, public hearing, etc. to strengthen people-government partnership in improving service provision and transparency

- **Supporting dialogues among stakeholders:** Generating people-run discussions to bring their voices and suggestions to the government

### Priority Themes and Setting

- **Themes:** Civic entitlements, social security (pension, PDS, NREGS, etc.), basic services (health, education, WASH, housing etc.) and flagship schemes-
- **Setting :** YSD works in the most fragile geographies: remote rural and tribal along with informal settlements in urban areas coastal areas, remote tribal areas and marginalised communities

### Major Stakeholders

- Women, children and youth
- Marginalised and vulnerable people: Dalits, Adivasis, and slum dwellers
- Government and elected officials, especially at Panchayat level

### We shall focus on

- Basic Services like health, education, water and sanitation, housing, etc.
- Social Protection (food, livelihoods, schemes for PWD, old age pensions, and other social security measures)



# VERTICALS

## 3. CLIMATE AND DISASTER RISK REDUCTION



India, like the rest of the world, is staring at colossal climate related challenges.

Global warming, carbon emission, heat-waves, flooding, unusually dry weather, spells of incessant rains, disasters have entered our everyday vocabulary and yet, one can't help but think that not enough is being done.

At YSD, we work with two basic clarities: the climate is not changing itself and everyone is not getting impacted by the climate-change induced crises in the same way. We look at the system of greed, waste, and the insatiable hunger for profit as the real culprit behind the climate crisis the world is facing today. We, however, also hold that the poor and the marginalised, children and women carry disproportionate burden of the climate crisis, even when they remain least prepared to negotiate it.

Our strategy is informed by these twin positions.

## Strategic Objective

We enable communities to negotiate climate change and disasters; promote community adaptation to climate vulnerability; and advocate for a way of life, a path of growth and development that is not extractive and exploitative to nature and people.

A systemic correction of priorities, policies, and processes and behavioural change at the individual level, are the only two ways to minimise the loss at a local level. Sustained simultaneous and collective effort globally will probably help us correct the damages we have inflicted on the planet.

YSD, therefore, works at multiple levels. With the government, we engage at the level of developing policies, their effective implementation, and disaster management and relief provision. With communities, especially, children and youth, we aim to bring positive changes in their life style and behaviour that minimise damages to the climate and environment.

## Major Steps

- **Awareness building:** We shall prioritise working on sustainable production and consumption (circular economy), waste management, renewable energy and afforestation
- **Risk informed planning and Disaster Risk Reduction:** timely and adequate humanitarian assistance in the time of need, preparing VDMP
- **Policy and Budget Analysis:** debate and discussion with policy makers and civil society; focus on renewable policy and climate policy

*Community engagement will be the defining feature of each step outlined above.*

## Priority Themes and Settings

- **Themes:** climate change, circular economy, disaster relief, resilience building
- **Settings:** fragile settings in rural, tribal and urban areas, specifically slums, coastal areas, mining affected and tribal areas

## Major stakeholders

- People living in slums, children, youth and their communities, schools, habitants of coastal areas, mining affected and tribal areas

## We shall focus on

- Disaster Relief
- Disaster Risk Reduction
- Green habits and practices and Circular Economy
- Organic Farming







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