

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2020-2021

ABOUT SWECHHA

Swechha is an organization dedicated to enabling ourselves and others around us to 'Be the Change', in making a visible difference to the Environment- both Physical and Social. *Our mission is to inspire, create and support - a just, equitable and sustainable society, for everyone and forever.*

Our genesis lay in the year 2000 as 'We for Yamuna' campaign, a collective response towards growing apathy towards one of the most polluted rivers of the world. Since then the organization has gathered popular and powerful voices for the support of this cause and has emerged as the loudest and strongest voice in India on the matter. Apart from this campaign, Swechha has grown over the decade to work on other issues of sustainable development and social change and has had considerable impact locally, nationally as well as internationally.

In the numerous things we do at Swechha, there are three key Focus Areas we address: (i) Environment and Citizenship; (ii) Education and Governance; and (iii) Empowerment and Enterprises.

GOVERNING BODY

1. Rajeev Singh, President
2. Vimlendu Jha, Secretary
3. Aruna Pandey, Member
4. Farhad Vania, Member
5. Lopamudra Sanyal, Member
6. Shilpi Singh, Member
7. Kuriakose Verghese, Member
8. Navin Joshua, Member
9. Deeksha Bhatia, Member

PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

This report consists of Swechha's programmes and **Activities** over the last one year (2020-21), detailed under the following heads –

Environment and Citizenship
Education and Governance
Empowerment and Enterprises

Environment and Citizenship

We strongly believe that all of us need to Wake up and Act on the criminal ways in which our needs and growing wants are damaging and affecting the Environment, both Physical and Social. Whether it is a drying Yamuna, an

overflowing Landfill, or a fast depleting green cover of the city, there is an urgent need for all of us to Know, Lean and Act on these concerns. Climate Change is a cumulative impact of several local and global environmental inactions or irresponsible actions. Given below are the details of the **Activities** conducted under this head in 2020-21 -

MONSOON WOODING CAMPAIGN

About the project

Monsoon Wooding is Swechha's annual environmental campaign which aims at expansion of green spaces in the city through youth volunteers. This action-oriented campaign encourages communities to plant, protect and promote trees and to take onus of creating and maintaining green spaces. The sapling distribution and plantation that happens as a part of Monsoon Wooding is seasonal in nature but its impact is indeed perennial. It has been implemented every year since 2011.

Objectives

- To protect and promote the green spaces in the city
- To mobilize communities to work together towards the protection of the environment
- To inculcate the spirit of environmental responsibility among the young people and the civil society

Activities

- Green walks with experts
- Community identification and Awareness raising and cleanliness drives in communities across Delhi and NCR
- Sapling distribution in public spaces and events
- Large scale plantation drives across communities in Delhi and

NCR Institutional collaborations with local partner organizations

Outcome and Outreach

- Over the past three years, more than 60,000 saplings have been distributed and planted across communities in Delhi and NCR
- More than 1000 volunteers have worked with community members to ensure access to greener spaces
- Large scale awareness and cleanliness drives organized across communities
- Garnered support from schools, colleges, NGOs, RWAs, media and corporate houses
- Creation of Delhi's first urban mini forest using native species at St Mary's School, Dwarka.

- Monsoon Wooding 2020 saw the plantation of 3000 saplings across Delhi-NCR.
- Monsoon Wooding Campaign 2020 was supported by prominent corporate houses such as IndusInd Bank, through a grant we received in partnership with Centre for Environmental Research and Education, (CERE), Mumbai
- In the past, Monsoon Wooding has been covered by prominent national media. Some of the links are given below-

<http://www.thehindu.com/sci-tech/energy-and-environment/and-a-forest-is-born/article4974036.ece>

<http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/delhi/Mini-forest-in-backyard/articleshow/21667418.cm>

Education and Governance

Swechha believes that education needs to be holistic, contextual and empowering. Apart from the basic belief of 'Education for All', which remains one of the core campaigns of

Swechha and its communities, we look at quality of education, capacity of educators and socio-political significance of educational institutions. We work with children (in-school, out of school), Teachers (Government as well as Pvt Institutions) and Managements on the issue. Education is one of the core prerequisites for active governance. Some of the **Activities** conducted under this theme in 2020-21 are listed below-

Cycles for Sustainability

CYCLES for Sustainability (Children and Youth in Cities, a Lifestyles Evaluation Study) is a project led by CUSP, an ESRC-funded Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity at the University of Surrey, United Kingdom. International research partners include –Instituto Akatu, BrazilThe National Institute for Environmental Studies, Japan, The University of Canterbury, New Zealand, The Environmental Learning Research Centre, Rhodes University, South Africa, The Department of Urban and Regional Planning, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh, and Swechha – We For Change Foundation, India.

CYCLES for Sustainability examines how cities currently support young people to live sustainably and hears directly from young people themselves, through focus groups, surveys, and multi-media reporting.

The study focuses specifically on the lives of 12-24 year olds, which spans an important developmental period during which footprints for energy use and habits for consumption are established, and aspirations and attitudes are formed. CYCLES for Sustainability builds on and extends emerging global comparative research into the lifestyles of young urban residents, including UNEP's 2011 Global Survey of Sustainable Lifestyles. 300 participants belonging to different age groups and from different income levels, participated in the survey conducted in year 2 of the project in 2019-2020. A concluding country wise analysis of the study was conducted virtually in July 2020.

BRIDGE THE GAP

About the project

Our current education system and parenting focuses on consumption-based upbringing as a result of which development and larger issues of social responsibility and active citizenship have taken a back seat. The education imparted in schools today, often qualifies us for a good job but it fails to inculcate sensitivity towards issues that do not affect us directly. In addition, it does not impart the intelligence to understand and reflect upon the consequences of our actions on the poorest of the poor, the marginalized and the unheard sections of our society.

Against this backdrop, Swechha designed Bridge the Gap (BTG) - a unique curriculum that aims at narrowing the increasing gap between the children and the realities of the world around them. The curriculum aims at enabling young people to strike a connection with and between the natural world and the man-made world by equipping them with the necessary outlook and the skills needed to make this connection.

Objectives

This curriculum aims to –

- Have a better understanding of the self and the 'other'
- Establish the relation between the local and the global - social, political, cultural and ecological - environment
- To have an understanding of the consequences of human actions on the environment
- To understand the needs and rights of present and future generations

- To develop self as well as social responsibility towards environmental issues To develop citizenship, stewardship and civic sense.

Approach

An unconventional approach that stands on the pillars of exploration, experience and exposure is adopted by us. This can be seen in the process given below -

ORIENTATION

Gaining an overview of and a perspective to Environment and Development



KNOWLEDGE

Building an individual perspective and a strong understanding of the problems and their long-term solutions



DISCOVERY

Learning by experience and case studies



ACTION

Taking action based on new learning; locally within the school and globally

Activities

The non-textbook approach focuses more on experiential learning as the course uses films, multimedia presentations, flash cards, journals and field trips as methods of teaching. The specific **Activities** are described below –

Classroom workshops – Interactive and activity-based these classroom sessions help the students develop an understanding of environmental and developmental issues in a simple yet structured manner. Innovative games, discussions and worksheets engage the children and inspire them to action.

Film screenings – Short films made by Swechha and other civil society organizations like Jijivisha, Wasted, Dilli are screened in the school to create an awareness on developmental issues like water and waste. These films stimulate discussions on the issues and help the students raise questions and challenge beliefs and practices.

Eco-walks - Swechha's Eco walks take students out of their classrooms and bring them face-to-face with the problem. These half day excursions ensure that the children see themselves as a part of our fast-changing social and environmental landscape. The walks that are conducted by Swechha include the Yamuna Walk, the Landfill Walk and others.

Action Campaigns – Modules end with an action plan or an action campaign which outlines steps that the students are taking to create awareness within the school community and inspire large-scale intervention and change. These campaigns allow for creative expression like street plays, posters, exhibitions and presentations. Students are also encouraged to participate in city-level campaigns on social or developmental issues.

Skill School – In order to integrate creative and vocational skills into the BTG, a weekend skill school was conceptualized to teach new skills to the young learners with help from experts and volunteers from colleges and corporates. Skills like computers, dance, art and theatre were a part of this school.

The curriculum inculcates a combination of themes and **Activities** based on the participant group and their requirements. It could hence be designed to fit into the school curriculum over the academic year.

Outreach and Outcome

In the year 2020, Swechha virtually engaged and worked with over 10,000 students across 20 different schools from Delhi/NCR. The curriculum transacted across these schools included online workshops on issue of water pollution, air pollution, waste management, urban green space management, and sustainable development.

The Bridge the Gap programme helps to -

- Nurture empathy and social responsibility towards the other
- Link young people as active citizens to local and global socio-developmental issues
Inculcate leadership as a value and a skill to practice in the schools and communities
Build sensitive and pro-active school communities

Empowerment and Enterprises

ME to WE

Pagdandi Adolescent Empowerment Programme

RATIONALE

Adolescent girls and boys are the most vulnerable section in a community, in terms of access to information, opportunity and resources – more so in marginalized communities. They are bound by patriarchal attitudes, beliefs and expectations and therefore are the last in the priority of empowerment. As a result of this, they face emotional, physical, sexual and financial discrimination, also leading sometimes to abuse.

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME

The Me to We programme grew out of a need to understand and address these problems at an individual as well as at a collective level, proposing a strong element of employability being a medium of empowerment – alongside interventions of education and life skills. The intervention is a more focused approach towards skill development and employment preparedness. It aims at working with a group of 100 adolescent girls from Jagdamba Camp community, one of the biggest slums in South Delhi.

OBJECTIVES

- 1) To create confident young adolescents in the community who have a sense of purpose and identity

2) To equip them with information, education and life skills needed to question and negotiate existing and constantly changing social realities while emerging as young leaders

3) To build and strengthen skills and capacities for employment, entrepreneurship and financial independence

APPROACH

The programme uses a participatory and process-oriented approach to achieve its **Objectives**. It builds learning along a continuum leading the individual from an understanding of the self vis-à-vis the other i.e Me to We. It empowers the individual to transform from being the target of change in their community to being a vehicle of change for their community. The program also has a bottom up approach whereby acknowledging the existing social, cultural and economic realities of these girls and therefore making collaborative efforts to solve problems, instead of conflict and confrontation.

ACTIVITIES AND INTERVENTIONS

- Support to school
- Life-skills workshops
- Leadership development
- Skill development – soft skills, creative skills, vocational skills
Entrepreneurship Training
- Practicum based approach to setting individual or collective enterprises

From June 2014-July 2015, 50 adolescents (20 boys and 30 girls) were engaged in a full fledged empowerment programme supported by Empower. The project focused on employability for these adolescents through active engagement on issues of identity, social efficacy and resourcefulness. 20 adolescents from the programme were placed as interns and employees with different organizations across the city.

From July 2016-2018, 30 more adolescents aged 12-18 were engaged through a life skills curriculum supported by EMpower. The curriculum uses innovative and engaging sessions, interactions with experts and industrial exposure visits to dedicatedly work on issues on identity, social efficacy and resourcefulness. During the same period, the ex Me to We participants were engaged through one-on-one interactions, events and community campaigns. This cycle also saw the journey of four community interns turned community animators for Swechha. During this cycle, two fellowships to ex participants to set up enterprises were also given out.

In 2020, due to the nation wide lockdown and covid-19 crisis, we were able to engage with our core participants of the program on a very limited scale. Most of our efforts went in relief work and assistance in the community. We engaged with a core group of around 50 youth participants, who were able to attend in person sessions and workshops on identity and self. In addition to this, these students were also engaged in daily remedial classes at our learning center, from October 2020 onwards. Our immediate priority during the initial months of lockdown, was to reach out to our youth participants and their families in the community and offer assistance and intervention through relief work, regular check ins via phone calls and eventually, in person one- one informal interactions during community visits. With ease in restrictions, the number of students regularly attending different sessions, remedial classes and workshops at our learning center, steadily increased

US EMBASSY ALUMNI MICROGRANTS COMPETITION

The Alumni Micro Grants Project aims to promote positive change in Indian society through social impact projects of micro- and macro-scale in fields as diverse as entrepreneurship, education, environment, youth empowerment, and women's empowerment. Through this grant we want to create a space of collaboration, co-learning and cross learning. American Embassy in partnership with Swechha invited applications from its Alumni network, for grant to create social impact through their innovative projects.

Over a 100 applications were received from around the country. 19 micro and macro scale projects were shortlisted and selected. These are focused on issues around environment, sustainability, gender, tolerance and inclusion, entrepreneurship and women empowerment.

US EMBASSY ALUMNI RAPID RESPONSE FUND – GREEN THE MAP PODCAST AND MASTERCLASS SERIES

Our 'Green The Map' Podcast and Masterclass series has been designed to 'reimagine and rebuild our world', through 'relevant and practical' solutions that meet real needs of the people (individuals, families, neighborhoods and communities), and achieving this through building community resilience during and after Covid-19.

We want to build the capacities of individuals as well as communities on future preparedness vis-à-vis ecological issues, as Covid and Climate crisis together is presenting an unprecedented threat to human life and misery.

In partnership with the US Dept of State, we began implementing a series of 6 online podcasts and 5 DIY Masterclasses that would run on a fortnightly basis.

These would focus on the need for community resilience through environmental conservation, environmental justice and environmental action, and also focus on 'green' stimulus going forward.

Through the facilitation of these digital mediums, our objective is to build a more resilient and well-prepared community that would be able to anticipate and address climate crisis threats and public health emergencies, on a more immediate basis. Each of these podcasts and webinars are aimed at engaging citizens on the best practices and policies that can be implemented at local levels to tackle immediate problems, as well as address the need for global advocacy in environmental issues.

SWECHHA FARM SCHOOL AND STAY

Swechha Farm School is a non-traditional education and practice lab, a pop-up institute, for present and future consumers of our world, for future growth. It's designed as a Learning Centre – hub for ecological design innovation and incubation, sustainable agriculture, environmental practices, life-skills and personality enhancement programs.

The purpose of the Farm School is to engage the community at large, especially young people, on issues of resilience and finding long-term solutions to ecological degradation, health and poverty. We aim at inspiring action and catalyzing communities for a regenerative and sustainable world, one with low impact and high quality lifestyles. Some of the salient features and practices being implemented and developed at the farm school include a multi-layer farming

shed, traditional agricultural practices, bee keeping, vermicomposting using DIY methods, and an indigenous native tree nursery.

Key activities envisioned for the farm school include –

- One Day exposure visits
- Experiential learning
- Volunteering camps
- Farm Stays
- Shramdaans and Gram Anubhavs

Focus areas include –

- Sustainability and resilience
- Ecological design and innovation
- Life skills, and personality enhancements

Target groups include youth partners, schools and other educational institutions, and civil society members.

