



SWECHHA

ANNUAL ACTIVITY REPORT 2023-2024



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. Kuriakose Verghese, Member
7. Navin Joshua, Member
8. Ashim Bery, Member



PROGRAMMES AND ACTIVITIES

This report consists of Swechha's programs and **Activities** over the last year (2023-24), 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 2023-24

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.



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Objectives

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

Activities

- 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
- New Delhi's first urban mini forest was created using native species at St Mary's School, Dwarka.
- Monsoon Wooding 2023 saw the plantation of 3000 saplings across Delhi-NCR. 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 2023-24 are listed below-

BRIDGE THE GAP

About the project

i) Bridge The Gap:

As the name suggests, our Bridge The Gap program aims to bring education and sustainability under one umbrella, keeping life skills and active citizenship at the core of our intervention. We work with both government as well as private schools, through curriculum-based intervention, which includes conducting workshops, exposure trips, campaigns, practicum, and infrastructure development, across themes of land, water, air, waste management, climate change, and inclusive ecology. We also conduct teacher training and work with educators, to build their capacity around the pedagogy of sustainability education. In the last 15 years, the 12-16 session long curriculum has been successfully implemented in over 250 schools of Delhi NCR with over 50,000 students and has been supported by Sri Ratan Tata Trust, Nokia Siemens Networks, American Express, National Geographic, and Adobe. In 2023-2024 Swechha worked with 15 schools and curated year-long curricula and leadership journeys to build environmental stewardship in schools on air pollution, water conservation, waste management, responsible consumption, food, and urban gardening, which resulted in student-led campaigns, and green action projects. The program was supported by Acuity Knowledge Partners and Acuity KP Solutions as a part of their CSR initiative in 2023-2024.



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ii) Brake Even:

Brake Even is our short-term module based outreach programme for schools and other institutions eager to engage with issues related to the environment, life skills and citizenship, as a way of creating awareness and ownership of our social and physical environment. As part of the programme, we conduct workshops on waste, water, air pollution and urban greens, including general information on each theme, plus information on their context in Delhi. Each of these workshops follow four steps, these are: orientation, knowledge, experience and consolidation/action. The programme has been implemented in more than 200 schools of Delhi and over 25 corporate houses and Institutions, such as Accenture, PwC, Nokia, Boston Consulting, etc. and has successfully engaged more than 500,000 individuals. In 2023, we engaged with 10 schools in Delhi/NCR as a part of this program.

iii) Yamuna Yatra: One of the flagship programs of Swechha, and also one of the most celebrated ones, Yamuna Yatra is a 12 days journey, from Yamunotri to Agra, tracking River Yamuna from where it originates and is pristine, down to the point where it reaches Agra and is almost a toxic body of water. This 12-day journey-based camp is a mix of environmental learning, fun and adventure and a holistic understanding of modern-day civilisation, and the nuances of industrialisation and sustainability. This 1000 kilometre journey includes Interacting with the River (camping on the riverside), as well as the communities around it, policy makers, religious institutions, market forces and others. Since 2004, we have conducted over 30 Yamuna Yatras, with over 2000 young leaders, in partnership with Vasant Valley School, Pathways World School, The American Embassy, British Council and The European Union. It is a life-changing experience for most young people as it helps them question and stretch beyond their comfort zones while connecting with a larger world. The Vasant Valley School has acknowledged the effectiveness of a travel based learning programme like the Yamuna Yatra and has made it a part of their annual curriculum for Grade XI. In March and April 2023, Swechha conducted two back to back annual Yamuna Yatra programs with 120 Grade XI students from Vasant Valley School.

iv) Naturescapes: This year we introduced a new program called 'NatureScapes', where we aim to create enriching experiences and challenges for young people to experience different ecologies of India. It is a balanced mix of fun, adventure, and learning. This 4-5 day journey is purely experiential and provides a space for young minds to understand ecological challenges and work with communities.. We work with urban schools and colleges to give the students an experiential learning environment through workshops, village interactions, home visits, Shramdaan, and cultural events. We conducted 2 trips with The Shriram Millennium School Noida, with grade 9 travelling to Ranthambore and grade 12 travelling to Mukteshwar.



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 to exist and constantly changing social realities while emerging as young leaders

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



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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.

In 2023-2024 over 60 adolescents aged 12-22 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 continuation of a mental health curriculum that was integrated within the project. In addition to job camps, career counselling sessions, and employability sessions, participants also went through 10 group workshops as well as over 50 individual sessions on mental health.



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SHE LEADS CHANGE
Farm School Community Development

In a climate-constrained world, with constant competition over natural resources, high levels of poverty and hunger, agricultural distress, and an expectation to fulfil the growing food demand of over 1.39 billion people: all point to the need for India to urgently adopt wide-scale sustainable agricultural and integrated development practices. Mewat, district Alwar, where the Swechha Farm School is located, is one of the poorest regions of India, where the land is predominantly barren and the local village community has been largely insulated from mainstream access to health, education, and development benefits.

Over the last year, we've been developing this region as a living prototype to promote innovations in sustainable agriculture, community development, livelihood generation, and women empowerment. Our programs are embedded in the engagement with communities of rural Rajasthan and link agriculture with various other human development indices. They are designed to engage the community at large, especially young people to build their resilience and capacities to find long-term solutions to ecological degradation, health, and poverty.

Our 'She Leads Change' program was a pilot initiative aimed at empowering youth and working with local farming communities. We aimed at working with young students from (primarily adolescent girls), to introduce them to profitable agriculture and allied practices/processes/businesses; Educate, empower and impart financial literacy training, build their capacity for efficient marketing and market linkages; and promote farming as a viable career choice amongst youth. This program was carried out in partnership with EMpower.



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-time exposure visits
- Experiential learning
- Volunteering camps
- Farm Stays

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.