

BE THE CHANGE



REPORT ON A FOLLOW UP STUDY OF PATHMAKERS AT PATANG

Patang's Pathmakers Programme is supported by National Foundation for India

The Follow up Study was supported by : Sir Ratan Tata Trust

The Power of a Paradigm



Question : *What do you see in this picture?*

"Each of us tends to think we see things as they are, that we are objective. But this is not the case. We see the world, not as it is, but as we are-or, as we are conditioned to see it. When we open our mouths to describe what we see, we in effect describe ourselves, our perceptions, our paradigms. When other people disagree with us, we immediately think something is wrong with them. This does not mean that there are no facts. But each person's interpretation of these facts represents prior experiences, and the facts have no meaning whatsoever apart from the interpretation. The more aware we are of our basic paradigms, maps, or assumptions, and the extent to which we have been influenced by our experience, the more we can take responsibility for those paradigms, examine them, test them against reality, listen to others and be open to their perceptions, there by getting a larger picture and far more objective view".

(Excerpts from "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, Stephen R. Covey, page 28 & 29")

This is exactly what we are trying to achieve in the Pathmakers programme at Patang. Patang's Pathmakers programme is an experiential learning journey for young people to help them look deeply, get first hand exposure to realities, analyze issues from different perspectives, articulate assumptions, and broaden their thinking.

This booklet will help you to understand the programme, its processes, achievements and challenges. Hope you will enjoy reading this document as much as we enjoyed going down memory lane and putting it together.

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Dhanyabaad

Patang's Pathmakers programme is the most challenging yet the most rewarding programme at Patang. It is a structured programme for young people with ample unstructured spaces and that is the beauty of this programme. It is simply impossible to take the young people through this journey on our own. There are many invisible hands, hearts and heads behind our Pathmakers journey so far. We are deeply indebted to each one of them for their love and support.

First of all we would like to thank IGSSS (Indo Global Social Service Society) for conceptualizing the SMILE (Students Mobilization Initiative for Learning Through Exposure) programme on youth development and supporting us to take the programme forward by providing a fellowship to Patang Founder Trustee Rita Mishra in the year 2003. We also take this opportunity to thank MASS (Manav Adhika Seva Samiti) for extending all possible support in the initial years to run this programme.

Patang's Pathmakers programme is inspired by Pravah SMILE programme. We are immensely grateful to Pravah for facilitating different processes with us to understand different perspectives on youth development, citizenship, and voluntarism in the Indian context. We share credit with Pravah on the Pathmakers programme design, content and delivery.

Patang's Pathmakers journey will never be complete without saying a BIG thanks to National Foundation for India (NFI), New Delhi. Our partnership with NFI is the most beautiful partnership we have experienced so far in our organizational journey. We take this opportunity to acknowledge the trust and confidence NFI has shown in our work. Our sincere thanks to NFI for being a true partner and standing besides us during our most difficult times.

We take this opportunity to thank our first batch of SMILE volunteers for giving us the feedback that this programme is very essential for young people in Orissa and for giving us the confidence that we can run it effectively.

Our gratitude to our rural exposure partners Manav Adhikar Seva Samiti (Mass), Agragamee, Anandwan, Antodaya, Lokdrishti, Seva Mandir, Bharatiya Kissan Sangh (BKS), Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) for placing volunteers in their organizations and facilitating their learning journey.

We also take this opportunity to thank Gangadhar Meher College, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose College, and Women's college, Sambalpur and NAC College, Burla for partnering with us in the programme.

Our sincere thanks to Sir Ratan Tata Trust (SRTT) for providing us with a small grant to strengthen our organization development processes. We are immensely thankful to SRTT for the timely support to consolidate our work with young people and to dream big.

Patang's Pathmakers programme would have never been a success without the commitment of our volunteers, support from parents and resource persons. We value your support and look forward to work with you more closely in the coming years.

Last but not the least a big congratulation to Patang team for demonstrating commitment to youth development and voluntarism and moving from being participants of the programme to becoming facilitators of the programme.

With gratitude

Rita Mishra

Managing Trustee

Patang



Welcome to Patang's Pathmakers Programme

The Context:

The four districts of Western Orissa (Sundergarh, Sambalpur, Bolangir and Kalahandi) occupy over 30 percent of the total geographical area and nearly 25 percent of the total population of Orissa. Sambalpur, (where Patang is working) the main town in the area, is an educational centre, with more than 20 undergraduate colleges located within a 25 km radius. Coaching centres, promising top results and a prime career, flourish. Each year, thousands of professionals and academicians get their degrees.

In an atmosphere where a person's potential is judged primarily by percentages, marks and grades, many young people end up feeling like failures. After years of focusing only on academic achievement and competition, individual creativity and compassion for society is lost in chasing for a better life, symbolised by admission to premier institutions or a high pay job in an MNC or a secure job with Government. On the other hand, how to survive and lead a decent life is a big challenge facing many young people.

When young people should be at the peak of their lives, brimming with energy and plans, they end up worrying about the future. The absence of a structured and constructive platform to guide and support them has led to a scenario where young people look for opportunities rather than create opportunities for themselves, feel under-confident, directionless and are prone to falling prey to antisocial elements and fundamentalist forces. Keeping this context in mind Patang thought of taking young people through a structured journey to inspire them, to take charge of their lives by creating a youth platform in Sambalpur.

The aim was to take them through a journey

From	Towards
Being Vulnerable	Being in Control
Dependence	Interdependence
Looking for opportunity	Creating opportunity

The Concerns:

In the year 2003, realizing this need we tried to create a platform for young people through the SMILE programme in Burla. The feedback we received from the young people inspired us to strengthen and sustain the platform and advocate youth needs and issues in this belt.

The struggle for us was to find out the reasons behind the under confidence and vulnerable feeling and also to look at ways to address them. We decided to address these concerns because there was a huge gap between what young people were capable of becoming / aspiring to become and the opportunities to facilitate them.

Some of the concerns Patang decided to address were lack of opportunities for young people –

- to interact with their peers
- to engage with social issues
- to develop their skills and attitude (building confidence, communication skills, decision making skills, leadership etc.),
- to get exposure to different cultures and issues etc.
- to showcase their talent and learn from others experience

The Intervention:

Keeping the needs of young people in mind we designed the Pathmakers programme with the objective to take young people through a journey of "Isolation to Participation". The idea was to bring young people together, support them to support each other, build their skills, help them to see the larger connections, get first hand exposure to issues and experience the change within and in the outside world. **The programme aimed at developing leadership among young people through voluntarism.**

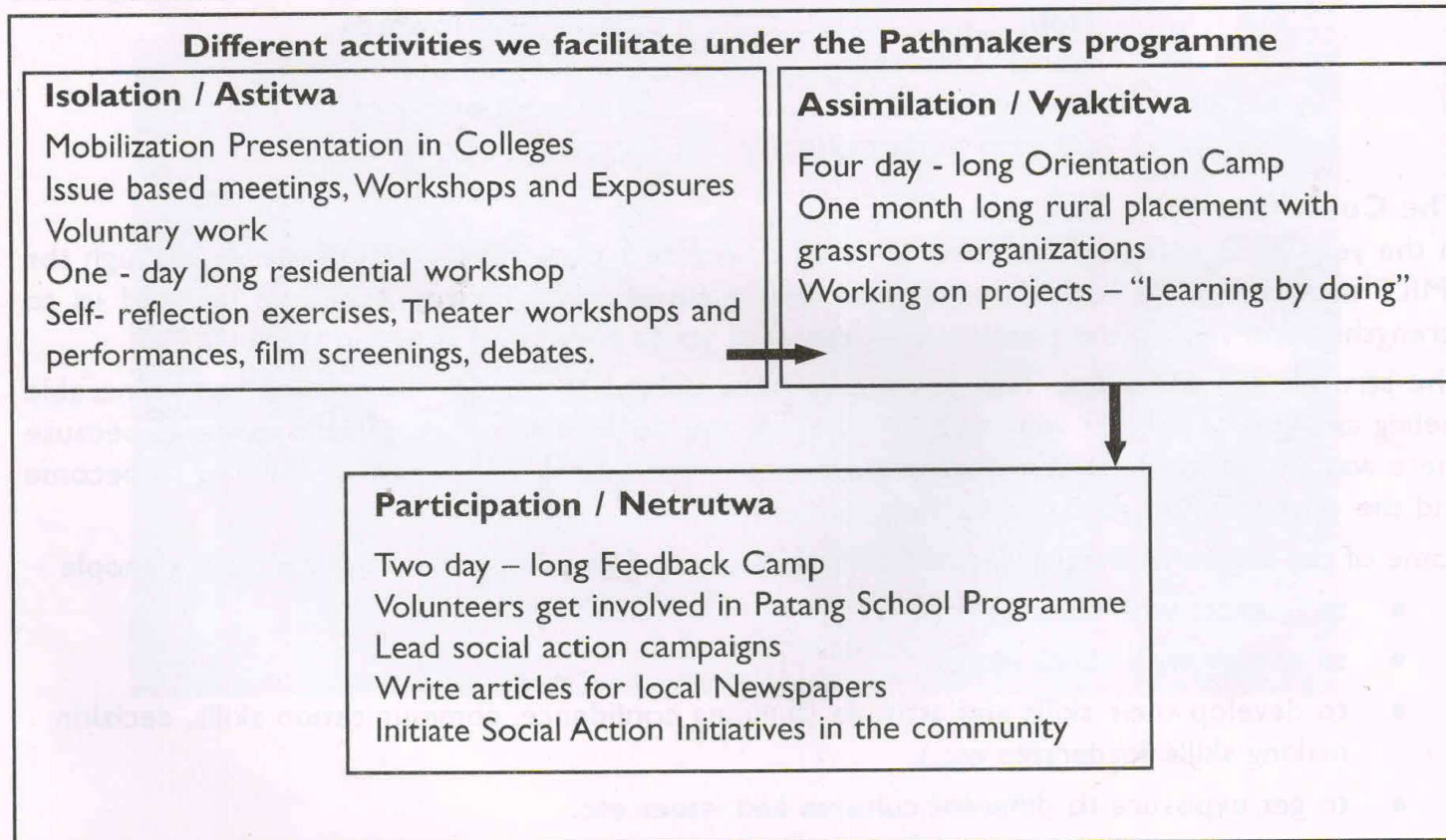
What is Pathmakers Programme?

Through Pathmakers, we mobilize young people between 18 to 25 years (students and non-students), who are willing to go through a year long journey to rediscover themselves and their potential while broadening their understanding about the world around them. The Pathmakers programme is designed along the lines of the Pravah - SMILE programme, but adapted to the local realities given our experiences in working with young people in Orissa. In the initial years, we used to call this intervention as SMILE programme but later we renamed it as Pathmakers Programme.

The programme aims at creating an alternative learning process for young people to develop their understanding about social issues, recognize their potential and develop their skills to become responsible citizens.

The volunteers are primarily mobilized through colleges in and around Sambalpur, Orissa. Each year we mobilize 60-70 volunteers. At least forty percent of them go through the entire journey while others go through sixty to seventy percent of the processes. As a part of Pathmakers, the volunteers participate in issue - based monthly meetings, theme - based workshops, voluntary placements and month - long rural exposure visits.

The Process :



The Pathmakers Journey – A journey from “Isolation to Participation”

The Pathmakers Journey has three different phases. This is an intensive journey and each volunteer is given individual attention. We at Patang maintain individual files for each volunteer to keep track of the processes they go through during their association with the Pathmakers programme.

1st PHASE (Isolation / Astitwa)

Mobilization :

Mobilization is the key component of the Pathmakers Programme. Mobilization in this case means sharing about the Pathmakers programme with young people in colleges and inviting them to join the programme. We mobilize volunteers to the programme by making presentations in colleges, street theater performances and putting up posters. Many volunteers are also mobilized to the programme by ex-volunteers.

Monthly Meeting :

Monthly meeting provides a platform for interaction among young people from different colleges. It also creates an opportunity to debate and discuss a particular social issue with emphasis on how we all are connected to the issues under discussion and what we can do to impact that issue positively.

Issue Based Exposures and Workshops: We organize day-long exposure visits and workshops for our newly mobilized volunteers to give them first hand exposure of local realities and sensitize them to social issues.

The One - Day Residential Camp:

One-day camp provides Pathmakers volunteers with an opportunity to know and interact with other volunteers (from different colleges), reflect on their abilities, understand their values and get familiar with at least one social issue. This is a residential camp and students spend 24 hours with Patang team.

2nd PHASE (Assimilation / Vyaktitwa)

The Four - Day Orientation Camp:

Pathmakers programme uses the experiential learning model. Volunteers, who put in more than 30 hours of voluntary work and go through the Astitwa phase, are given an opportunity to go for rural exposure visits to any part of the state/country. Before sending them for exposure an orientation camp is organized to brief them about - the purpose of rural exposure visits, do's and don'ts, how to

optimize learning, and effective ways to deal with problems. The orientation camp aims at building a positive attitude for the exposure and making volunteers' understand that exposure visits are not holiday visits. It also aims at preparing them to adjust and adapt to the new realities, as they will visit new places they are not familiar with.

Rural Exposure Visit:

Volunteers who are associated with us for few months and display commitment to the Pathmakers process by participating actively in different activities/processes get an opportunity to go for rural exposure for a period of 4–6 weeks depending on the exposure opportunity and time available. While with the rural NGO, students take up projects that enable them to interact with and learn from the community. The exposure is directed towards building in them sensitivity to disadvantaged communities and the issues affecting them. Through these interactions they enhance their understanding of the community, its socio-economic structure, art, culture and the problems they face while volunteering their time and skills.

3rd PHASE (Participation / Netrutwa)

The Feedback Camp :

After the students come back from their exposure visits, we bring the volunteers together for a feedback camp. The objective is to unpack the experience, and learn from each other's experiences. During the camp participants plan action projects and commit to implement them within a month.



Follow up Study of Pathmakers Programme

Background of the study:

Patang has been running the Pathmakers programme since 2003. Over the years we have worked with hundreds of young people from different colleges in and around Sambalpur. We at Patang constantly seek feedback from volunteers, partners and stakeholders on the effectiveness of the programme (content and delivery) to make the programme relevant to the target group. This time we undertook a follow up study of Pathmakers volunteers with support from Sir Ratan Tata Trust to assess the effectiveness of the programme. In this regard, we decided to go back to our Pathmakers / SMILE volunteers and seek their valuable suggestions and inputs to enrich the programme.

How we did the study?

Two NFI interns Sana and Shivani were placed in Patang for their summer internship in June 2009. At that time we were working on the design of the follow up study. Keeping in mind their skills and interests we decided to take their support in doing this exercise.

First of all we prepared a questionnaire covering major components of the programme like – mobilization, skill enhancement, exposure to issues, effectiveness of different activities/processes, and usefulness in real life situations, active citizenship, and programme delivery (design, content and facilitation) etc. Then we updated the volunteer database and got in touch with the volunteers and shared about the follow up study.

We collected data from 49 Pathmakers volunteers (from 4 colleges) who were part of the programme during different years. The idea was to get in touch with as many volunteers as possible. However, we tried to ensure that volunteers are not from a single year but from different batches. Out of 49 respondents 33 were male and 16 were female members. We could get in touch with volunteers from year 2003 to 2008 for the study. A detailed analysis of the data is presented in the next section. The list of respondents is given in the annexure I.

Key findings:

The study is definitely a good beginning to track our volunteers and find out what they are doing, how they find their association with Patang and how meaningful is the Pathmakers programme for young people. Some of the key findings are

- Almost 52% of the volunteers were mobilized through college presentations, followed by 40% through friends.

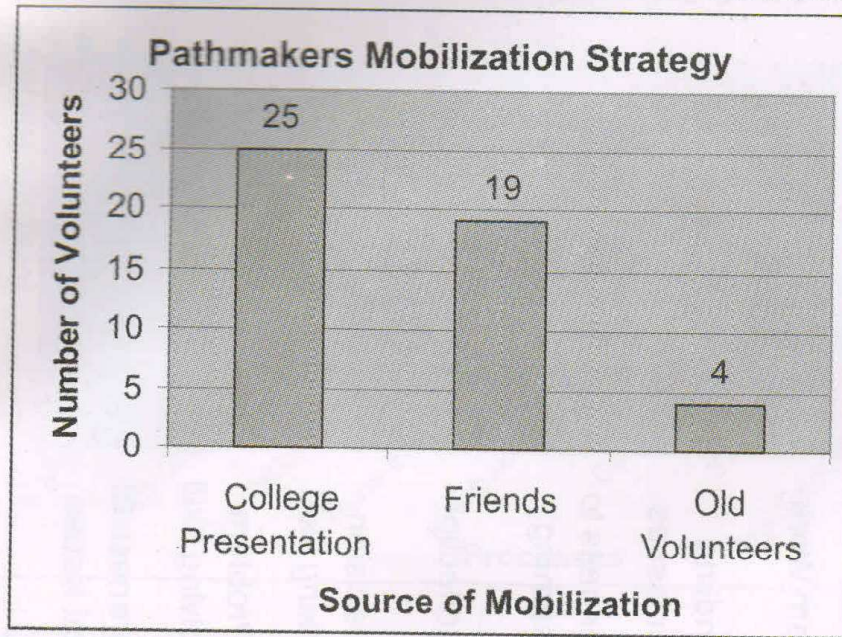
Number of Respondents			
Year	Male	Female	Total
2003	7	6	13
2004	4	1	5
2005	3	5	8
2006	6	1	7
2007	7	3	10
2008	6	0	6
Total	33	16	49

- Learning new things and doing social work were prime motivating factors for joining the programme.
- Pathmakers have gained maximum, in openness to learning and awareness of social issues followed by gaining confidence while being part of the journey.
- Except 5 volunteers (out of 49), all of them felt that their understanding and exposure about social issues was better as compared to their friends.
- Rural exposure was rated very high as it was the most memorable experience in their lives and they found it transformational.
- 54% of the volunteers want to take up social work as their full time career. Out of the 54% who are looking at development sector as a career option, 46% are keen on working on youth development theme.



Follow up Study Data Analysis and Interpretation

A. MOBILIZATION PROCESS IN PATHMAKERS:

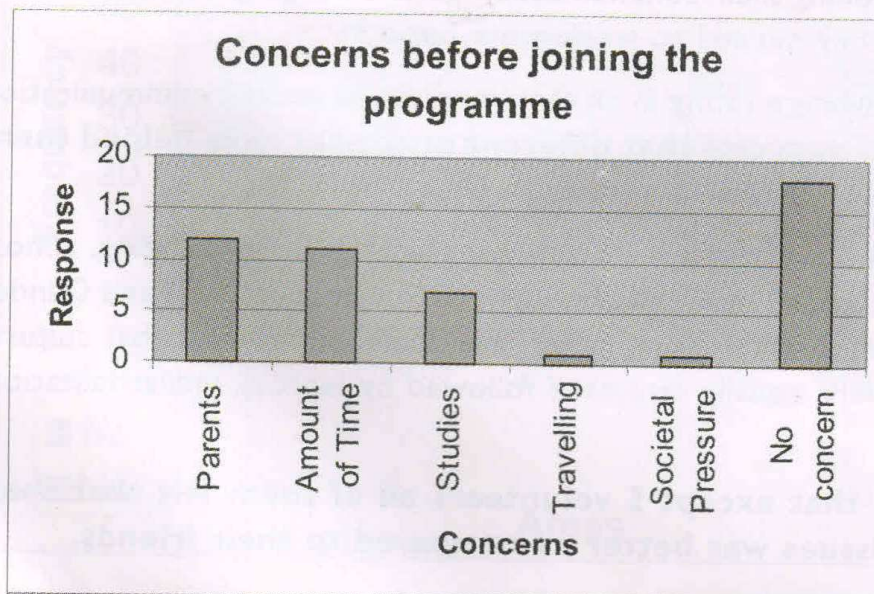


- Almost 52% of the volunteers were mobilized through college presentations, followed by 40% through friends and rest 8% through old volunteers.
- Girls shared that they found it more trustworthy when their friends convinced them to join the programme.
- Some of the suggestions to improve mobilization process were to involve volunteers more in the mobilization process; better dissemination about the programme through media, posters etc., use more interactive methodologies and use audio visuals.

B. MOTIVATION BEHIND JOINING THE PROGRAMME:

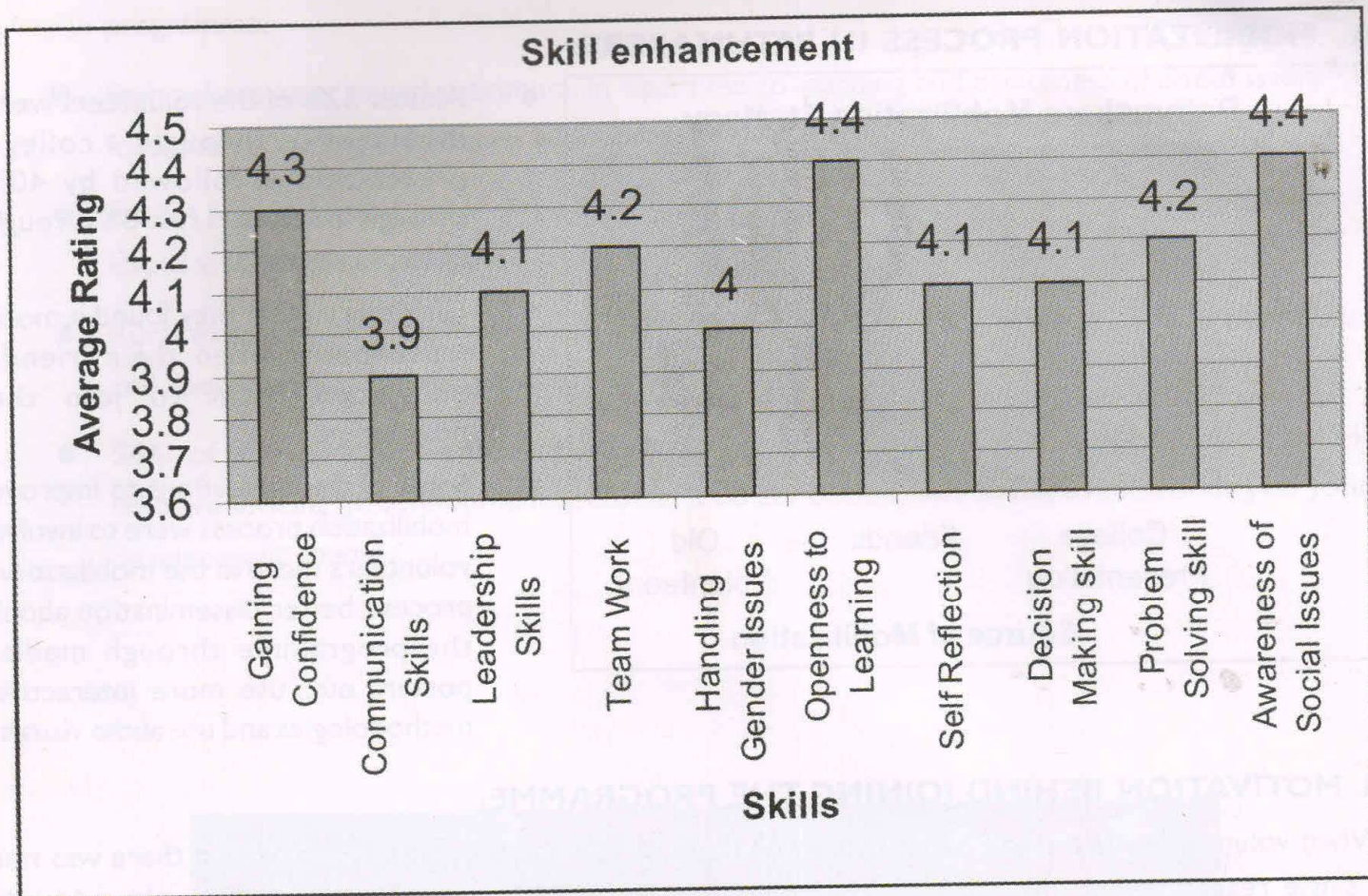
When volunteers were asked “what motivated them to join the programme?” they said there was not a single reason behind the decision. The volunteers had **multiple motivations** like making friends along with to discover hidden potential, to do social work. Some volunteers were also motivated by the issues Pathmakers was working upon. The girls were impressed by the fact that Pathmakers was focusing on gender equality. **However, learning new things and doing social work were prime motivating factors for joining the Programme.**

C. CONCERNS BEFORE JOINING THE PROGRAMME:



It's interesting to note that out of 46 respondents 15 volunteers did not have any concern at the time of joining the programme. However, those volunteers who had articulated that they were apprehensive have shared that those **concerns were mostly around whether parents will allow them or not, how much time they are required to give and will that have any negative impact on their studies.**

D. SKILL ENHANCEMENT AND EXPOSURE TO ISSUES THROUGH PATHMAKERS:



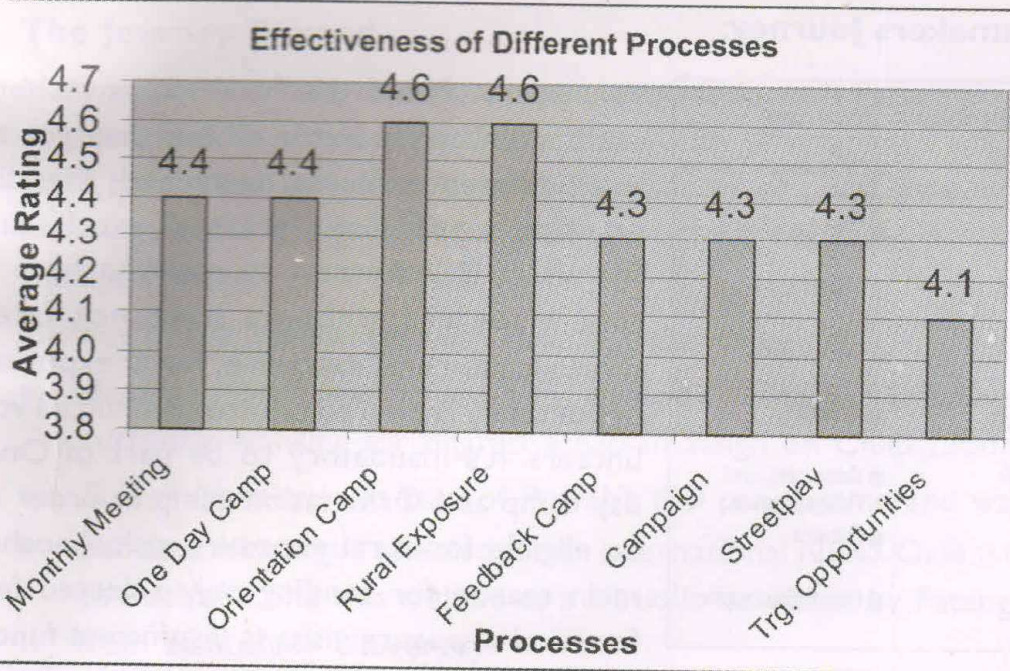
Pathmakers were asked to rate outcomes or benefits of the programme in a scale of 1 to 5 with 5 being maximum and 1 being minimum. **Pathmakers have gained maximum, in openness to learning and awareness of social issues followed by gaining confidence while being part of the journey.** Most of the volunteers felt that the Pathmakers programme had helped them immensely in boosting their confidence levels through exposures, camps, street plays, and most importantly through direct interaction with the community and local people. The Pathmakers programme had also helped them in honing their communication skills through group discussions, debates and interactive sessions but they needed to work more upon it.

It's interesting to note here that the average rating in all the components except communication skills is 4 and above. **The data clearly suggests that different processes have helped them to improve their understanding about issues and build their skills.**

When asked about kind of issues they got exposed to or got in-depth understanding, almost every volunteer shared that they have gained maximum on Right to Information (RTI) and Gender issues. According to volunteers environmental issue, rural developmental issues, tribal culture, stereotype and waste management were equally discussed followed by leprosy, industrialization, migration and displacement.

It is important to mention here that except 5 volunteers all of them felt that their understanding and exposure to issues was better as compared to their friends.

E. EFFECTIVENESS OF DIFFERENT PROCESSES:



Rural exposure was rated very high as it was the most memorable experience in their lives and they found it transformational.

Monthly meetings were rated as very informative as current topics are discussed, volunteers are asked to debate, give their own views and it is a kind of monthly planner which facilitates volunteers to prepare themselves better.

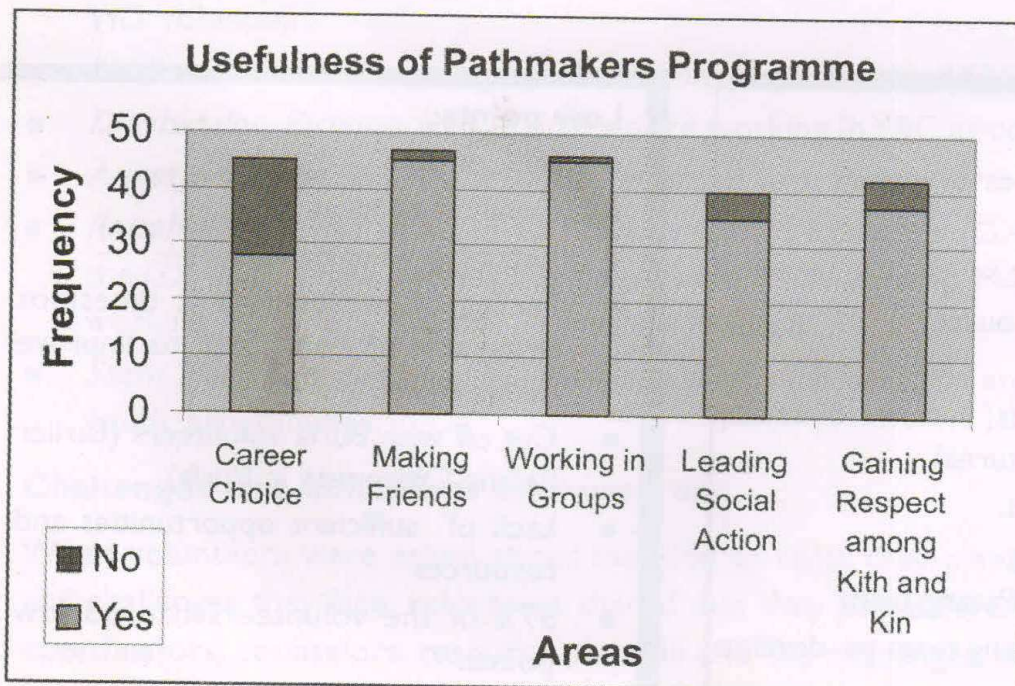
One day camps were seen as effective in creating participa-

tion and creative activities made them fun and also had impact on the people in the vicinity.

Trekking is the high point of orientation camp and volunteers also enjoy interaction with local people during preparation of the village map. According to volunteers campaigns and street plays were helpful in reaching out to people, take leadership and they provide opportunities to work in teams.

F. USEFULNESS OF PATHMAKERS PROGRAMME IN REAL LIFE SITUATIONS:

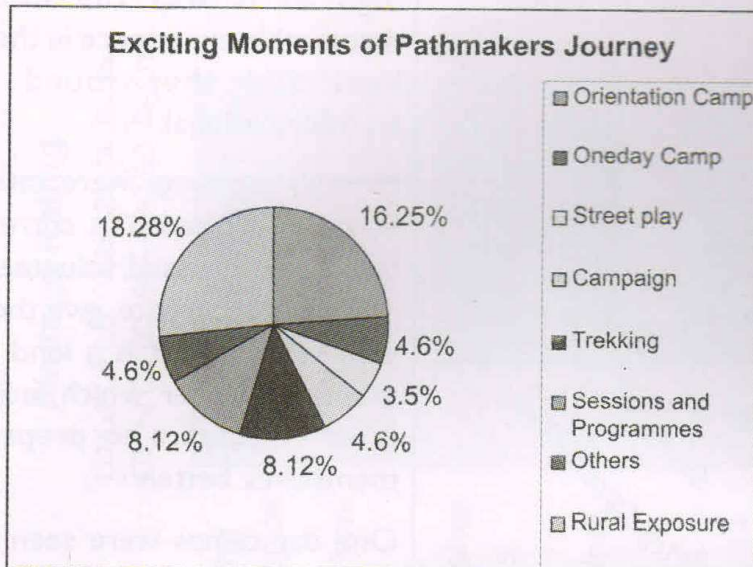
Overall all the respondents have found the programme useful in terms of using the learnings in real life situations. They found it beneficial in choosing careers. It has influenced their aspirations for higher studies. However, they are experiencing the benefit maximum in making friends as they have overcome their shyness, and increased their ability to express their feelings. They feel work-



ing in groups has become easier and more rewarding as a result of the experiences with Patang. Initiating social actions and leading them has also been positively influenced and they have led action projects on RTI, Drug addiction, AIDS in the community and college. They have also gained respect among friends and relatives who encourage and look up to them.

G. PERSONAL EXPERIENCES:

Exciting Moments of Pathmakers Journey:



Volunteers found the rural exposure very exciting and memorable where they got to learn different cultures, developed lifeskills practically and made a lot of everlasting friends. It is important to mention here is that many respondents have not been through the rural exposure. Rural exposure opportunity is offered only to committed volunteers. It's mandatory to be part of One-day camp and Orientation camp in order to be eligible for rural exposure visit. Another main reason for sending only selected few for rural exposure visits is insufficient funds.

Out of 49 volunteers who participated in this study 35 have gone through all the phases of Pathmakers programme including orientation camp and rural exposure.

Some of the volunteers shared specific stories about exposure visits. For example for one volunteer exposure to Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) was a memorable experience as he crossed 20kms. of jungle on foot when the bike got punctured. Similarly one volunteer shared going to an orphanage was the most beautiful moment during the orientation camp. **Trekking was almost everyone's favourite.** Orientation camp is the next in order of exciting space for reasons mentioned like trekking, interacting with villagers, spending time with friends etc.

Some found the theater rehearsals, sessions and the kind of work they did at pathmakers very satisfying and fun.

High points :

- Learning experiences
- Making friends
- Youth development.
- Effective use of resources.
- Work satisfaction.
- Exposure of all kinds(in terms of issues, people, society, cultures).
- Interactive sessions.
- Each visit to Patang.
- Friendly nature of Patang team
- Effort put in by Patang team to develop skills of volunteers

Low points:

- Lack of time
- Conflicts of ideas
- Retaining volunteers
- Feeling of helplessness at times(not being able to contribute to improve things around)
- Cut off with Burla volunteers (Earlier Patang Office was in Burla)
- Lack of sufficient opportunities and resources
- 57% of the volunteers had no low points.

H. ACTIVE CITIZENSHIP:

The Journey Beyond.....

Many volunteers have continued their association with Patang post Pathmakers programme. Some of them have been nominated to other youth programmes run by other NGOs while some of them have taken up jobs in development sector or pursuing courses like Masters in Social Work, Sociology etc. Many volunteers are volunteering regularly in Patang's school programme Making Change Makers.

Journey of few volunteers with Patang is shared below.

- *Ramesh Nayak* was selected for Pravah's Youth for Development (YfD) Programme, and is currently working for Bharatiya Kissan Sangh on Child Labor and Human Trafficking.
- *Susant Mahakud* was part of Pravah's YfD programme and was placed in Digantar, Rajasthan.
- *Bandana Meher* got selected for an international NGO, Oxfam and went for a 10 days workshop to Australia. She was trained as a lifeskills facilitator by Patang and is currently pursuing MSW from Sambalpur University.
- *Baldeb Purohit* is working for a Rengali (near Sambalpur) based organization working on HIV and AIDS and leading a team of 6 people. He has invited Burla YRC volunteers to facilitate awareness processes for his project.
- *Sudam Pradhan* is working with Gramya Vikas Sanghathan on AIDS awareness programmes.
- *Krishna Ch. Loha* did his block placement in Patang when he was pursuing his MSW from BISWAS, Bhubaneswar.
- *Niharika Meher* attended RTI, theatre workshops and lifeskills training organised by Patang and is currently placed as a YfD volunteer in Digantar, Rajasthan.
- *Nruparaj Mahananda* created awareness on RTI through Squirrel programme, attended UTOO workshop and lifeskills facilitators training. He is currently placed in Samabesh, Bhopal as a YfD volunteer.
- *Siddharth Padhee* is setting up a Youth Resource Center (YRC) in Burla.
- *Dinabandhu, Bishnupriya and Sitaram* are working in YRC as core members.
- *Anusaya Pasayat* and *Anant Mirdha* interned with Patang for a period of six months each.
- *Rajesh Meher* was selected to Pravah's Global Exchange (GX) programme. After completing the GX programme successfully he pursued MSW at Jamia Millia Islamia, Delhi. He is currently working for an organization in Madhya Pradesh.
- *Sachi, Malay* and *Bhumi* joined Patang as team members and are designing and running different youth programmes.

Challenges and difficulties encountered:

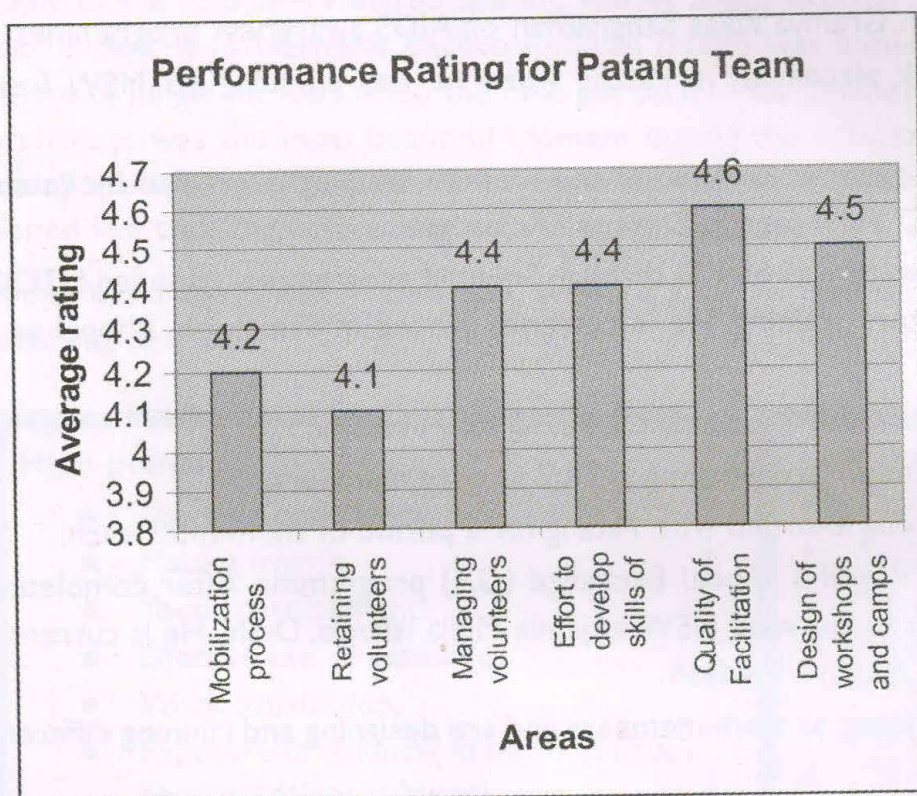
When volunteers were asked about the kind of roles they play in the community development and challenges they face, volunteers shared that they play different kinds of roles like volunteers, coordinators, counselors, resource persons and the challenges they face are

- Convincing parents, especially for female volunteers who have to face conservative and orthodox people.
- Convincing rigid adults and villagers who are reluctant to share their problems.
- Mocking behaviour of people during street plays.
- Some of them felt their shortcomings were a challenge.
- Gender and caste problems.
- Time constraint was also an issue for few volunteers.

It's interesting to note that most of the volunteers found their parents / family members supportive in this journey and where there were issues those got addressed after they got familiar with the work. However, some parents though happy with the work are still worried about the amount of time spent with the programme.

I. PERFORMANCE RATING FOR THE PATANG TEAM:

Volunteers were asked to rate performance of Patang team in a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being low and 5 being high score) on design and delivery of the Pathmakers programme. **As per the data quality of facilitation has been rated as very high followed by workshop and camp designing.**



According to volunteers they have rated the team performance high because of the following reasons.

- Mobilization process is very innovative and effective.
- Friendly and warm response.
- Quality of facilitation is excellent and the team does a commendable job.
- Great effort put in designing of workshops and camps.

Some of the suggestions for improvement are the programme should find a way to keep in touch

with volunteers regularly (previous as well as new volunteers), should create opportunity for celebrations / coming together and create more opportunities and mobilization process should have a bigger outreach.

J. VOLUNTEERS' ASSOCIATION WITH THE DEVELOPMENT SECTOR :

- Volunteers have mobilized their friends through sharing their personal experiences, telling them about the kind of work Patang was doing, the issues discussed and giving open invitations.
- They have also mobilized people to join the programme through inspirational work.
- From the total respondents 51.7% of the volunteers want to join (associated in different capacities) such voluntary organisations in future, 15% said they would think about it and rest were not interested.
- 54% of the volunteers want to take up social work as their full time career. Out of the 54% who are looking at development sector as a career option 46% are keen on working on youth development.
- From our analysis (done previously) out of 50 people who have gone through Patang's rural exposure programme so far, 15 of them have already joined the development sector.
- Some of the issues volunteers are keen to understand more and get exposure to are Child labour, Women empowerment, Genetically modified food, Naxalism, Terrorism, Waste management, Beggary, Communalism, Human Rights.



Case Studies

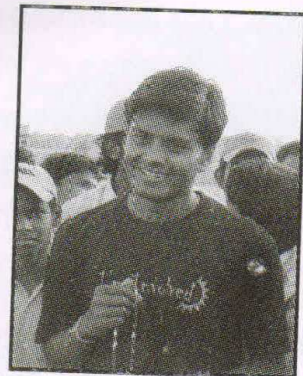
The Backdrop:

It has always been difficult for us at Patang to explain what exactly we do, how we work with young people and what we wish to achieve. Many a times we feel Pathmakers, being an experiential learning journey, can only be understood by listening to stories and experiences of young people who have been part of this journey with us.

We feel, the intense engagement, the relationships and the passion demonstrated during the journey can never be explained through mere statistics and numbers. In order to express what it means to be a Pathmakers volunteer and to travel a road less travelled, and what goes into making of a volunteer, we thought of presenting few case studies before you.

In the following section we will present three case studies and we hope you will find them exciting and inspiring. Although all the three volunteers have gone through similar processes, the direction their lives have taken is very different. Ramesh has already joined the development sector while Niharika wants to get into teaching and has got her B.Ed degree. Sitaram is all set to become a software engineer. But what's common to all of them is that they are all committed to continue their deeper engagement with the real world and want to contribute positively wherever they are.

Happy Journey



Ramesh Nayak
Working with BKS as a Documentation Officer

Ramesh Nayak is 24 years old from Bargapali village in Bargarh district in Orissa. His is a joint family with seven members. Ramesh Nayak is very fond of his village which has lots of trees and agricultural fields. Ramesh got to know about Patang and Pathmakers programme through his friend. He went to Agramee for a month long exposure.

For Ramesh, like many others, it was a family member who provided the initial inspiration to social work. In his case it was his maternal uncle (mother's elder brother) who reminded him of Mahatma Gandhi and was a very sensitive and emotional person.

While in college in Sambalpur he was further drawn toward working with people. He attended a meeting organised by Patang in Sambalpur on Hirakud Dam and became familiar with the plight of poor people due to the dam whose water was primarily used by big industries while the poor were deprived of their share of water and land. Conflicts in Nandigram further inspired him towards social work. He also met Malay from Patang and many other young people from the

Pathmakers programme all of whom also inspired him to venture into this field. Unlike many, Ramesh all along the journey found ready support of his family and friends.

As a precursor to the exposure programme Ramesh went through a one day training camp at an orphanage in Sambalpur. In the camp sessions like Who Am I, besides other interactions, helped provide a direction to his exposure programme. The one day camp was followed by a three day orientation camp at Nrishing Nath, Paikmal. During the programme he got basic training in PRA (Participatory Rural Appraisal). He went around villages and met with people and got to understand what MASS did. He undertook village mapping, collected data and participated in village meetings to understand concerns of local people.

Recalling his days just before the exposure Ramesh shared that he was scared to go alone as he had not been out before. He was apprehensive about meeting new people and was not sure what he will do once he got there. Other questions that bothered him were more basic like where will I stay, what will I eat, will there be electricity, running water, etc.

Ramesh's journey began with his arrival at Kandhamal where he stayed in a lodge without any electricity. Later after waiting for about three hours he got into a crowded bus which brought him to Agramee, his home for the next one month. The place was remote and in the middle of a forest. A surprise awaited Ramesh. At the centre there were just two people who had no clue about Ramesh's visit. He then showed them the letter and telephoned Patang which helped clarify the confusion. A refreshing bath at an open well and a lunch revived his spirits and made him feel more confident. In the evening he met with the Director Mr. Achyut Das and other staff members.

Ramesh went through a 4 -5 days orientation which made him more confident about the place and familiarised him about Agramee's work. The office was located in the middle of the forest and Ramesh slept out in the open despite his fear of wild animals taking him away in the night or being attacked by insurgents who are supposed to be active in the area. His fears were soon put to rest as no animal found him palatable enough and the area was relatively peaceful. Moreover, Agramee due to its work has a very good reputation with local people.

Ramesh's task was to visit various centres of Agramee and observe its work and make a report. He visited 15 to 20 centres located in remote areas which were accessible only by foot. Agramee was also operating schools in such centres. The language used by tribals was quite different from Ramesh's. Staff from Agramee who accompanied him on such visits helped translate the conversations.

The tribal people had no health facility and at times had to eat uncooked food. Ramesh was moved by their plight and wondered why people should be denied basic human rights despite 60 years of our independence.

During his stay Ramesh overcame his fears of living without electricity and running water. His inhibitions of interacting with local people also vanished. He felt so much at home that he started to freely communicate with women's group and attended meetings in 15-20 villages. Later he also started to lead the meetings and became familiar with functioning of local SHGs (Self Help Groups).

Along the way he picked up a bit of the local language called *Kui*. Ramesh in the process became friendly and adapted to the conditions. He was comfortable eating the food people ate and even tried new things like a dish made of *kathal* (Jackfruit) seeds. He was very touched by the affection and trust placed in him. To give an example he recalls the day when a group of women, whom he was visiting, accompanied him back for 11 kms just to see him off.

During the exposure he contributed to monitoring of education centres, attended over twenty meetings of SHG all of which he documented and submitted the proceedings in form of a report.

On his return Ramesh conducted meetings with SHGs in his village, something which he had not bothered about earlier. His efforts have been recognized and acknowledged positively by village women.

The exposure provided Ramesh with clarity about what he wants to do. He learnt that though people face adversities in their lives, they also welcome people from outside who can sincerely work with them to overcome them.

Reflecting back Ramesh shares how he once wished to do an MBA but could not do so due to financial constraints. But now he has no regrets about it. The experience with Agramee, has changed him and equipped him to adapt. He now feels he can work anywhere in India. He has also become confident of his professional abilities

Later Ramesh got an YfD (Youth for Development) fellowship from Pravah (an NGO working with young people) and got exposure to fund raising, and working with Bharatiya Kisan Sangh at Ranchi. Impressed with his skills and commitment BKS offered Ramesh regular employment. He now works as a Documentation Officer in Kishori Niketan at BKS. Kishori Niketan is a shelter home for survivors of trafficking and child labour. His work involves preparation and maintenance of children's records and profiles. He is also responsible for internal office and workshop reporting, filing etc. At present he continues to work with BKS realizing his dream to contribute meaningfully to self and society.



Days at Anandwan



Niharika Meher

Placed as a Youth for Development volunteer with Digantar

Niharika Meher is a bright, cheerful young girl who loves to dance Odissi and classical dance forms and is very fond of music. A graduate with B.Ed degree Niharika along with two others spent a month with Maharogi Sewa Samiti (MSS) at Anandwan, Maharashtra in 2006 as a part of the Pathmakers programme.

Niharika drew her inspiration for the programme from her inherent love to work with community, her desire to make new friends and meet different people. The interactive methodologies, games she learnt and experienced during her training also motivated her to take up the exposure programme. Perhaps the greatest motivating factor was that she saw the programme as a unique opportunity for self development and growth which would help her to make her own decisions and build skills by doing something she enjoyed the most, that is working with people and community.

Niharika found willing support of family and friends in her venture and her experience with NCC (National Cadet Corps) in school only added to her confidence.

Recounting her days of training and preparation for the exposure she remembers the various sessions like Broken Squares, theatre, exercises in effective listening, Win –Win attitude etc. These she recalls as being very helpful during the exposure. Recalling her experience of the three day orientation camp (which happened a little later) Niharika remembers her apprehensions and fears about going for a trek and how she got inspired when she saw that there were several others too who would be trekking. The exercise 'This is the way I know you' also helped her to appreciate others.

Before her departure Niharika had some unusual images and thoughts of Anandwan. She thought it was an Ashram full of sadhus! Her other apprehensions, like any body going to new place, were what to wear, how to behave, what will she share about Patang, how people at Anandwan would respond to her presence.

Arriving at Anandwan, having failed to spot any sadhus, Niharika's first impression, much to her relief was - Yae to Ashram Nahin hai! (The place is not an Ashram!). Instead she found Anandwan to be a huge organization helping deprived sections of the society in many different ways. Founded in 1949 by the internationally known human rights activist, Baba Amte, Maharogi Sewa Samiti assists people with leprosy and other disabilities to enhance their livelihood capabilities through self-discovery and empowering them to contribute back to society.

After lunch Niharika and her friends were introduced to Prabhu sir who helped plan their schedule and guided them during their stay. She and the others met and interacted with residents of Loti Raman, a home for senior citizens, that is named after a Swiss lady who helped establish it. They also got to know more about Anandwan and the person behind it, Baba Amte.

At the end of the first day Niharika was happy about the choice she had made. At same time she was also little apprehensive about completing the exposure and was also little concerned if the money she was carrying would last her the month...

Niharika's stay in Anandwan exposed her to people who had been affected with leprosy and how they had overcome the setback and continue to work. The fact that everyone in Anandwan worked, overcoming severe challenges and conditions, and, produced almost everything they needed and bought very little from outside was very inspiring for Niharika.

Part of the learning journey required Niharika to make minor adjustments. She found the food to be a little more spicy than what she ate and also had to adjust to a routine which began with breakfast at 6am and ended with going to bed at 9pm. Though at a new place she did not miss her friends but instead was happy and wrote letters to them.

Niharika true to her commitment of working with people made friends at Sandhi Niketan, a vocational training centre for physically challenged people at Anandwan.

Niharika during the time she spent at Anandwan hospital learnt to dress wounds. of patients. Prior to this she was afraid even at the slight of blood and recalls how she fainted in the hospital and had to be revived with a glucose drip. After the incident she overcame her fears and learnt to dress wounds. She feels that this was a big challenge for her as she had not studied science and was quite unaccustomed to such things.

As for her high points of the exposure Niharika remembers the Janamasthami and Matki Phor festivals where deaf and mute children made idols for the celebration. She also learnt Braille and sign language. Roaming in the fields during rains and talking to elders are some of the other fond memories of the trip. On her part she taught the people a bit of Oriya language and shared her skills with music and dance. She wished she had taken her dance music, so that she, an avid dancer, could have performed.

The exposure also helped Niharika discover her potential and strengths. She realized that she was a good communicator and mixed well with people. She also found that she could adapt and stay away from home (without missing it too much) and make friends. The exposure also helped change her views about leprosy and she understood that it was not an infection or something to be afraid of but something that can be dealt with. She has been able to share this experience with others.

In the end looking back on the experience Niharika feels that it has helped equip her to effectively meet challenges with community work which she always enjoyed.

Looking within



Sitaram Parida
Working in Hyderabad

Sitaram Parida is a smart and confident youngster from Burla in Sambalpur district. Burla is a medium sized town on the banks of Mahanadi with lots of people. According to Sitaram most people work with government departments while there are also some subsistence farmers. Sitaram's family consists of five siblings, his mother who is a housewife and his father who works with the medical college hospital.

Sitaram went to Development Alternatives (DA) and MC Mehta Environment Foundation (MCMEF) for his exposure programme in 2006-2007. MCMEF is a non-profit, non-governmental organization working nationwide for the protection of the environment, the rights of people to clean and fresh water and air, the promotion of sustainable development, and the protection of the cultural heritage of India.

Sitaram is grateful to Patang for giving him the opportunity and help provide a direction to his life. Before joining the programme Sitaram's life revolved around his home, he did not go out much and most of his interactions were limited to family members.

For Sitaram Patang provided a platform to engage with things that he had overlooked and got him out of the security and comfort zone of his home. Sighting one example he shares how he wanted to be an orator but lacked the confidence of public speaking. And how his interaction with Patang's programme motivated him to participate in a debate competition for the first time and win the second prize.

There were other far reaching and larger influences too. He initially did not interact with girls. He disliked them. But later there was a change or rather a metamorphosis of a kind and he found himself even participating in a group dance with girls. He like many young people had a mental block about English and Mathematics, but going through the experience of Patang's programme and his new found confidence in himself he was able to overcome the block.

He then moved on to do a Post Graduate Diploma in Computer Applications (PGDCA). This further added to his confidence and also drew appreciation of his friends and peer group. He also participated in a seminar and gave a presentation which was well received and appreciated by those present.

He recalls his initial days with the programme when he participated in a tree plantation drive. These trees have now grown and watching them makes him happy and satisfied that he has been able to contribute positively.

Sitaram's experience with Window to SMILE (One day Camp) made him realize that any change however big or small begins with oneself and he started to think about himself in the larger context of society as well. Sitaram as part of his orientation training went to Paikamal and worked with MASS. The short exposure of three days gave him basic understanding of doing surveys through PRA and skills to interact and meet with people.

At every step of his journey, Sitaram was supported by his family and friends. In Delhi Sitaram got training with Development Alternatives on air and water quality monitoring using their Pawan Tara and Jal Tara Kits respectively. During the training Sitaram interacted with other participants, got hands on experience to use the kits. At the end of the training he planned to use his newly acquired skills in air and water quality testing back home in Burla.

MCMEF was his next stop. At the foundation Sitaram underwent a seven day training programme on environment law. Here he met people from several NGOs from around the country. Lawyers at the programme shared about environment laws and their application. Mr. M.C. Mehta discussed ways to use solar energy, water recycling, paper recycling, menace of plastic bags and its effect on animals. By the end of the programme Sitaram could see the clear linkages between environment and society.

After the training Sitaram started to work even more on himself and also concentrated better in his studies. He wanted to be an inspiration and role model to others around him. He reached out to people who in turn wanted to listen to him.

Such has been his transformation that he now considers himself to be an active citizen and wishes to do something for the society, and environment. He wants to become a software engineer and faculty in a good institute. He sees himself as someone who will do much more than just his professional work. His days with Patang and its programmes have turned Sitaram into a confident and a motivated person who is willing to take initiative and who is willing to motivate others. For instance he even talks to the parents of children he tutors about the need for giving right values to their children.

In the end he feels Patang's programme has contributed immensely to his being and he wants to give it back in some way. He plans to look for organisations and opportunities similar to Patang and its programme in Hyderabad where he is currently working. He also wishes to contribute physically and financially to Patang which has given him so much!

Conclusion:

The stories clearly demonstrate the kind of effort volunteers put in and how they take up challenges. The exposure they get through the programme definitely helps them to become more aware of themselves and the world around, build their skills, adapt and adjust to new situations and move out of their comfort zones.

The stories also illustrate the role this journey from "Isolation to Participation" plays in helping young volunteers to figure out their aspirations and dreams in life, while understanding their own role and responsibility for making the world a better place to live.

Annexure -I

List of Respondents

1. Abani Prasad Sahu
2. Amina Begum
3. Anjali Panda
4. Anusaya Pasayat
5. Asit Acharya
6. Asit mirdha
7. Baldeb Purohit
8. Bandana Meher
9. Bhumisuta Sahu
10. Bidyadhar Sethi
11. Bishnu Priya Sahu
12. Dinabandhu Dehuri
13. Dinesh Jamdalia
14. Gazia Begum
15. Gobinda Prasad Naik
16. Jauban Ku. Bhoi
17. Jayshree Patnaik
18. Kalyani Sahu
19. Kiran jamdalia
20. Kishore sethi
21. Krushna Chandra Loha
22. Malaya padhan
23. Nandighosh Pandey
24. Niharika Meher
25. Niharika Patnaik
26. Nilambar Sahoo
27. Nruparaj Mahanandi
28. Prahallad Sarda
29. Rabi Sharma
30. Rajesh singh
31. Raju singh
32. Ramesh Nayak
33. Rinki Bhoi
34. Rupesh Behera
35. Sacchidananda Mishra
36. Sameer ku. Meher
37. Sandeep Ku. Pandey
38. Santosh Ku.Sahu
39. Santosh Nayak
40. Santosh Singh
41. Siddharth Ku. Padhee
42. Sitaram Parida
43. Sudam Pradhan
44. Sunit Sarda
45. Sunil Ku Kalindi
46. Suravi Ranabansi
47. Susanta mahakur
48. Susanta meher
49. Triveni Sahu

Thanks for sharing your views