HOW CAN WE FOSTER THE PROFESSIONAL INCLUSION OF EXCLUDED YOUTH?

YOUTH 4 CHANGE NETWORK FORUM

NOVEMBER 23, 2019 • 2:00PM - 5:30PM • MUMBAI
INTRODUCTION

In 2019, Youth 4 Change Network has organized five forums in Europe and Asia, in order to gather all the actors of the inclusion ecosystem of excluded Youth.

On November the 23rd, it was the first time that these actors were brought together in Mumbai.

This report recounts the exchanges that took place during the event and the key points to keep in mind for future actions.
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Conclusion of the 2019 Y4CN forum in Mumbai
Youth 4 Change Network is an international network of support and exchange between organizations working in favour of the social and professional inclusion of youths who are victims of exclusion.

### OUR OBSERVATION

Today, there are 1.2 billion young people between 15 and 24 years old. 600 millions of them live below the poverty threshold of 1,90$ a day, and are victims of lack of liberty, of violence, of abuse, of malnutrition. In 2025, they will be around 1 billion. Given the extent of this issue, the organizations face major obstacles on the field. Often isolated and with limited resources, these organizations have to double their efforts to effectively help the Youth.

### OUR MISSION

We wish to:
- Connect the organizations so that they can exchange their best practices and challenges;
- Be a support for the member organizations (watch, counselling services, trainings);
- Act together by organizing events, publishing books or supporting members’ projects.

### OUR VISION

By sharing our experiences, our practices, our knowledge, we can act together more effectively against the exclusion of young adults and help them find their place in society.

A mission
The social and professional inclusion of excluded Youth

An approach
The desire to unite, work together and to help one another.
PRESENTATION OF THE TEAM

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Y4CN Coordinator

Myriam Boudali
Y4CN Member Coordinator
India

Clarisse Fabrèges
Y4CN Member Coordinator
International

Costanza Pestarino
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Jordan Bates-Wright
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Ivana Jimenez Barrios

Y4CN partners with Sciences Po’s « Projets Collectifs », an introduction unit to project management in an operational structure, during which students can acquire an additional professional experience.
In 2019, following the success of its past forums in Europe, Youth 4 Change Network decided to extend its advocacy actions in Asia, first in Delhi and now in Mumbai.

The objective of this first edition was to gather all actors of the Youth inclusion ecosystem and together, to discuss and find concrete, reliable, and lasting solutions for the professional inclusion of excluded young adults.
After listening to two inspiring Youth testimonies, the discussion was organized around three panels:

- **The softer side**: how to develop young people’s skills in today’s workplace?
- **Focus on follow-up**: keeping in touch with the Youth every step of the way
- **Stronger together**: combining efforts to make the professional inclusion of Youth a success!

The panels were moderated by:

**Myriam Boudali**
Y4CN Member Coordinator
India
YOUTH TESTIMONIES

We were lucky to have two Youths who came to share with us their own journey to professional inclusion. We felt like sharing this wonderful inputs with you: here are their stories.

Bichitra Behera
20 years old
Ashiyana Foundation

Bichitra Behera’s testimony was originally in Hindi. Here is the translation and retelling that was given of it during the forum, by Shravani Ojha, from Ashiyana Foundation:

In 2014, Bichitra Behera left his village with a couple of friends and reached Bombay. Together they took a place where they were all staying and he started working as a housekeeping person. After eight years, things went wrong, something happened and he ended up in a juvenile institution.

Bichitra started building up anger, he used to be very secluded, was kind of victimised by the system for some time and because of that, he lost all hopes and he lost trust on people.

Slowly, the provision officers started to let him out for half an hour to mingle with other people inside of the institution. At that time, Sachi Maniar [Ashiyana Foundation’s founder] used to go there to work. Bichitra was observing people from far, and her too, as the trust he had was broken somewhere. When she was leaving, he was just asking his friends about what they did.
In 2017, he took part in a dance program happening every year in Bombay across all institutions. At that time, he began interacting with Ashiyana and getting some responsibility. Through that process he grew up and he realized that he could trust people again.

When time came for him to come out, he was really scared, because he had been inside for so long that he didn’t know how to live in Bombay. At first, when he went out he didn’t talk to anybody, then he came to Ashiyana, and there we could help him connect to people and find a job: Bichitra began working, for only one month. Then he took a job in a chocolate-making place, where he learned so many things: chocolate making packaging, delivering... and he worked there for nine months. After that, he took a break to study about paper for three months. Now, Bichitra is working for another company and teaching people.
LP4Y means Life Project 4 Youth: it’s for the slum children, youth who have not completed their studies, to help them to build a career, to have some good job and to have a better life to expect.

Before LP4Y, I was doing my studies. I was really interested to learn English, so my parents put me in an Urdu medium. But I only had one class in English, otherwise all the other subjects were in Urdu and Hindi. I was learning, but after a few months, my sister became really sick, the situation was really bad. I have had to stop my studies to help her, I was just trying to help my family: I had to find a job. I joined one of my uncles who had just started his business, and he would pay me six thousands a month.

After around one year, my sister started to feel well, and I met some foreigners. I didn’t speak to them because my English was not very good. I saw that other youths like me were talking to them. When they left I asked one of them what they were talking about. He told me that they wanted “to teach to the youth above eighteen years old. They can help to get a great job and to improve and learn English”. I was very interested to learn English and I decided to go.

At first they had to translate everything to me. They were supposed to talk with me directly, but I was not able to understand anything, so how could I reply to them?
Later, the LP4Y volunteers started to look for a bigger place, as they wanted to be able to teach to more youths. They found a place and I went there for one or two days, but that was so far away from me, I was not going there often. My coach was helping me, he really wanted to help me. They finally moved somewhere else, not so far from my home. I went back to learn and to find a job. At that time, my sister was feeling well, so my family supported me to go there.

I stayed in LP4Y for around a year and I learned many things. I have grown up, and actually the English I am speaking, I have learned from there. We had two trainers everyday and some other trainers were also coming two or three days in a week to train us about something or do mock-interviews... In the end, when we have completed LP4Y they push us to look for a good and nice job.

We have four steps there: autonomy, responsability, management and entrepreneur step. Now I am an entrepreneur actually, I am looking for a job.
THE SOFTER SIDE

How to develop young people’s skills in today’s workplace?

The first panel focused on soft skills, “key differentiators” in today’s workplace.

Rohit Salgaonkar
Application scientist, Roquette

Rohit Salgaonkar works as a scientist for Roquette, which is an international company, employing more than 6,600 people worldwide, working in the sectors of food, pharmaceutical, biochemical and animal nutrition.

As a member of a large and successful company such as Roquette, how would you say that soft skills are important in today’s workplace?

We all know what soft skills are: they are related to communication skills, relationship skills, organization skills, english speaking. As for me, if I am recruiting someone, I will really concentrate on some organization skills and communication skills. When I talk about communication, it is not only about talking, it’s also about listening. It’s important to listen to what other people have to say, to what message they want to convey. There are also leadership skills: the one I recruit needs to be very much able to define its day to day activities. Moreover, something that I am looking for when I am recruiting a youth, is that he/she should be able to take his responsibilities! That is really important.
Then we’ll talk about time management: there’s only a defined number of work days in a week, and every minute is money for a company. You need to organize yourself, you need to manage your time, and you need to be able to prioritize what is important.

What do you think companies can do to be more inclusive as well as help their young employees develop their soft skills?

Firstly, companies can give the youth internship opportunities, where they can be a part of the productive taskforce. Secondly, they can support and be a part of a promotional movement. There are different movements in India that are encouraging the youth to go out there and to spread the awareness. I think that this is really an opportunity for the youth to build a different system, and that’s where companies like ours can help you. As an example, I have been giving a few presentations with LP4Y because we are working with them here in Mumbai.

We need to make sure that we train the youths because they are our future.
What motivated Technoserve to work with the youth and to start this program?

Technoserve is an organization that is focused towards sustainable impact. Our new project has opened in 2015. We are now targeting the youth: we tie up with colleges across Mumbai, especially in commerce and associated fields, to provide a training of about 40 days, directly on the campus.

What we and the colleges have found, is that the students usually largely finish their studies and graduate, but they still struggle a lot to find a job. What we are trying to do here is to fill the gap: we provide them with this training, and we also place them in the banking, financial service and insurance sectors. We also tie up with companies in those sectors, so we get to see both sides of the employability market.

Around 60% of the students from these colleges are not employed even after two or three years after their graduation.
We chose these sectors (banking, financial service, insurance), as we have found that many youths who had ambition were particularly struggling to approach them because of a lack of soft skills. We wanted to be that inbetween space to make it easy for them to get on into the market.

What does this program consist of? Could you tell us more about the curriculum and about the post-program steps for the students?

We work on two separate levels: one is training, and the second is corporate connection. For the training, we approach colleges and we talk to all the people who are responsible for the professional integration of the students, to present our program. The training we provide is absolutely free-of-charge (for the students).

We have four different modules:
- One about professional and personal effectiveness, where we talk about topics like self-awareness, decision making, problem solving
- One related to the skills needed to actually acquire a job, like making a proper CV, a cover letter, and/or public speaking
- One on education readiness
- And a last one about career and work readiness: we tell them what job they can actually acquire and what they need to do to get those jobs.

Once the training is over, we contact our partner companies. On one hand, they come to the colleges, and they give students interviews so they can join a job. On another hand, we provide counselling because we understand that each and every student is different.
Could you first tell us more about your Livelihood program, and about how you work with the youth?

Magic bus started in 1999, originally to take care of children from the age of 10. Now, we support youth also from the age of 14. We teach them basic life skills, and we ensure that children stay in school and complete their education. Then they can progress into our livelihood programme. Once they finish the programme, they enter a stage where for six months we are following them to see if they need any kind of support.

Magic Bus is an all India’s foundation working with children and youths from disadvantaged backgrounds. Thanks to its different programs, it provides the youths with english training as well as various professional training and give them access to job opportunities.

Could you first tell us more about your Livelihood program, and about how you work with the youth?

The second panel focused on the follow-up of the Youth. Indeed, beginning a new job is not an easy task, and it can be even more difficult for Youths who are entering a professional world from which they have been so far before. Additionally, follow-up is also important because it can help to assess the efficiency and the impact of NGOs’ programs.

Masood Shaikh
Head of Training & Quality Assurance Magic Bus
Could you tell us more about your different curriculums?

At first, what we offered was football. It was an activity-based organisation and we believed in activity-based learning. The goal and main focus were to build resilience in the children. Now we have different programs: in hospitality, in the retail sector, or healthcare as well. The main goal remains the same: for the youths to find jobs.

Magic bus has celebrated it 20th anniversary this year, along the way you have helped thousands of youths to grow, develop their skills and find their way out of poverty and into a decent job...

How do you do to maintain the link with so many youths after they leave your programs?

We have a structure in every center, with the trainers, the center manager and the regional coordinator: the whole team works to follow the youths. Our plus is that we connect with the youths as well as with the companies directly, and it’s personalised. We call the youth and the company, if things are alright, then we only call once a month, if not, we call more: it always depends on the situation."
Ashiyana is a foundation working with children and youth between the ages of 12 to 24. Most of them are orphaned, abandoned, runaways from abusive families and many of them have been convicted of a crime or are in conflict with the law. Ashiyana foundation offers them a support from the inside of the institutions as well as when they leave the institutions, helping them along the way to develop their social and emotional skills, to enable them to successfully reintegrate society.

Following young people with such backgrounds necessarily has to be a long process: at Ashiyana foundation, how do you manage to keep in touch with them and maintain the connection even after they leave your programs?

The question is very interesting because many people come to us and ask it. The children in our institution, they come to us. You heard the story of Bichitra, every child who is in the institution is already excluded of the society in a way or another. As a human being, our basic need is acceptance and someone who can see through it. When the youth are coming to Ashiyana, we start working with them on a daily routine kind of a way. We start building a relationship with them, so that when they come out, they know that they have somebody. When they are scared, they know that they can talk to us.

Then, we connect them to places where they can find jobs, and we manage to keep a connexion with them so they sustain that job. It’s a very relationship-based approach.
We are 6 people working in our organisation, and a volunteer pool of about 35 to 40 people, thanks to which we keep getting in touch with the youths. **We have a weekly circle to gather everybody.** We want to provide a space to all the youths who are outside of the institutions because **they are looking for a community where they feel that they are included.** Of course, sometimes there are youths who never show up, but the thing is that we **don’t give up on them.**

As mentioned before, at Ashiyana, you put a big emphasis on the emotional growth of the youth and on the development of their social skills. Do you think that plays a role in their ability to stay on board with the program and to maintain a good relationship with you?

Any youth who has landed inside the institution, is either in conflict with the law or has been abandoned. Somehow **they are inside because society has failed them** and there is an emotional trauma that is associated with this. We have seen that even as adults we have troubles with our emotions, we don’t accept our feelings very easily.

**Therefore we started working on these small aspects like making them understand for example if they are angry, why they are angry.** When someone knows the reason of a feeling, it is easier to act on it. **Anger comes from a lack of love, from a lack of visibility, a lack of understanding.** The process starts with acknowledging your emotions, understanding them, managing them and then helping others to do the same.

« We’ll be there for you when you won’t even be there for yourself » is the basic lign of our work!
Combining efforts to make the professional inclusion of Youth a success!

During the third and last panel, we discussed how all actors of the ecosystem can combine efforts and unite their strengths, and how it is key to make the professional inclusion of Youth a success.

Sayantani Das  
Head of communications for Digital Inclusion, Capgemini

Capgemini is the 1st IT company in France and 6th in the world. It’s a perfect example of how companies can step up and lead innovative and inclusive projects that will benefit the youth as much as the companies. In 2019, Capgemini has launched two Digital Academies in India, located in Pune and Mumbai. These centers are designed to support excluded populations by using the Group’s collective skills to bridge the digital divide.

Could you explain to us what the Digital Academy is and what the vision behind it was?

As a major IT company, we have seen and realized that we are living right now through a digital revolution which is creating a huge gap and a digital divide that is basically reflecting the social inequalities and injustices we already have. Now we understand that this is an opportunity as well as a responsibility for us to do something to bridge this digital divide. And how do we mean to do that?
We want to share our skills, our network and our expertise in the field so that we can address this exclusion with digital inclusion. That’s exactly what we offer at the Digital Academy: digital skills such as programming, coding, developing, SQL, and as well soft skills, as this is extremely important as an employer.

The first Digital Academy was created in Mumbai. There are Digital Academies in UK, in the US, in the Netherlands. We are looking to open more Digital Academies in India and all over the world, to train people in the digital field: there are jobs, but not the right skills.

You said that the Digital Academy is an initiative that is “mutually beneficial to the youth and to the company”. Could you tell us more about this?

It’s extremely mutually beneficial for companies or the employers to be recruiting the youths from these academies, because what it really adds is the diversity that is lacking in our offices right now. Indeed, in any company nowadays, when you are looking for a solution, you want that solution to be global. There is no way that you will create a truly global solution unless the team who is creating it, is global itself. However, because of the digital divide an entire pool of talents is left aside, when all they need is a little bit of opportunity and access to the right skills!

I speak from personal experience because in US we have interns coming from the digital academies. It’s kind of amazing the perspective and experience they bring into the team! It definitely adds a lot of value and diversity in what we are trying to do there.“
Realty Gives and Antarang Foundation are both working with the youth from underprivileged backgrounds to provide them with life skills and employability skills. They are a perfect example of how NGOs can partner together to provide the best support possible to the youth.

Could you tell us a bit more about your respective programs with the youth?

"Reality gives was created in 2009, to teach the youth english, computer and life skills. After having ran many programs, we realized that we were not having the impact we wanted to have. We did a survey in the community and we found that other NGOs were also working on the same programs than us. We started to develop some partnerships, with Hope Foundation for the computers, and Antarang Foundation because they have a carrier learning program for the youth : they provide employability skills and internships."
Our career training is for 17-28 year olds, and works in community as well as in colleges. It’s a skills and employability program, which helps them understand what career is available to them, as well as the steps they need to take to go to that career. Our vision is to have every youth working in a job of their choice.

How came the idea of working together and how does your partnership work exactly?

We first contacted Reality Gives because we saw that they were doing a lot of mobilization, they had a lot of visibility from the community. We wanted to see what they were doing, and if we could help each other out.

Over the last 2-3 years, we have had a partnership with Antarang Foundation. At first, only the trainers came to our center, but then we realized that they were also working on employability, that they were providing internships etc.

Then we thought that it would be great to have an actual partnership with them. We have made a MOU (“Memorandum Of Understanding”) and it worked out! We now send our batches to Antarang Foundation. Now when a youth comes to us saying « I don’t know what to do with my future », we suggest him to go see Antarang, because they do this very well and we know that they will support him/her in this.

What do you both gain from this partnership?

More than 110 students are on the waiting list for our program and this really a nice thing for us. The thing is that now, when they wait for the admission, we recommend them to go to the Antargang program in the meantime.
First, you have to do a community survey: to find the other NGOs. Then, you have to look at what you do and what you are strong at (us for example we found that we have a good quality of english), and you focus on that. 

We believe at Antarang Foundation that you cannot work in isolation. When a youth comes to us to get help to find a job, there are so many factors that come into play. We try to find partners and to get help from other organisations like Reality Gives.

As an example, when we needed to give english classes, we turn to Reality Gives and their english programs. Another example is when we are having trouble connecting with youth because their family won’t allow them to do a job, then we partner with another organisation that is working on counselling. Basically, it’s a form of holistic support for the youth.

Do you have something else that you would like to share with us, or a piece of advice maybe for other NGOs as to how they can build partnerships such as yours?

First, you have to do a community survey: to find the other NGOs. Then, you have to look at what you do and what you are strong at (us for example we found that we have a good quality of english), and you focus on that. “
Before becoming the successful creator of the Bombay to Barcelona cafe and author of his autobiography, Amin Sheikh has had to overcome many challenges as a child and as a young adult. Today, the Bombay to Barcelona Library cafe trains and employs young adults from difficult backgrounds such as his, to sell drinks, snacks and provide the community a safe space filled with books where everybody can feel at home... and it is a huge success!

Could you tell us more about yourself and about the story behind the Bombay to Barcelona cafe?

Well as you know, people now call me “Amin Sheikh” but that was not always the case. People used to call me a “street-boy”, a “garbage boy”, whatever name they had for me.

My orphanage is one of the best homes that I have ever found, it’s called Sneh Sadan, it’s in Bombay and I still consider it as my best home now. Father Ricardo Frances is the director of that orphanage, he has been for 42 years in Bombay. The greatest man I have ever met in my life, a living God, he is my hero, and he is the hero of forty-one thousand children’s lives. He has never given up, he took a very small pride from it.

Father Ricardo Frances has changed forty-one thousand children’s lives, I am of them.

Then I started working for Eustace Fernandez because I was not good at school. I worked as a driver for him, for thirteen years.
The first time after 4 years working for him, he asked me what I wanted for Christmas. I answered «Nothing. I have everything, much more than I need. », «No, ask me what you want. » he said, «ok Sir, take me to Barcelona »! He laughed at me, «Are you drunk? Have you lost your mind? Are you stupid or what? ». And finally he pointed me to his friend: «Look at this driver, he has no two rupees in his pocket and he wants to go to Spain!». I started crying, I stopped the car and turned to him: «You asked me what I want Sir, and I told you what I want, if you don’t want to give it to me, fine, but I am not stupid and I have not lost my mind.»

I went home, set the table, put the dessert and wine. In the middle of the night, he came to wake me up and he gave me a beautiful Christmas card: «Merry Christmas Amin, 2003, 27th April, you go to Barcelona.» I cried, I hugged him.

When I arrived in Barcelona, the first thing that hit me was that I didn’t see a single child in the street. I didn’t see no family also. In the forty-minute drive that brought us from the Barcelona airport to the city center, I asked Eustace «Sir, the country you come from talks about equality, talks about humanity… what makes us so disconnected down here?», he couldn’t answer me.

I came back 45 days later: «Sir, I gave you my life, you give me my freedom.» He asked me «What happens?» I told him, «Sir I want to travel», he said «Why do you want to travel?», I said «Because what travel teaches me, no book, no lesson, no university can teach me.»

I started traveling, for seven years, wherever I could get the opportunity to.
I had a dream when I received my first flight ticket: to open a cafe that would be run by street-boys. When I said this, people made fun of me, especially my friends. They didn’t understand, they would tell me « What ? Why do you want to go backward ? », I said « No I want to do something. »

That was my dream, and one of the most beautiful thing that one human being can do on this planet is: always give back.

Some time after that, a doctor friend of mine calls me « Amin, we are building two hospitals: one in India, the second one is in Nepal and people have to walk for two days to get to the hospital. I wrote an autobiography, can you tell all your friends to buy my book so I can build this hospital ? », I said « Martha you’re a doctor, how is it possible you wrote a book ? ». She answered: « Are you stupid or what ? Everybody can write a book ! » Three nights thinking and I had a plan: write a book, publish the book, sell the book... open a cafe!

It took me two years and a half. Finally I had the book, but nobody wanted to publish it. Nobody. My problem is I have passion but no patience. I came back to Bombay, I decided to print the book myself and to sell the book myself. So, I sold my book, 25 000 copies: in Mumbai, in Barcelona, in Paris, and finally I built a cafe, after 8 years.

Our cafe is now running and there are ten children involved! Until now I have taken 11 children to Spain, as my boss had taken me.

In our cafe any street-boy, any child from slum can come and have free muffin and free hot chocolate, and any handicapped person also eats for free.
During one afternoon, we shared a lot of impactful tips, advice, and concrete solutions on “How to foster the professional inclusion of excluded young adults?”

We understood that **soft skills** are key for youths to discover their professional and personal strengths and find out what kind of professional career they want to pursue.

Then, as integrating the professional world is a **step-by-step process**, it is important to keep supporting the youths even after they leave an NGO’s program. NGOs can keep in touch with the youths by organizing regular meetings with the alumni, to meet them again and discuss their new life objectives. From a company’s point of view, it can be powerful to open their doors to unusual profiles through internships and job opportunities because it can be a real chance to add diversity and boost the creativity of their teams.

Finally, **we witnessed inspiring examples of how NGOs, companies, administrations, and Youth themselves are all working in favour of the professional inclusion of young adults**. At the end of this first forum in Mumbai, everyone left inspired and motivated to **keep taking actions** towards this goal, all together!

A huge **thank you** to all our partners, guest speakers and participants. **See you next year** for the second edition of this forum in Mumbai!
THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

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