

Transforming Tales

Visual imagery reflecting journalism or
community engagement



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Case Studies

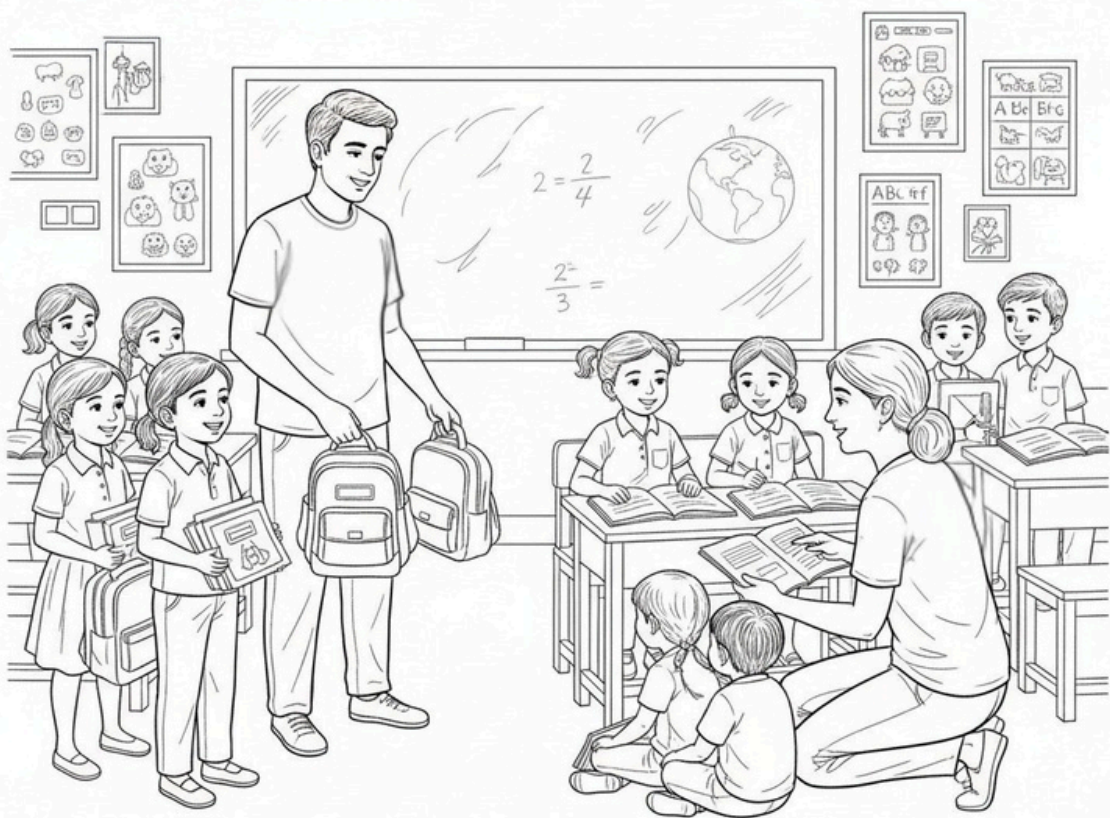
Impact of Volunteerism

A Case Study on Hyper-Local Volunteers in the Non-Formal School of Bengaluru, Karnataka

Authors

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Youth for Seva (Partner organizations or institutions:



Executive Summary

This case study highlights the educational challenges faced by migrant children in India, who often lack access to consistent schooling due to frequent relocations, language barriers, and absence of official documentation. These factors contribute to widespread educational exclusion, leaving many children disconnected from learning during crucial developmental years.

To address this issue, Youth for Seva (YFS) launched a non-formal learning center in Bengaluru, specifically aimed at supporting children from migrant communities. Located near migrant settlements, the center offers foundational education in literacy and numeracy, adapted to each child's learning level. With the support of trained volunteers, the center provides a welcoming, flexible environment that encourages regular attendance and builds trust with both children and parents. The curriculum is tailored to overcome linguistic and cultural barriers, and the program also involves community outreach to increase awareness about the importance of education.

The impact has been significant: children who were previously excluded from the education system are now developing academic skills and building the confidence to pursue further learning. Some have transitioned into formal schools, while others continue to thrive in the non-formal setup. This initiative demonstrates how a focused, community-based approach, even on a small scale, can create meaningful change in the lives of marginalized children.

Context and Background

As the narrative on climate change is shaping up to caution us about where we are headed, the mountainous regions are among the first to bear the brunt of climate change. Uttarakhand, nestled in the Himalayan ranges of Northern India, exemplifies this increased vulnerability. Popularly called “The Land of Gods” due to the number of pilgrimage sites in the state, its faith is being challenged by horrifying calamities such as the Kedarnath floods of 2013. Washing away over 9 million people and countless animals, this catastrophe was second only to the Tsunami of 2004 in India. It is a horrifying addition to the economic growth vs. development debate, symbolizing not just the effects of climate change but also poorly designed policies around it.

Like most rural areas in India, agriculture is the main source of income in rural Uttarakhand. Most of the state is under forests and wastelands, leaving only a small amount of land, 7.41 lakh ha (about 14%), for cultivation out of the total reported area of 56.72 lakh ha. Of the total, about 89% are under small and sub-marginal holdings. Given the urgency to revive their livelihoods post-floods, Sewa started with non-farm activities but also slowly began experimenting with farm-based activities with the women SHGs they had formed. Through these experiments and the trust built within the community, Sewa formalized the project of community farming in 2019, called “Sewa Krishi.”

With notable successes in women empowerment and upskilling of farmers, major challenges remain with respect to market linkage and man-animal conflict. The nuances of on-ground implementation captured throughout this study apply to any program in the development sector. Sewa's emerging strengths in internal staff capacity and trust within the community should be leveraged to strengthen the model and harness the immense potential of community farming.

1. Children of Migrant labour: A story untold

According to the United Nations Migration Agency [International organization of migration] definition “a migrant is any person who is moving or has moved across an international border or within a state away from his/her habitual place” of residence, regardless of :

- Person's legal status.
- Whether the movement is voluntary or involuntary.
- What the length of the stay is

As per the census 2011, the total number of internal migrants in India is 36 crore or 37% of the country's population. As per the Report Migration in India, 2020-21, based on Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020-21, released by Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), the total migration rate in India was 28.9% and in rural was 26.5%. The following data provides some insights into the challenges faced by migrant workers in India:

According to the International Labour Organization (ILO), there are an estimated 450 million migrant workers in India. This number is expected to grow to 500 million by 2030.

The average monthly wage for a migrant worker in India is Rs. 10,000, compared to Rs. 15,000 for a non-migrant worker.

1.1 Challenges faced by Migrant workers in India:

1. Safety and Health Concerns:

The informal sector relies heavily on migrant labourers, frequently at the expense of their own lives and well-being. Due to the dangerous and demanding nature of their jobs, poor living conditions, inadequate nutrition, limited access to social security and healthcare, and bad living conditions, workers in the informal sector are significantly more likely to suffer injuries, ill health, and even pass away. Instances of workplace accidents and fatalities remain unreported nationwide. For wounded workers or their kin, obtaining the proper compensation after an accident is a drawn-out and difficult process.

The group of workers who pass away from serious illnesses brought on by extended exposure to chemicals, poisons, and other carcinogens at work constitutes another invisible component. When employees are diagnosed with occupational disorders, establishing employer liability becomes nearly hard in environments where informal labour is common and companies are not stable.

2. Limited Livelihood Opportunities:

Lack of infrastructure and employment possibilities in their own states is the main cause of migration. Interstate migration is a result of many states not taking the necessary steps to keep its citizens.

It is difficult for migrant labourers to obtain regular jobs, acceptable housing, and access to needs.

3. Vulnerability to Exploitation and Trafficking:

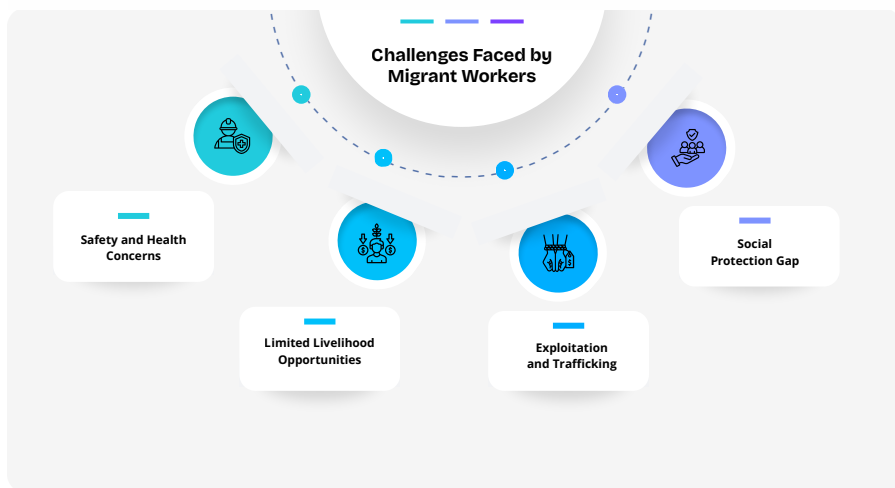
Due to their precarious situation, migrants are vulnerable to exploitation. They often work in low-paying jobs with adverse conditions.

Human trafficking remains a concern as migrants seek better opportunities but may fall prey to unscrupulous agents or employers.

4. Social Protection Gap:

Most inter-state migrants lack social protection. Only a small percentage is engaged in regular wage/salaried employment. Many of them don't have Government official IDs they struggle for Aadhaar card, ration card.

Policies should focus on providing social security, healthcare, and financial support to migrant workers.



2. A tale of a Migrant Child:

Whenever we shift from our homes to different cities we often enrol our students in good English medium private schools. When a Government official shifts from one place to another. The child can get admission in Kendriya Vidyalaya but when a migrant labour shifts to a different place in search of livelihood the child doesn't get admitted in any school due to various reasons.

Across India, every fifth migrant is a child (Census 2011). Millions move across state boundaries with their parents, but neither the Centre nor the state governments have education policies that address their concerns. Consequently, according to the Global Monitoring Report, 80% of children of seasonal workers in India do not have access to education.

“Eight out of 10 migrant children in work sites across seven Indian cities do not have access to education. Among young people who have grown up in a rural household with a seasonal migrant, 28 per cent identified as illiterate or had an incomplete primary education. Up to 40 per cent of children from seasonal migrant households are likely to end up in work rather than school.” — UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2019

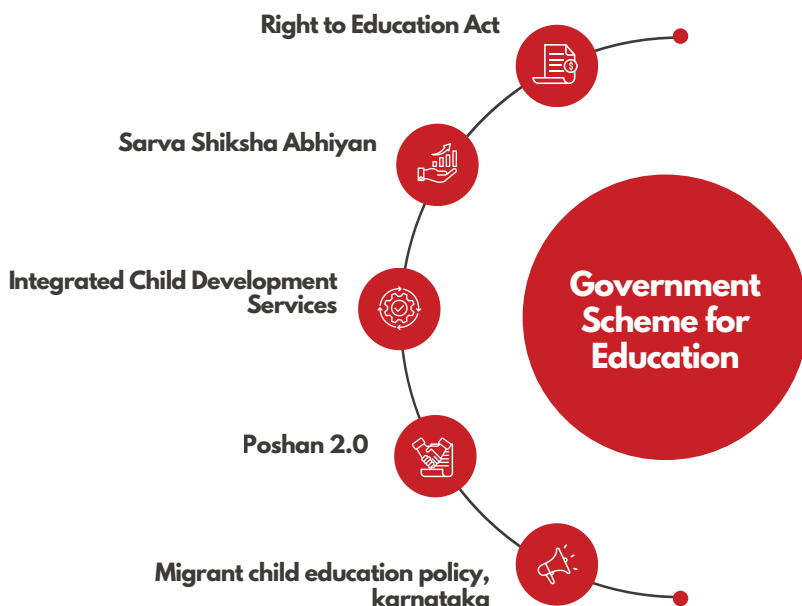
An estimated 63 million Indian children are migrants, according to the **2011 Census**. That is about the population size of Gujarat, the United Kingdom or France.

Furthermore, the migration nature of their parents makes it difficult to identify these children, raising the possibility that they may be missed by appropriate policy interventions implemented by the school system. The welfare of many migrant children is neglected and not supported by their local social networks. Indeed, national identity and all basic rights—including free access to public health facilities and educational opportunities—are the first things migrants take away from their towns and villages and lose.

3. Steps taken by the Government:

The petition has been filed by Child Rights Trust, and children’s rights advocate and activist Nina Nayak. They argue that the children of migrant workers and migrant children were already a vulnerable group. The pandemic has only worsened the situation. The petitioners have argued that the fundamental rights of migrant children guaranteed under Articles **14, 19, 21, 21A, 39, 45 and 47** are being violated. The petition sets out numerous obligations of the government under international conventions, in addition to constitutional commitments, that make such inaction unlawful.

- **Right to Education Act:** Provides for free and compulsory education for all children between the ages of 6 and 14 years old. The RTE Act mandates that every child in this age group has the right to education in a neighbourhood school and prohibits discrimination on the grounds of gender, caste, religion and disability. But still there is no mention of education for migrating children and hence a RTE of these children is violated and leading to a learning crisis.
- **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan:** It is a flagship programme of the government of India that was started in 2001, to achieve the Universalization of Elementary Education (UEE). The legal backing to SSA was provided when free and compulsory education for the children in the age group of 6-14 was made a fundamental right in the Indian Constitution under Article 21 A. SSA aims to meet the expectations of this fundamental right in a time-bound manner. In 2019, the Union Minister for Human Resource (GoI), in his written reply regarding the education of migrating children, stated that there are various interventions under Samagra Shiksha, such as the provision of seasonal hostels, residential camps in villages during the migration of families, residential and non-residential special training centres for out-of-school and dropout children etc.
- **Integrated child development services:** The Umbrella ICDS is a **centrally sponsored scheme** implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development. It was launched in 1975.
- **Poshan 2.0:** the government is currently prioritizing the provision of **Anganwadi services** to all, including migrant families, meaning the arrangement of a network of centres for the holistic development of children.
- **Migrated children and Children of migrated daily wagers Right for Free and Compulsory Education Policy 2019 of Karnataka:** The policy makes it mandatory for block-level officers of the education department and head of institutions to maintain movement register in respect of migrated child mainly to track them.
- **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** of India emphasizes equitable education, but fails to recognise the migrating children as a separate category. Also, the policy is passive in suggesting specific measures and strategies for their education inclusion [World Bank].



4. “But these policies are hard to reach to these invisible groups”. Hence it poses various kinds of challenges:

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1. **Language Barriers:** Children of migrant workers often move across regions or countries, which means they may not be fluent in the local language. This language barrier can hinder their understanding of lessons, communication with teachers, and social interactions.
2. **Disrupted Education:** Frequent relocations disrupt the continuity of education for migrant children. They may miss out on foundational concepts due to gaps in schooling. Catching up becomes difficult, especially if the curriculum varies across regions.
3. **No track of Children:** E-shram cards and various other initiatives have been implemented in recent years but still there is no proper tracking of migrant children.
4. **Lack of Documentation:** Migrant families may lack proper identification documents or academic records. This poses challenges during enrolment. Schools should adopt flexible admission policies and collaborate with local authorities to ensure all children can access education regardless of paperwork.
5. **Parental Involvement:** Migrant parents often work long hours, leaving little time for involvement in their children's education

4. The Intervention/Initiative

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Program or Initiative Undertaken

The core initiative discussed in this case study is the Non-Formal School model for migrant children, spearheaded by the non-profit organization Youth for Seva (YFS) in Bengaluru, Karnataka. Recognizing the deep educational divide faced by children of migrant laborers, the program was conceived as an alternative, community-centric educational solution aimed at overcoming barriers such as frequent migration, lack of identity documentation, poverty, and systemic exclusion from formal schooling. Unlike traditional educational institutions that require fixed enrollment procedures, attendance regulations, and rigid schedules, YFS's non-formal schools offer customized, flexible, and inclusive educational opportunities delivered directly within the communities where these migrant families live.

At its heart, the initiative is volunteer-driven, transforming ordinary citizens particularly homemakers and local residents into powerful agents of educational change. These volunteers not only support marginalized children but also experience deep personal growth. As they take on responsibilities such as lesson planning, student mentoring, and community engagement, they gain confidence, leadership skills, and a renewed sense of purpose. Many volunteers describe their journey as transformative, often finding a stronger sense of identity, Purposeful life and emotional resilience.

This dual-benefit model empowering both children and volunteers stands as a powerful example of mutual development and social upliftment through community engagement.

Implemented by

The initiative is led by Youth for Seva (YFS), a nation-wide volunteer movement established in 2007. With a mission to create a self-reliant society powered by socially responsible individuals, YFS facilitates structured volunteer engagement in various sectors including education, healthcare, environment, and rural development.

In the context of this initiative, local community[all of them are women]of that particular area who we call as Hyperlocal volunteers serve as key implementers. These volunteers operate as grassroots educators, mentors, and community connectors. Their presence ensures cultural relatability, trust, and sustainability. The leadership of women like Lata Rao ji, who transitioned from different role to educational leader, illustrates how personal dedication and community ownership can drive impactful social change.

Timeline and Scope

The non-formal school initiative has been operational for over 10 years, with its origins tracing back to early grassroots efforts in urban slum areas of Bengaluru. Initially launched as small community classes led by individual volunteers, it has evolved into a scalable model adopted across several clusters in the city.

The scope of the project is hyper-local yet deeply impactful. It currently caters to dozens of children in Happy Valley Layout of Bengaluru and has facilitated the integration of hundreds of students into formal schools. Beyond education, the initiative also organizes health awareness programs, life-skills training, and parent engagement sessions, ensuring holistic support for the children's development.

Target Beneficiaries

The primary beneficiaries are children aged 6–14 from migrant families, a group that remains largely invisible in national educational planning. These children are often the first generation in their families to access education. Most come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds, with parents engaged in daily wage labor, construction, or domestic work. The lack of steady residence, birth certificates, or transfer certificates makes it difficult for them to access government schools.

Secondary beneficiaries include the Hyperlocal volunteers themselves, who find empowerment, purpose, and community recognition through their engagement in the program.

Strategy or Approach

YFS's strategy is multi-layered and adaptive, based on a combination of grassroots community development, pedagogical flexibility, and volunteerism. The major elements of the approach include:

- **Volunteer-driven Implementation:** The program relies on local volunteers to teach, mentor, and track children's progress. This community-led model ensures cost-efficiency and cultural alignment, while also enhancing community ownership.
- **Bridge and Transition Model:** Non-formal schools act as preparatory platforms that provide foundational learning and psycho-social support. Once ready, children are transitioned into formal government with the continued help of the program.
- **Holistic Child Development:** The curriculum includes academic instruction, creative arts, life skills, moral education, and health awareness. This supports not just intellectual but emotional and social growth.
- **Parent Engagement and Advocacy:** Volunteers regularly meet with parents to emphasize the value of education, especially for girl children. They also assist families in accessing government schemes and identity documentation.

Literature-Based Justification

Migrant children often face multiple barriers to education, including socio-economic hardships, language barriers, frequent relocations, and limited access to formal education systems. Studies highlight the disruption in their academic progress due to these challenges, leading to higher dropout rates and lower academic achievements compared to their non-migrant peers (UNESCO, 2019).

Economic instability often forces children to work or take on adult responsibilities, limiting their educational opportunities (Béné et al., 2014).

Non-formal education provides a flexible and inclusive approach to education, catering specifically to the needs of migrant children. It includes community-based education programs, evening classes, and vocational training. Research by McLoughlin (2013) emphasizes that non-formal education helps in retaining students by offering a curriculum tailored to their immediate needs and life circumstances.

Volunteers play a pivotal role in non-formal education settings, offering support in teaching, mentoring, and community engagement. According to Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy (2010), volunteers bring diverse skills and perspectives, which enhance the learning environment and provide personalized attention to students.

Several case studies illustrate the success of volunteer-driven non-formal education programs. For instance, the Pratham Education Foundation in India relies heavily on volunteers to reach out to children in slums and rural areas, significantly improving literacy rates (Banerjee et al., 2016). Similarly, the 'Teach for All' network operates in multiple countries, leveraging the power of volunteer teachers to address educational inequities.

5. Implementation Journey

How the Initiative Unfolded Step-by-Step



Figure1: Child from Youth for seva non-formal school

Non-formal education: A way to reach invisible children.

The Non-Formal School initiative by Youth for Seva (YFS) unfolded organically over more than a decade, beginning as an individual act of compassion and growing into a structured, community-rooted educational movement.

Phase 1: The Spark of Compassion

The journey began with Lata Ji, volunteer at Youth for Seva and a former computer science engineer now a teacher leading Non-Formal School with Passion, who was struck by the sight of migrant children playing near her home during the construction of her house. She noticed they were unsupervised and not attending school. Her empathy ignited a sense of responsibility, and she began teaching them basic literacy skills at home using whatever resources were available. This act of individual service laid the foundation for the initiative.

“I had compassion towards the kids. When I saw them playing around while my house was getting constructed, I asked myself—what can I do for them?” — Lata Ji,

Phase 2: Building a Community of Volunteers

As word spread of Lata Ji's efforts, other community women joined her mission. These were primarily from that Local areas like Mangala Ji, Vidya Ji, and Gayatri Ji, who were driven by a desire to contribute meaningfully to their communities. With Youth for seva support, the effort grew into a coordinated volunteer-driven model.

Classes began to take place volunteers homes. A basic curriculum was established that included reading, writing, arithmetic, and general knowledge.

Jayanthi, Sudha, Rekha, Rashmi, Archana, Neeraja, Shubha, Roopa are some of the “sheroes” of Non-formal school who are currently working as the Volunteers in Non-formal school.

“I got connected with Lata Ji, and from there the journey remained unstoppable.” — Mangala Ji,

Phase 3: Structuring the Program

More structured support by using a bridge curriculum aligned with government school standards. Children who had never been to school were grouped by learning level rather than age, allowing for customized instruction.

The initiative also introduced tracking mechanisms to follow up with children even after they transitioned into formal schools. Volunteers maintained regular contact with families, tracked school admissions, and assisted with documentation like birth certificates or Aadhaar cards.

Volunteer-led activities expanded to include:

- Health awareness sessions for mothers (e.g., women's health camps).
- After-school programs to support children who transitioned to formal schools.
- Mentorship support for higher education.

Community Involvement

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Community Involvement

The program thrives on strong community ownership and grassroots participation. Volunteers are not external professionals—they are community members themselves, which fosters a high level of trust and cooperation.

- **Parental Involvement:** Parents, particularly mothers, are engaged in regular meetings and are made aware of their children's progress. Volunteers conduct home visits and motivate families to prioritize education.
- **Family Support:** Many volunteers are supported by their own families. For instance, husbands help organize events and daughters assist in tutoring or managing logistics.

"My husband took care of our daughter so I could teach. My daughter teaches English to 10th-grade students. It became a family mission."

— Lata Ji,

"My daughter helps the kids with art, and my husband arranges donations. Volunteering became a shared journey."

— Mangala Ji,



Figure 2: A volunteer of Non-formal school taking class

- **Peer Learning and Returnees:** Graduates of the non-formal schools, like Sharan, Ambika, Sharanamma, and Jyoti, now serve as mentors and tutors for current students, creating a virtuous cycle of community empowerment.

"I once studied here, and now I teach the same kids who come from where I did."

— Ambika, Focus Group Discussion

Innovations and Local Adaptations

The success of the initiative lies in its innovative, context-sensitive solutions, which are adapted to the local realities of migrant families.

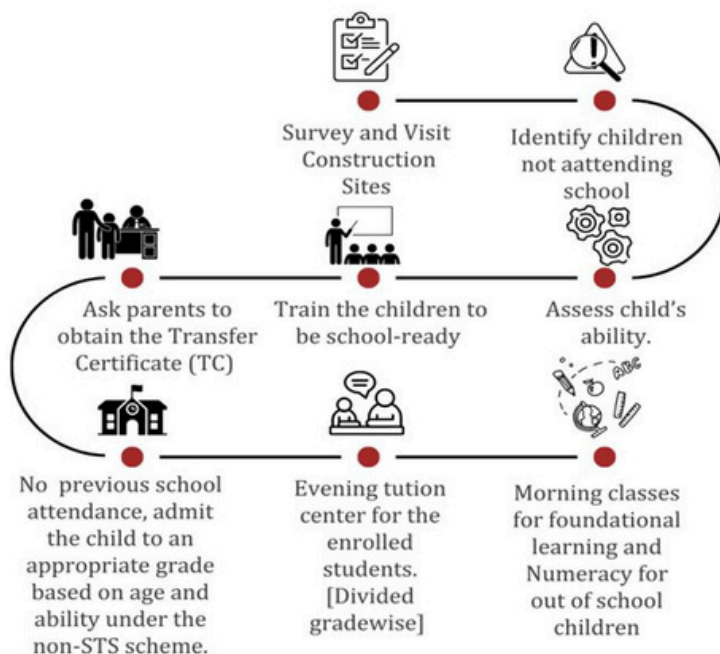
"Even when the children moved, we kept in touch, guided them, and made sure they stayed in school."

— Vidya Ji,



Figure 3: Children of Non-formal school doing prayer

Non formal school Process



Stakeholders Involved

1.1 Introduction:

This study took a comprehensive qualitative approach to understand the support provided by housewives in their involvement with informal school initiatives. The aim was to uncover the roots of their commitment and assess the broader impact on the community. By using observational data and informal interviews, we explored the complexities of their sustained engagement in non-formal education.

1.2 Methodological Framework

The research followed a holistic approach, focusing on a detailed and intimate examination of the experiences of housewives involved in non-formal education. We employed a combination of observations and informal interviews to gain a deeper understanding of their involvement.

1.3 Data Collection

Observations

We conducted detailed observations of the housewives' activities and interactions within the non-formal school environment. This helped us capture the nuances of their daily contributions and challenges.

1.4 Informal Interviews

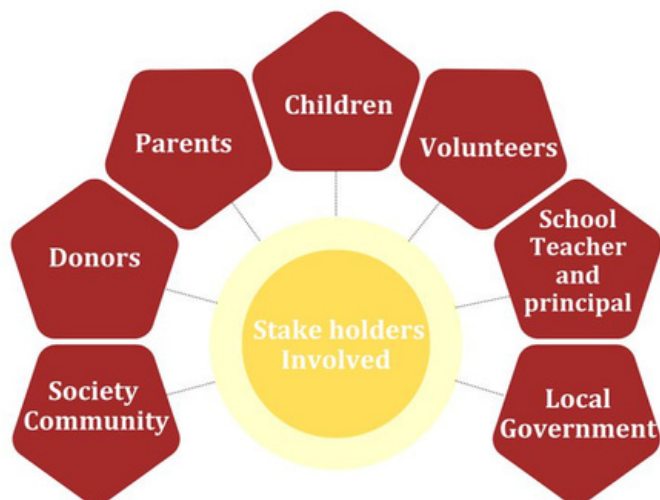
We carried out open-ended, informal interviews with the housewives to explore their motivations, aspirations, and the barriers they face. These interviews provided rich, in-depth insights into their personal experiences.

1.5 Analysis

Through qualitative analysis, we aimed to:

- Examine the mechanisms that keep housewives engaged in non-formal education.
- Understand the socio-economic, cultural, and family factors influencing their involvement.
- Explore the intersection of these factors and how they shape their experiences.
- See impact of non-formal schooling on children.
- Analyse impact on overall community.

Broader Impact



6. Voices from the Field

1.1 “The Heartfelt Journey of Lata Ji and Non-Formal School”: Compassion to Passion

“I had compassion towards the kids when I saw them playing around at the time when my house was getting constructed. There was a question about what I can do for them. I was already working with one NGO where I used to teach kids and from there my passion ignited” - Lata ji.



Lata Ji, a former computer science engineer turned homemaker discovered her true passion when she saw the sparkle of curiosity in the eyes of children who were denied the right to education. Moved by their innocence and potential, she committed herself to changing their lives through education. This case study delves into her heartfelt journey, the establishment of a non-formal school, and the deep emotional impact she has made on these children and their families. The discussion reveals the following observations:

a. Empathy and Compassion:

It all began when Lata Ji noticed children playing near her new home. She was struck by their laughter but troubled by the realization that they weren't attending school. Driven by empathy and a desire to make a difference, she began teaching them herself, turning her home into a makeshift classroom filled with hope and possibilities.

b. Broader mind set and solution orienteers:

Recognizing the complex challenges faced by migrant children, Lata Ji sought assistance from the government school in her locality. Her advocacy led to support from local schools, which, by mandate, accepted students at their appropriate educational level. Lata Ji's initiative to provide bridge courses helped these children regain lost ground, smoothing their transition into formal education. Her relentless efforts symbolized a beacon of hope and resilience.

c. Community Involvement

As word spread about her noble cause, friends and community members were inspired to join Lata Ji. The initiative initially operated from a temple, a humble yet sacred space that mirrored their pure intentions. Lata Ji's personal visits to slum areas, where she passionately convinced parents about the importance of education, showcased her unwavering commitment and emotional investment in each child's future.



Figure 4 Lataji in non-formal school teaching kids

d. Ensuring Continued Education and Personal Development

Lata Ji's dedication did not stop at primary education. She took personal responsibility for her students' further education, ensuring their admission into colleges and helping them choose subjects where they could shine. She acted as a guardian, offering unwavering support and guidance, embodying the role of a nurturing and steadfast mentor.

e. Learning from the Children

Lata Ji humbly acknowledges that her journey has been as much about learning as it has been about teaching. The resilience and determination of the children, who juggle studying with minimal resources, have been a source of inspiration for her. Their stories of perseverance and courage have enriched her understanding and strengthened her resolve.

Celebrating Milestones Together

The bond between Lata Ji and her students is beautifully illustrated by their gesture of celebrating her birthday, despite never having celebrated their own. This act of love and appreciation speaks to the deep emotional connection and mutual respect they share, highlighting the warmth and sense of family that has blossomed within this community. Lata Ji's journey is a powerful voice of impact one person's compassion and dedication can have on a community. Her efforts to provide education and support to slum children have not only transformed their lives but also created a ripple effect of hope and inspiration. This case study highlights the profound emotional and social impact of community-driven initiatives through transformative power of education.



Figure 5 Lataji with the kids

1.2 “From finding Playmates for daughter to finding Purpose: Journey of Mangala ji’s dedication to Children’s Welfare”



“I got connected with Lataji and then the journey remained unstoppable. Being with these kids gives me satisfaction and I want to do something for these kids” Mangala ji.

Her journey from seeking playmates for her daughter to becoming a dedicated volunteer at a non-formal school showcases a transformative experience driven by a passion for children's welfare.

Her background in administration at Toyota took a backseat when she prioritized her family's needs, but a desire to contribute to society led her to volunteering. This transition marked a significant shift in her life, introducing her to the concept of non-formal education and igniting her dedication to children's holistic development.

a. Adaptability and Openness to New Concepts:

Mangala Ji's willingness to embrace new concepts, such as non-formal education, demonstrates her adaptability and openness to learning. Despite having no prior experience in volunteering, she wholeheartedly embraced the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of children.



Figure 6 Mangala ji teaching a student

b. Zeal and Dedication:

Mangala Ji's unwavering zeal and dedication to the cause of children's development serve as a testament to the enduring impact of meaningful engagement with a cause. Her commitment remained steadfast, driving her continued involvement and advocacy for children's rights.

C. Long-term Impact:

Mangala Ji's eight-year journey in volunteering signifies the long-term impact of meaningful engagement with social causes. Her dedication has likely influenced not only the lives of the children she has directly supported but also the broader community's perception of volunteerism and social responsibility.



Figure 7 Mangala ji with the kids

1.3 “Following interest to find solace: The Transformative Journey of Volunteer Vidya Ji”



“I feel satisfied after this work”. It’s like we all like minded people come together and talk about holistic development of a child” said by Vidya ji. V olunteer Vidya Ji’s experience in the non-formal school over nine years has yielded valuable insights into the power and potential of volunteering for holistic development.

Here are some key findings:

a. Personal Satisfaction:

Vidya Ji finds deep satisfaction in her volunteer work. This satisfaction likely stems from the sense of purpose and fulfilment gained through contributing to the betterment of others’ lives.

b. Community of Like-Minded Individuals:

Through volunteering, Vidya Ji has found a community of like-minded individuals who share her passion for holistic development. This community provides support, camaraderie, and opportunities for learning and growth.

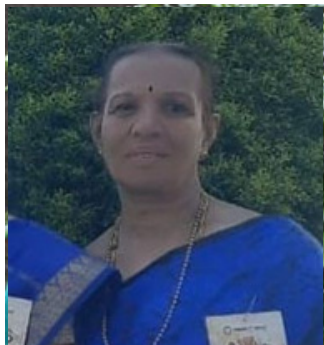
c. Sense of Belonging:

V olunteering has created a sense of belonging for Vidya Ji within the non-formal school community. This feeling of belonging is crucial for maintaining motivation and commitment to long-term volunteer engagement



Figure 8 Vidya ji teaching kids

1.4 “From Babysitting to Impact in non-formal school: Journey of Gayatri ji.



I have my own babysitting centre and my love for kids led me to join a non-formal school. “I love kids and hence I always wanted to do something for the kids and non-formal school gave me a chance to work for them.

a. Desire to Make a Difference:

The individual's desire to contribute positively to the lives of children was evident throughout their career trajectory. They recognized that non-formal schools provided them with a platform to add

b. Alignment of Passion and Profession:

By transitioning to work in a non-formal school, the individual effectively aligned their passion for working with children with their professional endeavours. This alignment likely enhances their job satisfaction and overall sense of fulfilment in their chosen career path.

c. Social Impact:

Through their work in the non-formal school, the individual is actively contributing to social change by providing educational opportunities to underprivileged children. This not only benefits the children directly involved but also has the potential to create broader positive impacts within their communities.

d. Continuous Commitment:

The case study highlights the individual's enduring commitment to serving children. Her journey from owning a babysitting centre to working in a non-formal school underscores their dedication to making a lasting difference in the lives of children, regardless of the challenges or changes in their professional environment.



Figure 9 Gayatri ji teaching art and crafts to the kids

2. Overall findings and observations:

2.1 Empathy and Sensitivity in Elite Nobles

- **Personal Commitment:** Lata Ji and the volunteers, including Mangala Ji and Vidya Ji, exhibit a profound sense of empathy and sensitivity towards the underprivileged children they serve.
- **Engagement with the Community:** These individuals' personal interactions with slum communities highlight their sensitivity to the children's needs, emphasizing an emotional connection that drives their efforts.
- **Supportive Environment:** The volunteers create a nurturing and empathetic environment, fostering trust and encouraging children to pursue their education despite hardships.

2.2 Acceptance of Inequalities

- **Educational Disparities:** The children in these communities face significant barriers to education, such as economic challenges and social norms that prioritize early marriage over schooling for girls.
- **Resource Scarcity:** The stark contrast between the limited resources available to these children and the more abundant opportunities in affluent areas highlights the pervasive inequalities in educational access.
- **Systemic Barriers:** Despite government mandates to support education for all, systemic issues often prevent migrant children from seamlessly integrating into formal schooling.



Figure 10 V olunteer teaching kids in non-formal school

2.3 Diversity and Inclusivity

- **Tailored Education:** The non-formal school's approach to providing bridge courses and personalized support ensures that children from varied backgrounds receive the education they need to thrive.
- **Community Participation:** The active involvement of volunteers from different walks of life, such as former professionals and homemakers, illustrates the diversity and inclusivity within the educational initiative itself.



2.4 Culturally Rooted

- The non-formal school embodies the Bharateeya (Indian) concept of "Seva" (selfless service), emphasizing compassion, community upliftment, and serving humanity without expecting any reward.
- Volunteers' dedication to educating underprivileged children goes beyond academics. It encompasses nurturing their cultural identities and instilling values aligned with Dharma (righteousness) and Ahimsa (non-violence). She believes true education builds character, fosters empathy, and prepares children to contribute positively to society.
- Volunteers' interactions with the community reflect the Bharateeya belief in Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (the world is one family). She approaches each child's family with compassion, understanding their struggles, and working collaboratively to find solutions. This holistic approach ensures culturally relevant education, grounded in the realities of the children's lives.

2.5 Bond of Children and Teachers:

- **Emotional Connection:** The deep bonds formed between the children and their teachers, exemplified by the students celebrating Lata Ji's birthday, demonstrate the profound emotional connections that foster a sense of family and belonging.
- **Mentorship and Guidance:** The teachers' roles extend beyond academics, providing mentorship, guidance, and emotional support, which are crucial for the holistic development of the children.

b. Recognizing Artistic Talent

Lata ji saw beyond textbooks. She recognized Sharan's innate artistic flair—the way he sketched intricate patterns during breaks.

Guided by her encouragement, Sharan explored Fine Arts—a path that would shape his future.

c. Unlocking Potential:

Sharan's transformation was profound. The non-formal school provided personalized attention, nurturing his creativity. Today, he stands on the cusp of completing his Fine Arts degree, a testament to the power of recognizing individual talents. Not only he is excelling in his career but he supports other kids in his slums too, he ensures that every kid nearby his home goes to non-formal school.

Imagine Sharan's joy when Lata ji first praised his sketches. His self-worth blossomed, and he found purpose beyond survival. The non-formal school became his sanctuary—a place where dreams took flight on canvas.

1.2 Ambika's Resilience: Dreams Amidst Challenges

"I want to become a good accountant," Ambika said. My parents never bothered about my studies but Lata ma'am did and she pushed me to study. Ambika hails from Saidam in Gulbarga and she along with her family migrated to Bangalore seeking better opportunities. Ambika's journey mirrors the struggles faced by many migrants seeking a better life. Her story unfolds as follows:

a. Dreams in a New City:

Ambika left Saidam in Gulbarga, hoping for brighter prospects in Bangalore.

The non-formal school welcomed her during its second batch, offering not just education but also emotional support. The growth is now visible in a form that Ambika is currently interning and pursuing graduation in B.com and is in final year.

"I want to support other kids who want to study" said Ambika.

b. Balancing Responsibilities:

Ambika's path was strewn with obstacles—supporting her family through part-time work as receptionist, internships, and studies as she is currently pursuing B.com. Yet, the volunteers at the non-formal school became her guiding stars, providing solace and encouragement. They have been stuck to them from the

- **Long-term Commitment:** The volunteers' dedication to supporting the children through various stages of their education, from primary schooling to college admissions, reflects a sustained commitment to their well-being and success.



Figure 11 V olunteer of non-formal school teaching the students

7. Impact and Outcomes

Transformative Impact of Non-Formal Education:

The non-formal education initiative in Bangalore transcends mere classroom learning. It has become a hope for marginalized students, nurturing their talents, dreams, and resilience. In this case study, we dive into the lives of Sharan, Ambika, Sharanamma and Jyoti along with the ripple effect they've created.

1. Focused Group discussion with Sharan, Ambika, Sharanamma and Jyoti:

1.1 Sharan's Journey: From Migration to Mastery

Sharan's family migrated from Kalaburagi to Bangalore in pursuit of livelihood opportunities just like every other migrant little did they know that their son's destiny would take a remarkable turn. Here's Sharan's story:

a. Non-Formal School Entry:

In 2007, Sharan stepped into the non-formal school, a haven for children like him who lacked access to conventional education.

His journey began with basic literacy and numeracy, but his potential soon caught the eye of Lata ji, a dedicated mentor.

time when Ambika was in 3rd standard. She supported her young sister to study and push her limits and study hard and now she is pursuing BCA.

c. Holistic Empowerment:

Beyond academics, Ambika imbibed life skills—the ability to manage finances, communicates effectively, and dreams big. Her journey exemplifies holistic education, where personal development complements academic learning.

Picture Ambika's tearful gratitude when a volunteer helped her draft a resume of her life. The non-formal school wasn't just about textbooks; it was where she learned resilience, compassion, and the art of survival.

1.3 Sharanamma and Jyoti: Sisters of Determination

"I want to become a Nurse", said Jyoti, currently in 1st PU already cleared in her mind about her dream. Sharanamma and Jyoti, siblings from Saidam migrated to Bengaluru sharing a common purpose—to uplift their family while pursuing education.

a. Inclusive Opportunities:

The non-formal school embraced both of them. The hyper local volunteers guided them on each step. Sharanamma pursued B.Com, while Jyoti aimed for 11th grade—an inclusive environment where dreams knew no bounds.

b. Gratitude and Aspiration:

Their gratitude toward teachers and the educational system is palpable. They recognize that education isn't just about personal growth; it's a gift they want to pay forward.

c. Becoming Advocates:

Sharanamma and Jyoti's impact extends beyond their own lives. They actively support the non-formal school, inspiring other children to dream, learn, and break barriers.

Currently, Sharnamma is working part time in a pharmacy and doing internship with Ambika long with pursuing B.comImagine Sharanamma and Jyoti sitting together, sharing stories of their journey. Their laughter echoes resilience. The non-formal school isn't just an institution; it's their shared legacy—a torch passed from one generation to the next.



Figure 12 Lataji with Ambika, Sharana and Sharanamma



Figure 13 Ambika and Sharanamma with Lataji

2. The Broader Impact

2.1 Community Transformation:

Sharan, Ambika, Sharanamma, and Jyoti are catalysts for change.

1. Their resilience has sparked a paradigm shift in the educational landscape of their locale.
2. Exclusive follow backs taken by the volunteers with every students is the key for consistency.
3. "I want to make girl and boy to come to the school and make them aware if they don't study then what kind of repercussion they will face" said Sharan.
4. "I want to make everyone aware about the importance of education "said Ambika.

2.2 Generational Legacy:

1. The non-formal school's impact reverberates through generations.
2. Children who once benefited now give back, perpetuating the cycle of empowerment.
3. "I am grateful to Lata ma'am, Mangala ma'am & Vidya ma'am, if we ensure every child in our area attends the non-formal school and pursue good education. We will feel
4. that is the only way we will be able to pay back to non-formal school" said Ambika and Sharan.

2.3 Inclusive education:

The non-formal school's walls hold whispers of dreams fulfilled, tears shed, and futures rewritten. Their story underscores the significance of inclusive education, where students from diverse backgrounds are provided with equal opportunities to thrive. The non-formal school not only facilitated their academic pursuits but also instilled in them a sense of gratitude towards their teachers and the educational system that enabled their journey.

The biggest impact is in the form that these children are now supporting non-formal school and the children who are currently involved there. This is how the project impacted the beneficiaries where beneficiaries want to become part of the project.



Figure 14 She once studied in non-formal school and now teaching the kids along with studies.



Figure 15 Previous student of non-formal school now teaching kids along with beneficiary

3. Generational Impact of Non-Formal School:

3.1 Introduction

In this case study, we explore the remarkable journeys of two mothers whose trust on non-formal school and commitment to education has had a profound impact on their families.

a. Parvati ji [Ambika's Mother]

In this case study, we explore the remarkable journeys of two mothers whose trust on non-formal school and commitment to education has had a profound impact on their families.

- A resilient single mother raising four children.
- Initially lacked formal education due to societal constraints.
- Now witnessing the positive ripple effect of education through her daughter, Ambika.

2. Renuka ji [Sharanamma and Jyoti's Mother]

- Married at a tender age of 12, defying societal norms.
- Proudly supporting her educated daughters, Sharanamma and Jyoti.
- Advocating for their right to education despite opposition from relatives.

3.2 Ambika's Mother:

"I am grateful to non-formal school for giving us inclusivity in Education".

Ambika's mother reflects on her journey as a single parent. Despite financial hardships and limited educational opportunities, she was determined to provide emotional and financial support to her children. The turning point came when Ambika enrolled in a non-formal school.

Key observations:

a. Generational Impact:

- Ambika's enrolment in the non-formal school marked a turning point for her family. Her education empowered her to break the cycle of poverty.
- Now, Ambika not only earns a living but also continues her studies. Her newfound knowledge has transformed her perspective on life.

2. Empowering Women:

- Ambika's mother recognizes that education is the key to empowerment. She has witnessed her daughter's confidence grow as she navigates the complexities of modern Bangalore.
- Ambika's ability to take her mother around the city symbolizes progress and hope for future generations.

3. Community Influence:

- Ambika's story has inspired other parents in her community to prioritize education. They see first-hand how knowledge opens doors and creates opportunities.
- Now the elder sister daughter of Ambika has joined non-formal school hence emphasising a long term impact.

3.3 Sharanamma and Jyoti's Mother

Sharanamma and Jyoti's mother defied societal expectations by prioritizing her daughters' education. Despite relatives questioning the need for their schooling, she stood firm. Here are the key observations:

a. Breaking Stereotypes:

- Sharanamma and Jyoti's mother challenges deeply ingrained gender stereotypes. She believes that education is not limited by gender.
- Her unwavering support for her daughters sends a powerful message to the community.

2. Educational Aspirations:

- Sharanamma and Jyoti's education has broadened their horizons. They dream of careers beyond traditional roles.
- Their mother's determination ensures that they have the tools to pursue their aspirations.

3. Seeking Partnerships:

- Sharanamma and Jyoti's mother actively seeks educated partners for her daughters. She envisions a future where they continue working and contributing to society.
- Her commitment to their education extends beyond the classroom.

The stories of Ambika's mother and Sharanamma and Jyoti's mother exemplify the transformative power of non-formal education. These women have shattered barriers, emphasizing that education is a universal right. As we celebrate their resilience, let us continue supporting non-formal education initiatives, ensuring a brighter future for generations to come.

Both of them motivating other children mothers to come to the school reflect the greater impact of non-formal school.



Figure 15: with the Mothers of Ambika and Sharanamma

3.4 Human capital and Social capital

Direct Human Capital

- **Educational Attainment:** Migrant children receiving education through non-formal schools improve their basic literacy and numeracy skills.
- **Skills Development:** Volunteers teaching in non-formal schools help children develop essential life skills and vocational abilities.

Indirect Human Capital

- **Long-term Employment Prospects:** Education and skills development increase the chances of migrant children obtaining better jobs in the future.
- **Overall Improvements:** Education often leads to better health awareness, which can result in improved long-term health outcomes for the children.

Direct Social Capital

- **Community Networks:** Non-formal schools create a sense of community among migrant families, providing them with a support network.
- **Volunteer Engagement:** Local volunteers build relationships and trust within the migrant community, enhancing social cohesion.

Indirect Social Capital

- **Enhanced Social Mobility:** Education can help break the cycle of poverty, enabling migrant families to move up the social ladder.
- **Policy Advocacy:** The success of non-formal schools can lead to increased advocacy for migrant rights and better policy frameworks, benefiting the wider migrant population in the long run.

	Human Capital	Social Capital
Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Education Attainment• Skill Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community Network• Volunteer• Engagement
Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Long term employment Prospects• Overall Improvrment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Enhanced Social Mobility• Policy Advocacy

These outcomes reflect the comprehensive impact of non-formal schooling and volunteerefforts on migrant children and their communities.



Figure 17 V olunteer teaching in non-formal school

8. Challenges and Learnings

1. Challenges faced by Non-formal school:

- **Irregular Attendance:** Due to the migratory nature of the children's families, attendance is often irregular. Children frequently move with their parents, leading to disruptions in their education and hence it become tough to track them and eventually they end up with lack of basic education.
- **Lack of Awareness among Parents:** Many parents are unaware of the importance of education and prioritize work over their children's schooling. Convincing parents to regularly send their children to the non-formal school is an ongoing challenge
- **Admission Hurdles:** Facilitating the transition of children from non-formal to formal schools involves navigating bureaucratic hurdles and ensuring that the children meet the necessary academic standards for admission.



2. Solutions:

1. Staying Connected with Parents:

The volunteers of the non-formal school maintain communication with parents. For women, they also connect with other organizations to address health-related needs. Currently, regular health check-ups are being conducted. I attended the session along with the women.

2. Tracking Children:

Volunteers ensure that they keep track of the children. If a child relocates to a different area, the volunteers stay in touch with them. Additionally, efforts are made to facilitate their admission to college.

3. Spreading Awareness:

The volunteers actively raise awareness among parents and children to encourage continued education. This focus is especially important for girls, emphasizing the importance of ongoing education.



Figure 18 Attended the Women health awareness program organised by V olunteers of non-formal school for the mothers of the kids



9. Sustainability and the Way Forward

Sustainability and the Way Forward

Local Ownership and Capacity Building

The long-term sustainability of the Youth for Seva (YFS) Non-Formal School initiative is deeply rooted in its community-led structure, which emphasizes local ownership, capacity building, and empowerment through volunteerism. Unlike many top-down interventions, this initiative thrives because the change agents emerge from within the community itself.

At the core of the initiative is a group of hyper-local volunteers, largely composed of homemakers, retired professionals, and youth, who serve as educators, mentors, and liaisons between families and the educational system. These volunteers do not simply "assist" in education—they design, deliver, and manage it. Through training provided by YFS and years of experience on the ground, many have evolved into skilled facilitators and

The initiative fosters capacity building in several key ways:

- **Pedagogical Training:** Volunteers receive informal but regular training in child-centric pedagogy, class engagement, and bridge education methods. They adapt their teaching styles to match each child's learning pace, ensuring inclusivity.
- **Community Mobilization Skills:** Volunteers learn how to engage parents, resolve community resistance, and create awareness around the importance of education. Their deep local knowledge makes these engagements effective.
- **Leadership Development:** Over time, volunteers such as Lata Ji, Mangala Ji, Vidya Ji, and Gayatri Ji have developed leadership capabilities, organizing school functions, managing logistics, and mentoring other volunteers.
- **Intergenerational Skill Transfer:** Graduated students like Ambika, Sharan, and Sharanamma, who once sat in these classrooms, now return to teach and support current students. This circular model ensures continuous knowledge transfer and deepens the sustainability of the initiative.

Exit Strategy and Long-Term Vision

Interestingly, the initiative does not have a formal exit strategy. The model was never intended to be a short-term project with a finite end, but rather a permanent, evolving support system embedded in the local social fabric.

Key elements of the long-term vision include:

- **Ongoing Community Ownership:** As the initiative is fully owned and operated by local volunteers, there is no dependency on external staff. As new volunteers join and alumni return, the community becomes increasingly self-reliant in sustaining the program.
- **No Expiry of Relevance:** The migration patterns that leave many children out of the formal system are not diminishing. Thus, the need for such flexible educational models remains ongoing, especially in fast-urbanizing cities like Bengaluru.
- **Integration, Not Replacement:** The goal is not to replace formal education but to bridge the gap and facilitate integration. Children are eventually transitioned into formal schools, with YFS volunteers supporting them through after-school sessions and follow-ups.

- **Scalability:** While the current model is deeply rooted in specific neighborhoods, its modular, low-cost, and volunteer-led approach makes it highly replicable in other urban migrant communities.

Recommendations for Policy and Practice

Drawing upon the grassroots success of the Youth for Seva (YFS) Non-Formal School model, several practical and policy-oriented recommendations emerge that can guide government institutions, education planners, and of migrant children from mainstream education.

1. Institutionalize and Scale Volunteer-Based Education Models

Governments should formally recognize and fund volunteer-led educational initiatives as complementary to mainstream schooling. YFS's model demonstrates that with minimal financial input but high community engagement, significant educational outcomes can be achieved. Volunteer-based models are low-cost, flexible, and culturally rooted—making them ideal for urban poor and migrant communities.

- **Evidence:** According to Banerjee et al. (2016), teaching by trained volunteers dramatically improved literacy outcomes in under-resourced areas.
- **Supporting Literature:** Hustinx, Cnaan, and Handy (2010) highlight the scalability and resilience of volunteer-led social change models.

2. Develop Bridge Learning Frameworks for Out-of-School and Migrant Children

India's **Right to Education Act (2009)** guarantees access to free and compulsory education for children aged 6–14, but it lacks specific guidelines for the education of migrant children, who often miss out due to mobility and documentation issues. Government programs must include **bridge courses and flexible learning centers**, like the YFS model, to serve as educational catch-up platforms.

- These frameworks should be localized, modular, and easily integrated with nearby government schools.
- Programs should adopt assessment-by-learning-level, not age, to accommodate children who have missed years of formal education.

3. Build Schools or Dedicated Classrooms Exclusively for Migrant Children

To address the distinct challenges faced by migrant communities, policymakers should consider establishing schools or dedicated classroom units near construction sites, slum settlements, or labor colonies where migration is concentrated. These schools should operate on flexible schedules, support multilingual learning, and offer holistic support (meals, uniforms, emotional counseling).

- These can be set up as community-run satellite centers with trained volunteers, based on the non-formal model YFS has piloted successfully in Bengaluru.
- Schools can also serve as resource hubs for legal documentation support, nutrition programs, and parent engagement.

4. Integrate Migrant Education Explicitly into National Programs and Policies

Despite their growing numbers, migrant children are not adequately addressed in national schemes like Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) or National Education Policy (NEP) 2020. These children should be recognized as a distinct and vulnerable category in education planning.

Recommendations include:

- Amending SSA and NEP to explicitly mention migrant children and their educational rights.
- Ensuring block- and ward-level tracking of migrant populations through school mapping exercises.
- Creating dedicated budgetary allocations for the identification, enrollment, and retention of migrant children.

"Migration is not a one-time issue—it's a structural reality in urban India. Schools must adjust to this mobility, not the other way around."
— Field Research Note, 2024

5. Replicate the Non-Formal Education Model through Policy-Backed Pilots

The success of YFS's non-formal school model calls for state-supported pilots across urban centers with high migrant inflow. These classrooms can serve as 'education anchors'—not just teaching spaces, but community hubs led by trusted volunteers.

- **Recommendation:** The Ministry of Education or State Education Departments can initiate Urban Informal Learning Centers (UILCs) inspired by this model, in partnership with NGOs and community groups.

6. Deploy Mobile Education and Health Units in Migrant Clusters

To address challenges related to frequent relocation and lack of access to healthcare, mobile classrooms and mobile medical units can be introduced.

- Mobile educational vans, equipped with basic learning materials and tablets, can provide continued learning to children in highly transient families.
- Paired mobile health camps can offer routine checkups and vaccinations—integrating health and education into a unified support service for migrant families.

These mobile solutions can be coordinated by local municipal bodies or public-private partnerships with NGOs, drawing on the experience of grassroots organizations like YFS.

7. Strengthen Community-Led Child Tracking Systems

Children from migrant families often fall off the radar due to the lack of documentation and mobility. The government can adopt community-led child tracking systems, inspired by the volunteer follow-up mechanisms used by YFS.

- Volunteers can help identify, monitor, and report enrollment gaps through digital registers or mobile apps.
- Collaboration with Anganwadis, E-Shram, and school cluster resource persons can enable real-time tracking of migrant child mobility.

10. Visuals & Data (Optional but Recommended)



With the Volunteers of Non-formal school



With the kids and volunteers of Non-formal school

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Transforming Tales

Visual imagery reflecting journalism or community engagement
