



## BREAKING TABOOS: YOUTH FOR INCLUSIVENESS

**Praveen Varghese Thomas**

*Research Scholar, Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum.*

### **Abstract**

*This article is practice oriented, augmented by the testimonials of a youth worker about, how a small group of youngsters influenced policy makers and bureaucrats to come up with programmes and strategies so as to provide conducive environment for transgender youth in society. This paper describes, unprecedented transformation initiated and executed by a group of young people belonging to a Post-graduate social science institute for a section of marginalised young people because of the choice they have made. The programme which had policy implications later aimed at delivering opportunities for all young people and targeted support for the most vulnerable. regrettably, the vast potential for young people to further contribute to their communities goes largely untapped. Youth workers can organize activism efforts, lobbying policy makers, educating their peers, and taking leadership roles around the world. Effective youth work helps young people to develop essential personal and social skills and an understanding of their strengths and potential.*

### **Introduction**

Young people gain more from their experience when they are actively involved and evolve along with the process. Research also suggests that programmes for youth which are developed through a partnership of youth and adults could be highly effective in developing youths' skills and if social participation is ensured.. Such an involvement benefits both the young people who identify, conceptualise, campaigns and execute programmes, besides the beneficiaries of the same. Youth working for youth ensures the ownership of the ideology put forward and it becomes socially accepted if it is properly mentored and executed. Peer education can support young people in developing positive group norms and sometimes it can even interrupt an existing taboo which is seemingly hard to break. The youth- adult partnership is a key and one among the catalyst in social transformation leading to sustainable development and more importantly it gives a feeling of ownership. This paper is an illustration following with discussion on the process behind a recent initiative by young people from a college<sup>1</sup> in India, providing space and acceptance for the trans-variant young people up to the policy level. – *a small step towards silent revolution.*

### **Frame Work**

This article is practice oriented, supported by research components and augmented by the testimonials of a youth worker about, how a small group of youngsters influenced policy makers and bureaucrats to come up with programmes and strategies so as to provide conducive environment for transgender youth in the society. This paper describes about the unprecedented transformation and change initiated and executed by a group of young people belonging to a Post-graduate social science institute for a section of marginalised young people because of the choice they have made. The programme which had policy implications later aimed at delivering opportunities for all young people and targeted support for the most vulnerable.

### **Description (Background)**

The idea of such an interface evolved almost quiet serendipitously. It all started with an invited talk by Surya, a Cine-artist and a transgender. Surya, being a transgender activist fired up the youth with the experiences and perspectives shared. This interface triggered in them the intention of cobbling 'something' that would mitigate the identity crisis experienced by the transgender and ease their agony arising out of this. However, this died down fast as they got into their daily activities.



Almost a month passed, before another trigger happened. Some of the youth who watched a TV program were touched by another interview that Surya gave. In response to whether the society would accept them, Surya shot back with anger coupled with pride, ' a College as different as Loyola has accepted us!!!' this rekindled their energy and they decided to do something more substantial towards promoting the cause. No matter how involved young people are and how seriously they are into social transformation or social activism, or at the intersection of politics, social transformation and social activism, normally encounters road bumps. Society perceives young people with uncertainty because of the tenderness and volatility' of their

<sup>1</sup> Loyola College of Social Sciences, Trivandrum India (where the youth worker associated )



age.’ Moreover it matters also to society ‘who you are and where you are from. Most importantly it also matters on what youth are working on and for whom they are working.

Breaking all the limitations, a group of young people have decided to do ‘something’ on November 20<sup>th</sup> 2015 a day to commemorate transgender remembrance day.

**But then what to do?? What next?**

The team comprising of youth undertook a mini research on the transgender community and came up with healthy collaboration with the transgender community. The collaboration helped to recognise the desire and aspirations of young people among the transgender community to be at a school/ college and treated as **normal** beings. However, they are often excluded from the education system in India because of the stigma attached. In some parts of India transgender are treated as good omens and objectified which is actually not a privilege but keeps them “off the road”.

The team with the help of other students and college authorities decided to bring transgender community to the campus as chief guest and declare the campus as trans- variant friendly campus which is the very first of its kind in India. Slowly the idea got its momentum; public and private organisations joined hands with the college to ensure inclusive education for the marginalised section. Though law and legislation supports inclusive education the stigma attached to the community never allowed them to enter the lime light.

On November 20<sup>th</sup> -2015 Loyola College of Social Sciences, India with various other stake holders declared the campus as trans-variant friendly campus by raising voice for the them and by putting up the solidarity wall. 27 transgenders were present at the programme and the entire campus organised the event in a way that one among the transgender has said as follows

“ I have never felt so special till now in my life, infact I even doubt my existence but then my new friends made me feel that I am alive and I can do wonders”

Kiran – a transgender has put it another words “ shocked !! usually youngsters of college are among those who verbally abuse us and reinforces the stigma more;but today, together we made history”

**Outcomes**

What can a small college do at the policy level?  
The college declared the campus as the India’s first trans-variant friendly campus which attracted several public-private organisations and institutions. The ripples of this initiative reached public firms and even the Government welfare bodies. One among those was the Kerala State Youth Commission (KSYS). KSYS has reframed the system so as to have 10 transgenders among the 100 youth volunteers across the state. These volunteers are supposes to work with the different sections of youth and organize different programmes for the same. They will be paid with honorarium and the actual cost for conducting programmes and also for the documentation.



Since the inception of KSYC there was not even one transgender in the volunteer list, but then a small step by a group of college students was able to penetrate the existing system and thereby serve as a catalyze of acceptance for transgenders in the society – *one working for other*.

The group who has been invited to the college felt privileged and the overwhelming response from their counterparts at the college made them to open up.

Last year I was able to crack the entrance exam and got shortlisted for a PG course at the college, but then I was totally in a dilemma whether to join college or not... because of my identity – as a transgender ... I thought I have no space in the main stream.....  
But after attending the programme and enjoying the acceptance and respect from my peers I am double confident to go for it .. my passion !

**-Kiran**



## Pvt College to be Trailblazer in Integrating TGs into Social Mainstream

by Murali Manu

T'Puram's T. V. S. College of Social Sciences at Thokkuzhampatti is all set to become the nation's first transgender T.V. trailblazer. Gender Vertices, the first transgender social media platform, announced that the social media campaign in this regard will be made on Friday on the sidelines of Transgender Day of Action.

Transgender Day of Action is observed every year on November 19. It is a commemorative day for those who face discrimination on the basis of their gender identity.

From the evening academic session, the college will launch a social media campaign on Facebook, Twitter and other platforms to ensure successful implementation, which will be carried out with the

help of T. V. S. Government for training, awareness programmes for their experience for the welfare of the TG community.

The interest of our students to have transgender students in our college is a positive sign. It is a step towards social inclusion and equality. We will be providing them with the necessary support and facilities to help them integrate into the society.

We intend to put an end to gender discrimination on the campuses with this initiative by expressing our support to the TG community.

It is our hope that this initiative will help to create a more inclusive and supportive environment for transgender students in our college.

Two months ago, the students of the college had an interaction with TG trans-activist groups, which was organized under the aegis of the Department of Sociology. Following that, the students of the college decided to launch a social media campaign to support the TG community.

During the first semester, the transgender community will be invited to speak at the college and the students and faculty will provide them with the necessary support and facilities.

Also on Friday, a transgender day will be celebrated on the college premises.

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### Implications

Once the Youth becomes civically minded, they can contribute their time, ideas, and talents to better their communities. Youth participation acquires particular significance in democracy-building initiatives. But active citizenship cannot be expected to happen overnight when a person reaches voting age: it must be learned "by doing", ie. through everyday experiences such as opportunities to participate in shared decision-making, listening to different opinions, weighing options and consequences.

Rather than having new and revamped programmes/schemes every time, it is time to think about the youth groups working for one another. Coexistence !!

Youth work has the potential to engage, enrich and enhance the thinking of young people and facilitate them to act as a catalyst for social development. Understanding the society in a holistic manner will be key factor. The most effective programmes and campaigns for youth are those which encourage them to draw on their existing knowledge and experiences to analyse various social issues. You can be made proactive once they develop the confidence to question and share their views/opinions on a range of sensitive issues, thereby getting actively involved in developmental activities.

### Conclusion



responsibilities and how they can influence the decisions that affect their lives and their peers.

Youth have positive roles in their communities. Yet all too often, they are portrayed in a negative light. But then young people are already making substantial contributions to society leading new initiatives to improve their communities. Yet these contributions are frequently overlooked, with young voices going unheard. Even more regrettably, the vast potential for young people to further contribute to their communities goes largely untapped. Youth workers can organize activism efforts, lobbying policy makers, educating their peers, and taking leadership roles around the world. Effective youth work helps young people to develop essential personal and social skills and an understanding of their strengths and potential. It contributes to their understanding of their rights and