

# EMPOWERING UNDERPRIVILEGED YOUTH OF SLUMS: INVOLVING THE COMMUNITY

*A study of Saath's Youth Force Program*

*Dec 2014 – June 2015*



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## Contents

<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>5</b>
Methodology.....	5
Findings .....	6
Discussion.....	6
Recommendations .....	6
<b>Section - 1: Introduction</b> .....	<b>7</b>
1.1 Structure of the Report.....	8
<b>Section-2: The Context – Ahmedabad City and Saath NGO</b> .....	<b>9</b>
2.1 Urbanisation and Urban Youth .....	9
2.2 Saath .....	9
2.3 Program Implementation.....	9
<b>Section-3: The Study</b> .....	<b>12</b>
3.1 Background and Rationale .....	12
3.2 Objectives.....	12
3.3 Methods/Methodology.....	12
3.3.1 Orientation and understanding of the program .....	12
3.3.2 Research Instruments and Data Collection.....	13
<b>Section 4: Findings</b> .....	<b>15</b>
4.1 Juhanpura.....	15
4.1.1 Overview of the community .....	15
4.1.2 Group Interviews of the youth .....	15
4.1.3 Individual Interviews.....	15
4.2 Meghaninagar .....	16
4.2.1- Overview of the community:.....	16
4.2.2 – Group Interviews of the youth .....	16
4.2.3 Individual Interviews.....	17
4.3 Odhav .....	17
4.3.1 Overview of the community: .....	17
4.3.2 Group Interviews of the youth.....	18
4.3.3 Individual Interviews.....	18
<b>Section 5: Discussion</b> .....	<b>19</b>
<b>Section 6: Recommendations for program implementation</b> .....	<b>21</b>
<b>Limitations of the study</b> .....	<b>22</b>
<b>References</b> .....	<b>24</b>

## Foreword

Growing urbanization and the resulting strain on urban infrastructure and services is one of the most visible phenomena in India today. It is estimated that more than half of the country's population will live in cities by the year 2030. With this accelerated urbanization, the fastest growing segment of population is the urban poor. The urban share of poverty faces multiple deprivations, ranging from housing and basic services to livelihood, food security, nutrition, health and education, making the urban poor one of the most vulnerable sections of the population. According to Planning Commission estimates in 2007, there was a shortage of 28.4 million houses for the poor in urban areas. In addition, more than half of India's 80 million urban poor are malnourished and do not have access to safe drinking water or sanitation. In this scenario, policies and programs targeting the urban poor, gain specific relevance. Gujarat is India's third most urbanised state with 42.6% of its population living in urban areas. Ahmedabad is India's eighth largest city with a total population of 55.68 lakh in 2011. The State of the Urban Youth in India Report, UN Habitat, 2012, estimates that urban Gujarat has 43% youth in the age-group of 15-34 years, with the population of youth being 14.62 lakhs.

Saath, with its involvement of various sectors of slum development initiated "Youth Force" to focus on the holistic development of slum youth who are circumstantially deprived of the mentoring and atmosphere that one requires to grow in the rapidly urbanised world. With the regular counselling and the focus being the capacity building of the youth, Saath aims in preparing them as the agents of change towards slum development.

The report provides insights into how the youth program has reached out to the slum youth of Ahmedabad and how it can be taken forward in the direction of an integrated and wholesome growth of the youth as well as the slum communities. It can serve as a good example for in-depth, unbiased perspectives for program participants and stakeholders sharing the collective interest of a desired social impact.

**Rajendra Joshi**

**Saath**

Saath's involvement with the slum communities since past 25 years has led to many young interns and volunteers to take interest in the development process and provide an external perspective which is conducive to the design and implementation of various programs at a grassroots level. The evolution of slum communities being a dynamic one invites new challenges for an organisation to analyse and understand the changing needs and demands of the people and thus the involvement of young individuals carrying the potential of offering a fresh insight into the programs gives us the opportunity to reanalyse the magnitude of the desired social impact which we hope to create from our operations.

The report provides an external view of the youth program of Saath and caters to various inputs that are useful to strengthen Saath's efforts in improving the lives of slum youth and communities. We hope that it acts as a stimulant for other organisations and individuals involved in the process of slum development to understand Saath's approach of addressing various issues from the core in the realm of urban slum development.



**Niraj Jani**

**Saath**

## **Acknowledgments and Experience of the Researcher**

The curiosity in learning about the challenges of the underprivileged communities drove me to Saath. The learning commenced after the orientation from the Saath team about the various intervening approaches Saath takes to improve the lives of urban poor. It stimulated my mind to know more about CBO's (Community Based Organisations) with whom Saath was working from 1992 in ISDP (Integrated Slum Development Program) till recently. The quest became stronger to learn about human behaviour led me dig deeper in knowing about how people come together and form a collective to address challenges on their own. With the youth being on the focus, it became crucial in understanding their role in stimulating their communities towards betterment.

The experience was nourishing on many facets. There were challenges related to the new place and language but Saath's welcoming and amiable team helped in tackling them. Delving into Saath's history of working with the slum communities, it was enriching to learn about some very positive examples of individuals who fought back from their circumstances and rose above them to have an identity of their own. The study helped in developing a critical perspective and examine the gaps in the impact of the program and the potential solutions which can be implemented.

I am deeply thankful to many slum communities who confided in sharing some nuggets of their lives and thus helped in gaining deeper insight about humanity. Sincere thanks to Dipikaben(Odhav), Monicaben (Meghaninagar) and Hansaben, Afrozben and Sanjidaben( Juhanpura) for sparing their valuable time for taking for field visits and understand the areas in depth. The members of the youth program too have contributed immensely by devoting their time for rich interactions.

I would also like to thank Mr. Niraj Jani, Director of Saath Charitable Trust for his constant guidance and support in editing the report, Mr. Rajendra Joshi, Founder of Saath for providing insightful suggestions about the slum communities of Ahmedabad and Dr Siddharth Agarwal for his unflinching trust and valuable inputs in carrying out the study.

**Kanupriya Kothiwala**

## Executive Summary

### Challenges of slum youth in India

There are large numbers of underprivileged youth in India. The challenge faced especially by slum youth is not just unemployment, but of overall-youth development. In urban context, the challenge is more complicated since the youth is influenced by the popular culture prevailing in cities yet youth is ill-equipped to make informed choices.

The report seeks to better understand the impact of programs like “Youth Force” by Saath, an NGO based in Ahmedabad, Gujarat on the lives of urban slum youth and their communities and provide recommendations that can further enhance the program implementation. Saath, established in 1987 as a Public Charitable Trust, has been involved in various sectors of slum development including that of slum youth. Through the youth program, Saath tried to address the challenges associated with the slum youth through capacity building exercises, regular meetings and vocational training through their formal and informal training programmes.

The introduction of new SDG's (Sustainable Development Goals) where SDG 11 mandates "Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" calls for eliminating social exclusion that has been witnessed along with urbanization and promoting inclusive urbanization (United Nations 2015). In this context the efforts of organisations like Saath towards the micro (or slum) level implementation by including the deprived sections (especially youth, in this context) of the society to bring real urban inclusiveness.

### The Study

To understand the aspirations and challenges of slum youth, 30 youngsters were interviewed collectively and individually from three slums in Ahmedabad city. The slums were in the purview of Saath's program of youth empowerment. Along with the interviewing youth, the three slum communities were also understood to have a better insight of the socio-economic environment of the youth. The objectives of the study were –

- a) To understand the overall aspirations, challenges of the youth enrolled in Saath's "Youth Force Program".
- b) To understand the perspectives of youth towards Saath program
- c) To provide a set of potential recommendations which can further contribute to strengthen the program.

### Methodology

The methodology consisted of orientation of the program from the team, followed by the visit to the program community centres and youth activity centres. The sample areas were then selected in consultation with Saath team members with the help of the director. The three sample areas were - Juhapura, Meghaninagar and Odhav.

Information was collected about the history of sampled areas, livelihood scenario, education of older generation, living conditions etc. through community interactions in groups and individually. During the transect walks in the slum communities, some vulnerable pockets were also explored.

The sub pockets of the areas were taken for to have a more in-depth understanding of the challenges of the communities, out of which some of them were highly vulnerable. Group and individual interactions were undertaken with slum youth enrolled in Saath's youth programme.

The literature review of the subject included Google search for 'slum youth challenges', 'urban poverty' etc. and review of consultation of various reports such as UN HABITAT Report, State of Urban Youth in India, AMC Health Plan, UN Reports, Census of India, AMC Health Plan and some documents from Saath.

The observations were analysed and recommendations were drawn after a thorough discussion with the Saath team. The study was then presented to the Saath team

### Findings

Many youth were unsure of pursuing professions of their choice. Lack of knowledge, financial means and parental support were barriers expressed along with the desire of independence. There were few youngsters who expressed satisfaction of engaging with vocational activities like retail management, nursing and beauty parlour courses (among girls).

Girls faced restriction of movement and explore opportunities. Married girls with children expressed challenges to work and contribute to family income. Few girls displayed confidence to pursue opportunities and credited parental support.

Some youth were hesitant in expressing their ideas and opinions. This posed challenges to find jobs requiring good communication skills.

Many youth felt the need to focus on the present available opportunities in terms of overcoming their challenges. Some girls were not confident of overcoming societal restrictions.

The aspirations and challenges of the youth were mostly in tandem with the socio-economic climate. For e.g. Girls of Juhanpura (a pure Muslim neighbourhood) had aspirations which they wished to pursue within the confinements of their neighbourhood in comparison to other girls of Odhav and Meghaningar who had an inclination towards more diverse aspirations.

However, there were examples of positive deviant families within the communities where women and girls displayed a strong sense of confidence. Most of the youth saw the program being a platform to meet and interact with other people and visit places they have never been before. With regard to the training program of Saath, many of them had a strong conviction regarding the need to being employed. Retail management and beauty parlour courses were the top preferences among boys and girls respectively.

### Discussion

On the basis of observations, it can be analysed that a lot many issues pertaining to youth are based on the social environment that encompass the youth of the slums. The volatile atmosphere of the slums is usually not conducive to the growth of the youth and thus it poses many challenges like restriction of movement for girls, the youth being disinterested, parental pressure on the youth, financial incapability on the part of parents and inadequate guidance that is required for the youth to grow.

### Recommendations

An integrated community based approach where the focus of all the programs of Saath can be concentrated on one area, keeping in view of the evolving needs of the communities. These operations have the potential to address the challenges pertaining to the socio-economic environment of the communities, thereby benefitting the youth in the process. Capacity building of the engaged community representatives is another direction which has the potential to provide an all-encompassing support to the program during the advent of any financial crisis affecting the implementation of the program. The utilisation of resources and funds can be focussed on strengthening the program efforts while the core focus being on strengthening the capacity of the team.

## Section - 1: Introduction

Along with development of the cities with a high-income and upper middle class segments, big buildings, institutions, and later malls, there also grew a large section of impoverished population which contributed their sweat and toil for the development of roads, buildings, office complexes and malls. This bereft section unfortunately resorted to form their own, excluded world in slums where accessing basic services for living still remains a challenge. Within that impoverished section, there is a population of youngsters or “slum youth” who have aspirations, hope and live in an environment of opportunities, challenges and uncertainties.

There is no written or conceptualised definition of “urban slum youth” anywhere. Thus, understanding about the youth from the slums is drawn from the differences between other urban youth in terms of opportunities and challenges. Much of the studies done on urban youth in India and other developing countries cater to issues like drug abuse (Sarangi *et al*, 2003), sub-optimal health and nutrition (Izutsu *et al*, 2006), tobacco consumption (Gupta V *et al*, 2010) adolescent and sexual transitions (Potdar and Mmari, 2011; Alexendar *et al*, 2007, Jjheeboy, 1998, Sodhi and Verma, 2003). While they do conjure up the essential aspects of today’s youngsters, there is a greater need to delve into the aspirations and challenges of youth, particularly from the underprivileged section which thwart their potential and drive their daily interactions with their lives.

While the policy documents concerning youth in India have acknowledged youth most of them are either aligned in the production of labour and boosting employment (National Skills Day, GOI’s National Skill Development Mission launched on World Youth Skills Day, July 7 2015) or measures like promoting scouting and guiding, adventure schemes in the name of “promoting holistic youth development and leadership” as mentioned in National Youth Policy, 2014. Such measures, though aimed with the noble intention to address the gaps of adequate platforms for youth to grow their potential often overlook the foundational aspects that drive youth’s capacities in developing a more productive workforce. These are some issues which contribute to the existing, larger dialogue of achieving “urban inclusiveness” in contemporary development practices as Poornima Dore argues “Most of the discourse on the youth as a ‘demographic dividend’ looks at them as productive employable resources. It is important to also see them as thinking feeling individuals with their own set of experiences, aspirations and goals: whose physical and psychological wellbeing will determine the shape of things to come.” (UN HABITAT, 2012).

In the Global policy scenario, United Nations Sustainable Development Goals acknowledge exclusion as a pressing concern, manifested in Goal 11 which mandates "Making cities inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable" and calls for eliminating social exclusion that has been witnessed along with urbanization and promoting inclusive urbanization (United Nations 2015) or in Goal 8, which envisages "Promoting sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all." The title of the first of Habitat III’s 10 policy units is “Right to the City, and Cities for All” (UN Habitat 2015). The looming question is where these aspirations see underprivileged youth? Will they cater the need for these young people to make better choices and take charge of their lives? What role their socio-economic environment/communities play? Are these policies and programmes catering to the neediest and vulnerable section of the society? The following report tries to address these questions by understanding the role of Saath, an NGO based in Ahmedabad, through its program “Youth Force” aiming to empower the youth from slums.



## 1.1 Structure of the Report

The report is divided into six sections. Following the introduction, Section 2 delves into the context of Ahmedabad city, the work of Saath in improving the lives of slum communities as well as the program implementation of the youth program. Section 3 outlines the methodology involved in study. Section 4 discusses the findings that emerged from the study. The last section discusses the findings and the recommendations that can be considered by Saath to implement in their program efforts.

## Section-2: The Context – Ahmedabad City and Saath NGO

### 2.1 Urbanisation and Urban Youth

Gujarat is India's third most urbanised state with 42.6% of its population living in urban areas. Ahmedabad is India's eighth largest city with a total population of 55.68 lakh in 2011 (Urban Management Centre, 2013). The city is home to a slum, slum-like and chawl (population collectively designated by Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation as Key Focus Areas or KFAs) of 34 lakhs.

The country's youth population (15-32 years) in 2011 comprises 35 per cent of the urban population [Government of India, 2011, NSS 66th round] and 32 per cent of the rural population. The population of the youth in India in the age- group 15-34 years is expected to increase from 353 million in 2001 to 430 million in 2011 and then continue to increase to 464 million in 2021 (UN HABITAT & IRIS, 2012).

It is estimated that urban Gujarat has 43% youth in the age-group of 15-34 years, as according to The State of the Urban Youth in India Report, UN Habitat, 2012. Using Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation's (AMC) estimate of Key Focus Areas (slum, slum-like, chawl) of 34 lakhs, youth of 15-34 years in KFAs is estimated to be 14.62 lakh.

### 2.2 Saath

Established in 1987 and registered as a Public Charitable Trust in 1989, Saath has been involved in various sectors of slum development (housing, healthcare, microfinance, livelihoods) and has supported millions of deprived slum population by providing them livelihood services, health education and employment.

Saath addressed the challenges associated with the slum youth through the program of "Youth Force." The programme focuses on enhancing the capabilities of youth to make them self-reliant that they emerge as the leaders of development and further stimulate the disadvantaged youth of the communities.

Saath provides the platform for the youth which facilitate the exchange of ideas within themselves and where they can be motivated to redeem their lost spirit by the cushioning of guidance and support through various enriching activities. Their efforts have been crystallized in the form of 'Youth Force'.

### 2.3 Program Implementation

#### 2.3.1 Identifying the areas through baseline surveys

The first step involves identifying areas by conducting baseline surveys where youth are deprived of skills and knowledge and the organisation finds it feasible to involve itself with the youth.

#### 2.3.2 Mobilizing and stimulating them about the external environment through regular meetings, exposure visits:

The youth of the particular community are encouraged to come together and are motivated to express their ideas and skills in the form of various activities such as by playing games or organizing activities. It serves as a platform to sensitize them to external environment by taking them to exposure visits (For example - catering them to biodiversity parks to understand biodiversity etc.)

#### 2.3.3 Identifying their potential through various activities:

Through various activities conducted such as creative competitions, their talents and skills are recognised which helps in identifying the direction in which the youth can establish themselves.

#### 2.3.4 Training and counselling of the youth as per their skills:

The youth are provided with the counselling on the choice of their careers they are willing to pursue and is suitable to them. They are mentored by the counsellors who help them in selecting right avenues and are trained accordingly. Many youth are motivated to finish their school education or college and are provided assistance.

#### 2.3.5 Financial Literacy and other life skills training:

The youth are made aware the value of the entitlements and are trained on how to manage their savings and maintain accounts so that can complement towards their financial growth as well as livelihood training program.

#### 2.3.6 Preparing for the placements:

After the completion of training, the youth are prepared for placements through exams and viva voice. Job fairs are also organised in association with different companies by the organisation to boost employment opportunities.

#### 2.3.7 Integrated Training

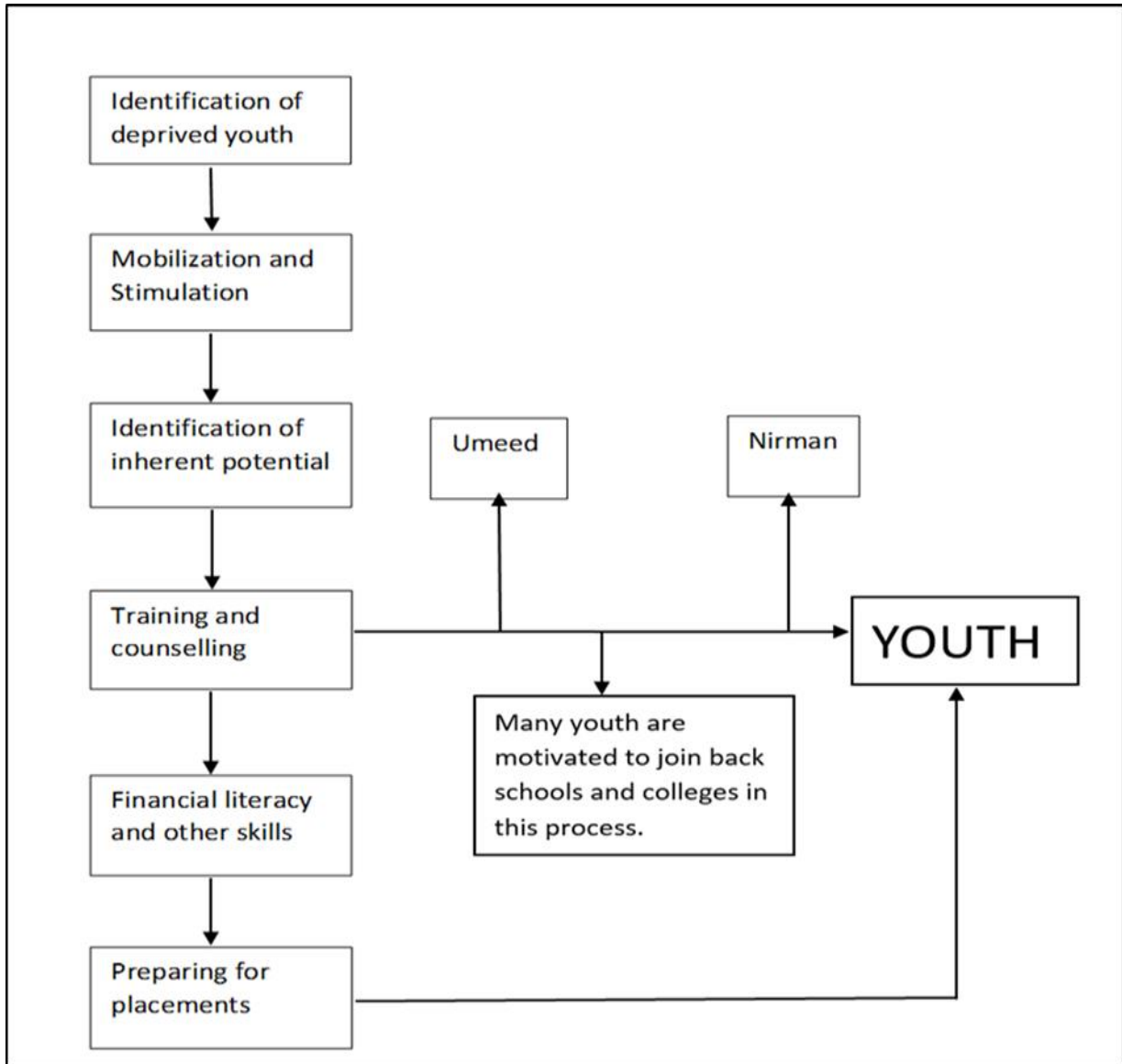
The youth are also encouraged to avail benefits of other existing programs of Saath. For example- Urban Resource Centres (URC's) provide assistance to youth by supporting them in procuring entitlements such as Aadhar, Voter ID etc.

#### 2.3.8 Umeed – The Formal Training Program

The programme lays emphasis on the growth and development of youth in formal job-sector such as Retail management, Bedside-Patient Assistance, Office Administration etc. Saath does a market scan and identify potential youth from the community capable for the job. The youth are trained with theoretical knowledge and then practical on-the job training with basic spoken English and IT skills. 90 percent of participants who complete the course are placed in jobs; 37 percent are women; 64 percent are from Dalit communities; and 16 percent are from minority communities. Umeed graduates have been placed in leading companies like Hutch, I Call, Subhiksha, Reliance Fresh, TVS, Godrej, Hotel Fortune, Landmark, Shree Computers, DTDC and Café Coffee Day, HDFC Bank, ICICI and ABN-Amro.

#### 2.3.9 Nirmaan – The Informal Training Program

Nirman is a 2-year old programme which focuses on the informal job-sector training such as carpentry, masonry, electrician and plumbing. Along with that, development of life skills such as leadership qualities, communication skills, training for safety are also encouraged. The



youth are made to follow a step-by-step process for training. Before placements, the team also set their exams and viva which helps in preparing them in getting employment.

Figure 1 Program Implementation of “Youth Force” by Saath

## Section-3: The Study

### 3.1 Background and Rationale

As established from the above sections, there is a greater need to understand and involve the trajectories of urban slum youth which transcend beyond the needs of employment and having a secured life. Owing to the volatile environments these youth come from and lack of any stimulation, the youth of the slums find it extremely difficult to understand the needs and demands of the big, bustling cities beyond their area confinements. Therefore, developing rapport and trust takes a lot of time to build up in the minds of youth.

In the 2012 novel *Behind the Beautiful Forevers*, Katherine Boo covers the complex trajectories of the residents of an illegal settlement called Annawadi in Mumbai's Airport road which hosts millions of migrants as rag pickers. Her documentation of the stories of youth of Annawadi intermingles with the complex social, political and economic climate of their immediate surroundings which influences their aspirations and struggles. This intersection of the youth with their vulnerabilities – physical, social, political and psycho-emotional is thus, crucial to understand their challenges and capabilities.

### 3.2 Objectives

The objectives of the study are:

- a) To understand the overall aspirations, challenges of the youth enrolled in Saath's "Youth Force Program"
- b) To understand the perspectives of youth towards Saath program
- c) To provide a set of potential recommendations which can further contribute to strengthen the program.

### 3.3 Methodology

#### 3.3.1 Orientation and understanding of the program

The orientation of the program took place in the month of July 2014 and the study was initiated in the month of December 2014, followed by March 2015 and completed in the month of June 2015.

The orientation program consisted of understanding of various programs of Saath, followed by visits to the program community centres and youth activity centres. The initial interactions with the youth gave an insight to their aspirations and obstacles they face. The visits to slum communities were taken to get acquainted with the social environment that encompasses their daily lives. Initial interactions in the slum communities were conducted to learn about the living conditions (physical living environment such as water supply, type of housing, toilets etc.), forms of livelihood, education and the general history of the community. These visits helped in understanding the general challenges of the impoverished urban slum population and design the key themes and the motive of the study.

The three sample areas were then selected with the help of Saath team – Juhanpura, Meghaningar and Odhav. These were the catchment areas of Saath's youth program where the youth from different slums had been formed into groups by Saath facilitators and field functionaries. These three slums were taken in sample owing to their different socio-economic profile, the knowledge of which can contribute to strengthening of the program and understand varied perspectives of the youth.

Information was collected to understand the living conditions through community interactions and transect walks to have a deeper understanding about the evolution of the communities and so the acquired knowledge is valuable to the organisation for their outreach programmes. Many vulnerable areas within the slums were also spotted and so have been included in this report. The youth of the program however did not belong to these vulnerable slum pockets.

The literature review of the subject included Google search using keywords such as “Slum youth challenges”, “poverty”, “urban youth” etc. Reports such as UN HABITAT Report, State of Urban Youth in India, AMC Health Plan, Saath documents on area profiling of Ahmedabad city, a working research paper entailing Saath’s previous operations were reviewed.

### 3.3.2 Research Instruments and Data Collection

#### *Youth Interviews*

A questionnaire was designed keeping in view of the broad thematic areas of the aspirations of youth along with possible probes for both collective and individual interviews. Questions also included the educational background of the youth, engagement with other activities, parental activities, aspirations, obstacles faced, their ways of overcoming them as well as perspective towards the program. The respondents were the youth groups, in which one girl and one boy were individually interviewed to have a deeper insight into their trajectories and capture nuances related to gender. Group interviews were taken to have diverse perspectives among the youth members. 30 youth were interviewed with 10 youth representing each slum in a group. The interactions with the youth groups were recorded and relevant findings were gleaned from the recordings. The interviews of the youth group were conducted at their field centres with the help of the facilitators and field officers. The field officers of Saath accompanied the author to most field visits while some were taken alone. Most interactions were conducted in Hindi. The field officers facilitated translating from Gujarati whenever respondents preferred to speak in Gujarati.

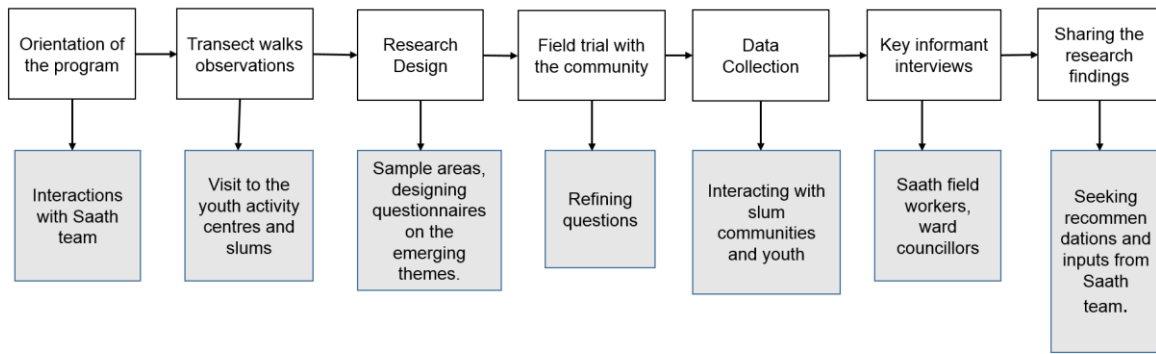
#### *Community Interviews*

For community interviews, broad pointers about their living conditions were kept in mind. Their pointers were later enhanced through the inputs of the key informant interviewees and during the field trial with the community.

Interactions took place within the residents of the slum communities. Qualitative data was collected through individual and collective interactions. The key informants were Saath field officers of the three sample areas and a ward councillor of one of the sample areas who oriented about the slum communities.

Group interviews within the slum communities were conducted to learn about the living conditions and challenges of the slums. The residents of the slums were contacted on the spot during the transect walks and told about the purpose of the visit and on the basis of their willingness to give time, the interactions were conducted. Often the residents from nearby houses would also join in the interactions owing to their eagerness. Conversations entailing a deeper description of the locality would be recorded after their verbal consent while in some conversations, on the spot handwritten notes were made and were later documented in MS Word.

The observations were written and analysed. They were followed by the recommendations which were drawn after the thorough discussion with the core team of Saath. The study was then presented to the Saath team for their inputs. The report is a final outcome of the inputs combined with the observations of the author.



*Figure 2 Methodology Incorporated in the study*

## Section 4: Findings

### 4.1 Juhanpura

#### 4.1.1 Overview of the community

A neighbourhood in the New West Zone of Ahmedabad, Juhanpura has an unfortunate history of “involuntary resettlement, spatial confinement, culture of exclusion and disenfranchisement.” (Thomas, 2015). Before 2002, the locality was a simple economically disadvantaged Muslim neighbourhood, however the riots of 2002 attracted an influx of Muslim migrants from various parts of the city who established a Muslim ghetto of their own. Most of the public services in the locality are replaced by private initiatives of affluent Muslims who self-financed hospitals, libraries, educational institutes etc. Sankalitnagar in Juhanpura is the prominent suburb in the centre of Juhanpura from where Saath runs its youth activity and vocational training centre. The locality is divided in several wards with alphabetical names “A ward, B ward” etc. with each ward having around 300 households.

#### 4.1.2 Group Interviews of the youth

In Juhanpura, the youth members were all girls and women as explained by the Saath field officers that the extreme volatile environment of the locality is not yet conducive for members of both genders to come together. The group had most young girls from the age group of 18 to married women of 30. Most of them lived in different parts of Sankalitnagar and Vejalpur, another locality adjoining Sankalitanagar.

10 members were interviewed in group. Most girls and women were school dropouts. Some of them had their families migrated from other states such as Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh and parts of Rajasthan. Most of the members were involved in domestic chores except few who were involved in working from home as tailors, making kites and selling food products, thereby contributing to family income. The husbands and fathers of the women and girls worked as daily wage labourers, shopkeepers, owned small businesses, weavers etc.

In Juhanpura, a young girl aspired to become a doctor but was currently pursuing her training in Bed Side Patient Assistance course (a course akin to nursing) and a young girl (who was attending college) aspired to set up her own business. The women who could not educate themselves, aspired that their children are educated and become self-reliant. Girls and women expressed restrictions by families which hinder them to go out on their own and explore opportunities. One woman also recounted her experience of facing domestic violence which she also said that she is able to overcome by fighting boldly. The women and girls demanded more employment opportunities within their locality which would not entail them to travel far. Girls expressed that they can start focusing on the present available opportunities to them. They found the Youth program of Saath a platform to socialise with people and also interact with the outside world through occasional exposure visits. One of the girls and her friends aspired to teach poor children of the locality as part of their self-driven initiative and sought encouragement from Saath facilitators.

#### 4.1.3 Individual Interviews

##### *Interviewee: Amir*

Amir is 25 years old. He has been involved with Saath since many years and has facilitated mobilising the community in Juhanpura in the previous outreach programmes of Saath. He owns a photocopy shop in the outskirts of Sankalitnagar and claims it to be very famous for students within Juhanpura. He only studied till class X in Juhanpura and could not pursue his education due to financial difficulties in the family. Since he gets the chance to interact with many students who approach him for their work related to documents, he is able to get a lot of information about entrance exams and job applications which he keeps on spreading word among other students. Many students also approach him for his advice on job applications.



He aspired to establish his own business of computers but his family never supported him and discouraged him constantly. It is after joining the Youth program he feels energised towards pursuing his passion and overcome the negativity he has faced. He has recently married and looks forward to expand his venture of photocopy business.

*Interviewee: Fatima*

Fatima is a 19 year old girl living in Sankaltnagar. A school dropout after class X, she remained confined indoors till she joined the Bed Side Patient Assistance (Nursing) program of Saath and intern at Ikra hospital as a trainee nurse. Born and bred in Ahmedabad, she has not been to many places in and out of Ahmedabad. Her father is a daily wage labourer and her mother is a housewife. Even though she took the training in Micro-entrepreneurship, she could pursue any opportunity related to it. When asked about her aspirations, she said that she wanted to become a doctor but had to reconcile with nursing owing to financial problems for which she had to drop her formal education during high school and stay at home.

She likes her job as she is able to treat the sick, similar to a doctor's work. Talking about her barriers she said that she has to deal with a lot of people of her neighbourhood and family members who do not understand the importance of any girl to be self-reliant. They do not even consider her going out alone very appropriate. To overcome that, she said that she tries to focus on the available opportunities and be active in the activities in the youth group as she can.

## 4.2 Meghaninagar

### 4.2.1- Overview of the community:

Meghaninagar is the ward in the North Zone of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation with the population below 75,000 as according to the AMC Health Plan. In comparison to Juhanpura, the ward has a more diverse population with migrants from different states settling here to work in mills which have been shut down by now. According to the locals, around 70%-80% population lives in chawls, slums or slum-like areas. Ambedkarnagar and Premnagar are two prominent chawl areas in Meghananigar where people work as lorry workers, shopkeepers and labourers. The ward has a substantial share of hosting vulnerable slum populations such as Netanagar and Shastrisagar where the houses are made of kuccha material with water leaking from the rooftops in monsoon and no sanitation services. A vulnerable slum population resides in Chamundanagar where most families work as ragpickers to support their living.

### 4.2.2 – Group Interview of the youth

10 youth (5 girls and 5 boys) participated in the interview held at the youth activity centre of Meghaninagar. Many youth lived in the nearby wards of Saraspur and Saijpur. Most youth were the natives of Gujarat apart from a few whose families migrated from Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. The fathers of the youth worked as sweet making, labourers, run small businesses and shoe sellers. The mothers were housewives except for one respondent whose mother worked as an Aaganwadi worker. Half of the youth had passed school and were enrolled in some degree course, while some had dropped out of school due to financial incapacity or family pressure (in the case of girls). Boys were involved in activities like daily entry operators, technicians, training for police while girls were enrolled in beauty parlour courses, electrician course<sup>1</sup> and there was one girl who was not pursuing anything because of hesitation and family pressure. The youth had diverse career aspirations such as setting up smaller businesses, police service, acting, singing etc. They however expressed challenges such as not receiving encouragement from parents and lack of financial means. They felt should focus on the present available opportunities and see where they lead them to.

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<sup>1</sup> The Nirman program of Saath which provides training of woman electricians.

They saw youth programme as a platform to be a part of different activities but expressed frustration on the political forces that operate in their locality which often hinders their activities pertaining to community development

#### 4.2.3 Individual Interviews

*Interviewees: Anju and Mihir*

Anju and Mihir shared a similar scenario. Both of them pursued their education till class XII. Anju works as a data entry operator while Mihir works as an AC technician. They both have been involved in the program since a year. Anju said that she is never able to make the most of the meetings because she does not get time out of her busy schedule. Mihir has been active though. Anju's father had a heart attack because of which he cannot work anymore and so she works as a data entry operator. Mihir said that he could not complete his education owing to financial problems in his family, his father he told is a school teacher teaching Mathematics in a private school.

Talking about their aspirations, Anju said that wants to become a singer while Mihir wants to become an actor. They said that it is difficult for them to pursue these activities since their family is not financially capable to get them enrolled in singing or acting classes. Both of them felt that there is not much hope for them to do anything regarding their aspirations so they should focus on their respective fields in which they are working.

Anju, even though is never able to attend much events and activities, she feels that she has been able to voice her opinions and express her ideas in awareness activities like cleanliness drives. Mihir, on the other hand was quite active as a youth member and went to Vadodara<sup>2</sup> with other people of Saath to attend the training program on leadership.

### 4.3 Odhav

#### 4.3.1 Overview of the community:

Odhav is located in the East Zone ward of Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. It serves as a headquarters for GIDC (Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation) which accelerated industrialisation in Gujarat. According to the locals, the Government of Gujarat acquired the land of farmers and provided them work in the mills and industries for exchange. People from Maisana (100 km from Ahmedabad), Patan (Gujarat), Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra, settled here owing to work as labourers due to the presence of different factories and cloth mills. GIDC factories are in the vicinity which provides livelihood to thousands of people of the community. Women mostly are engaged in working from home sewing, making *chuna*<sup>3</sup>, necklaces, decorative lights and weaving *torans*.<sup>4</sup> The place also inhabits people from Rabari<sup>5</sup> community.

The ward also hosts thousands of impoverished population living in vulnerable slums like Bhavinagar Tekra and Jantanagar Chapra. A canal passes through Bhavinagar Tekra known as Kharikat canal which surrounds the slum houses nearby. The canal has its own risks to the slum population since often the children fell in the canal and the people release all their household waste. The residents are exposed to the pungent smell of the canal and risks of infections. In Jantanagar Chapra, many households live in temporary squatters and shacks with no access to public services. A newly formed residential locality hosts the impoverished population which has been rehabilitated from different areas in Ahmedabad with no services.

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<sup>2</sup> A major industrial, educational and cultural hub, approximately 110 km from Ahmedabad.

<sup>3</sup> A chemical used in drugs and medicines.

<sup>4</sup> A decorative piece usually hung at the entrances of the doors in Indian homes.

<sup>5</sup> Rabaris are nomadic herders who live scattered throughout Gujarat and Rajasthan. Their livelihood is mainly to rear cattle. The Rabari women are identified as wearing a gold nose ring.

#### 4.3.2 Group interviews of the youth

Youth who were enrolled in the youth programme came from areas within and nearby areas of Odhav. 5 boys and 5 girls were interviewed in a group. Most of the youth were natives of Gujarat. Most of the fathers were workers in cloth mills, small businesses like selling local food products, clothing and embroidery business like plastics, while most of the mothers worked as housewives apart from one respondent whose mother stitched from home. Most of the youth were school graduates and were pursuing some degree or professional courses among both girls and boys. A diverse range of aspirations was also seen in Odhav with many girls having an inclination towards athletics and among boys to join armed forces. Girls were also pursuing engineering and other professional courses while boys aspired to set up businesses and sports (cricket). Some youth who had undergone the training in Saath's retail management program, did not know the direction they could progress or find employment.

#### 4.3.3 Individual Interviews

##### *Interviewees: Aditi and Rajat*

Aditi has been involved in the program since past nine months and pursued her training in Retail management. Academically, she is pursuing her bachelor's degree in arts. She spent a large part of her childhood in Madhya Pradesh till her father shifted to Ahmedabad for financial reasons. He has his own stall selling local food products. She enjoys being a part of youth force since that enables her to interact with many people.

She aspires to become a teacher by observing the job of teachers at her college. However, she feels that she lacks confidence to express herself in front of people despite the support of the family at home. She also feels that she cannot speak English that well and does not have the atmosphere which is supportive to her in acquiring that skill.

She feels that if she seeks help and guidance from her teachers and volunteer for teaching to the children of slums, she will be able to overcome her hesitation and steadily move in the direction of her pursuits.

Rajat has been involved in the program since the time Aditi joined and like her, even pursued his training in Retail management. He is pursuing his bachelor's degree in Management from a private college. He has been living in Ahmedabad but he originally hails from Uttar Pradesh. His father is a contractor. He finds the youth program as a way to get exposure and meet different people.

Talking about his aspirations, he is not sure of what he wants to pursue ahead. He said that he wants to be a popular celebrity, but could not figure out what he should be doing. He is not being able to take interest in the academic course that he is pursuing. He says that he wants to be independent, but feels that his parents will not support him in his idea of being independent.

## Section 5: Discussion

### 5.1 Aspirations

#### 5.1.1 Contextual Factors:

Youth from all the three slums have diverse aspirations which reflect their immediate environment. For e.g. Girls from Juhanpura prefer occupations which can be pursued from home however this does not necessarily apply to all the respondents since one girl expressed a more outgoing aspiration owing to her family support. Women who could not study further aspire that their children are able to do so. These aspirations are reflective of their contextual environment that influences their ideas. The youth (mostly girls) from Meghaninagar and Odhav had more outgoing aspirations owing to the cultural differences where mostly men and women were working together in contributing to family income and had relatively less restrictions.

#### 5.1.2 Fulfilment with other vocations:

Youth who were involved with other vocations/part-time jobs displayed a sense of fulfilment and independence. While not all of these jobs were financially secure for long term, engagement with such vocations always help in nurturing the potential and work as a stepping stone towards fulfilling their aspirations.

#### 5.1.3 Aspirations distant from their realities:

Some aspirations of the youth were inclined towards careers which were external to their circle of influence (For e.g. careers like singing and acting which require entailing risk and is uncertain in terms of establishing oneself). These aspirations are possible reflection of their continuous interface with the urban world which promises an allure of glamour and fame. These aspirations require to be understood and considered as a part of their growth and can be encouraged simultaneously while pursuing more certain opportunities.

#### 5.1.4 Lack of direction among the youth:

There were also a set of youth who did not have a strong sense of direction as emerged in the interviews or were not happy with their present engagements. Factors that contribute to such traits are usually inadequate exposure to different opportunities and parental discouragement which is synonymous to the volatile environment of the slums. Such anxieties require sensitivity and willingness to listen to the youth by social development workers and counsellors and understand their immediate environment.

### 5.2 Parental Engagement:

Among the youth interviewed above, parental engagement is a recurring factor that influences their daily activities. Most parents, guided by certain norms and ideals of their community pressurise their children to act in a certain way which is not in sync with their aspirations, as reflected in the interviews. However, many parents within these interviews were supportive (For e.g. A college going girl from Juhanpura who expressed a more outgoing and bold streak in comparison to other girls described her father's support in making her capable to face the world. In her words "My father raised me as a boy and taught me that fear is not an option to live with"). Such examples of positive deviant families can be nurtured within the community which have the power to influence other members within the community.

### 5.3 Financial Incapacity:

Many youth cited financial incapacity as one of the major factors for their inability to pursue directions of their interest. Some youth were engaged in different vocations (Beauty Parlour, Data Entry) which helped them gain experience and were fulfilling since it assured them a financial incentive thus giving confidence of their ability to become financially independent to a certain extent. This existing potential and confidence of being financially self-reliant can be nurtured by motivating them to save, teaching them to manage savings and budgeting their daily expenses for setting up small corpus (in the form of fixed deposits in their bank accounts) which they can utilise to pursue their interests.

### 5.4 Gender-based restrictions:

The program has benefitted many girls and women in getting a platform to share their opinions and ideas, there still existed a number of girls and women who were not able to step out of their confinements. Juhapura, in comparison to Meghaningar and Odhav had most women and girls who faced restriction of movement. Their inclination towards pursuing work from home testifies to their limitation of movement. Women and girls can be gently stimulated by providing training of vocation programmes that befit their interests (such as beauty parlour) or motivated to establish through small businesses (such as selling food products from home or stitching) by following examples of other women in the locality.

### 5.5 Establishing networks in more vulnerable sections:

During the field visits in the communities, it was observed that none of the youth belonged to many vulnerable slum communities. The youth from such kind of communities can be involved to understand more challenges and their potential can be nurtured.

## Section 6: Recommendations for program implementation

### 6.1 Involving the community and the youth:

Anthropologists and educators like Shawn Ginwright and Julio Cammarota writing in the context of social justice in the United States believe that “the limits of current youth development models are bound by an inability to examine the complex social, economic and political forces that bear on the lives of urban youth. A discussion of these forces is particularly important for youth who struggle with the issues identity, racism, sexism and police brutality and poverty supported by unjust economic policies.”(Ginwright and Cammarota, 2002).

While this statement is in the context of political and social unrest in America, the similar need emerges to examine this statement with the context of India’s slum youth where the immediate social environment and the communities play a crucial role in their development, as emerged in the findings. Therefore certain suggestions may be implicated from this study to involve the youth and their community.

An integrated based approach can be executed which provides inter-linkages in the programs run by Saath focusing entirely on the communities with the core focus being on empowering the communities along with the youth.

#### 6.1.1 A need-based approach

A need-based approach should be followed and implemented in the communities while following the integrated-community based approach, owing to the communities being dynamic. The efforts to motivate the youth can be concentrated in those very areas.

#### 6.1.2 Interlinking of the programs

Interlinking of the programs in the integrated manner in the concentrated areas can benefit both the community and slum youth. For e.g. Programs that can have similar implications on the youth and their families can be executed in the communities such as Microfinance training to boost livelihood opportunities for the youth and their families. This approach can facilitate a platform where the communities and youth are able to come together and foster mutual empowerment.

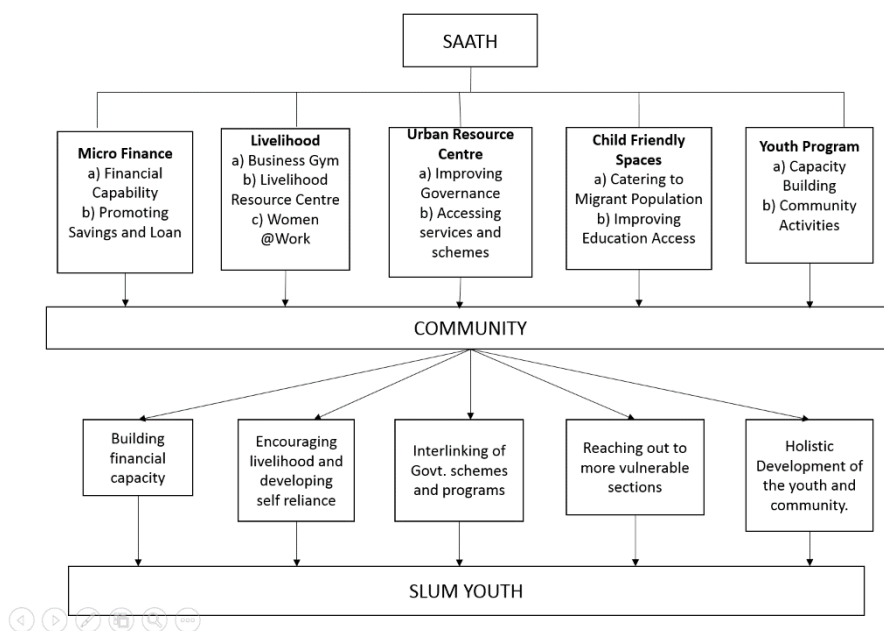


Figure 3 Integrated Community based Approach

### 6.1.3 Funding challenges

The similar approach can be utilised in dealing with the funding challenges associated with the programs. The interlinking aspect of the program to community specific challenges can help the judicious utilisation of the resources. During the advent of financial crisis (a fairly common scenario in the development sector where the programs are often on the verge of being shut down), building capacity of the engaged community representatives can sustain the program efforts in the catchment areas by providing an all-encompassing support. Focusing on activities that are centric to the needs of the community while diverting resources only meant to further strengthen the program efforts can be some strategies to interlink programs of youth and the community.

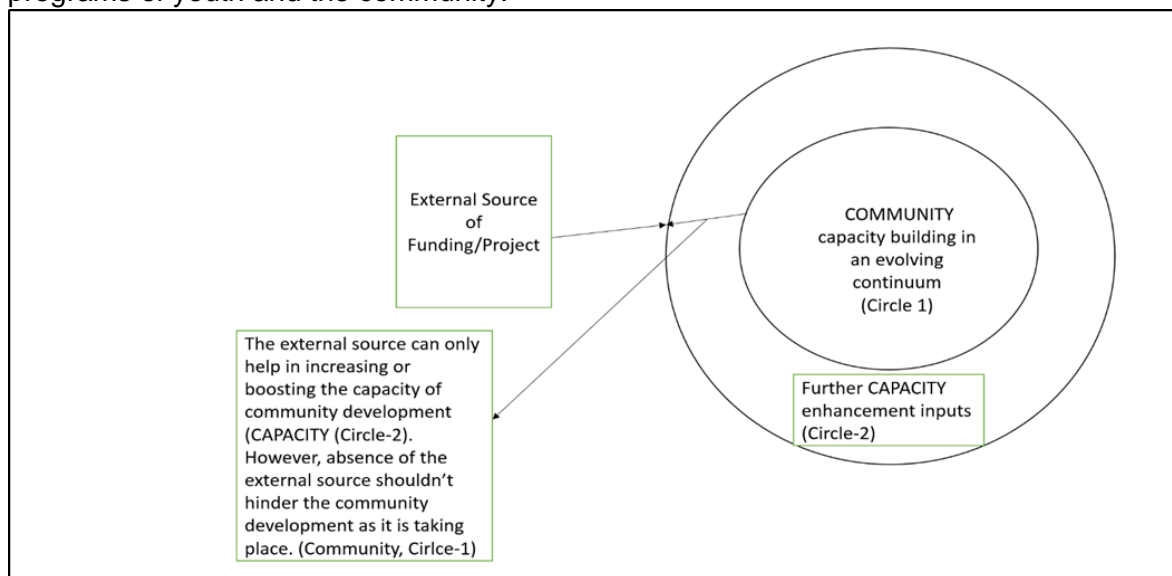


Figure 4 Strategy of capacity building and resource allocation

These set of recommendations can be considered by Saath team to deepen their programmatic outreach and enhancing the impact of the programs on the lives of millions of slum communities in their catchment areas.

### Limitations of the study:

Certain limitations with the study are acknowledged by the author.

- The study was conducted by a first time researcher and might not be the most appropriate replication of studies done by more established and experienced researchers.
- The sample size is relatively smaller owing to the very reason that it was conducted by a first time researcher. The findings might not be reflective of all the youth of the slums within the program area since the sampling of the respondents was not in the control of the author.
- The questions were comparatively broad since it was the first experience of the author to interact with the deprived sections and document their challenges.

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