

# Youth United Advocacy Project

(Draft for discussion and implementation)

**Name of Organisation:** Youth United

**Website URL:** [www.youthunited.in](http://www.youthunited.in)

## **Summarize your proposed project.**

This project will use web technology with a robust database management system to address problems arising due to non-effective implementation of public services and infrastructure projects. In 3 years' time, Youth United will make use of 20,000 trained citizens in 3 Indian cities to fix 10% of such problems eventually ensuring better standard of living for around 8 million urban population.

## **Summarize your project in a paragraph.**

While India on paper spends 2 % of its GDP annually for various social schemes and projects started by governments covering various welfare areas, barely 15 % of this money reaches to beneficiary groups. India despite on papers having good records fares quite worse than other developing countries when it comes to implementation of these policies. It will hence be a reasonable approach to have a system in place which can check widespread misappropriation of funds prevailing in the name of execution of government projects and legislations while ensuring effective implementation of the same by shaping chains of accountability for concerned authorities. Youth United hereby aims to launch the pilot phase of the project incorporating a similar system in Bangalore, Mumbai and New Delhi in 3 years' time. The system which will make use of principles of Advocacy, Lobbying and Judicial Interventions in bringing an issue to a logical end will boast a robust online system to connect millions of citizens and their grievances to the concerned authorities. The online platform shall maintain a large database of citizens and their grievances information developed through its website and mobile applications. These citizens besides getting real time updates on an ongoing case will also be able to directly contribute to the system by reporting an issue, joining a cause, signing a petition, forming a representation, volunteering for meetings/legal proceedings, offering legal services, and by donating. These users will also be connected online to various participating agencies including Government authorities and their grievance redressal systems in an attempt to resolve an issue without escalating it to Core Committee which comprises of a strong group of dignitaries (the Advisory Body), group of legal experts (RTI activists, advocates), and group of media (print, radio, TV, social) so as to reach to the logical solution of the case in consideration. The interactions of online users and data collected from them through various website functionalities will go to great lengths in creating ethical and social pressure on concerned authorities for logical solution. At any time the compiled data shall be used to create a case of most extensive public interest.

The chosen case if escalated will then be taken up by the Core Committee in the following manners:

- a) Research- The data compiled through online portal will be augmented by comprehensive research which will be based on online information, publications, journals, feedbacks, media, legal recourse like RTI etc.
- b) Publish- The core committee with the online portal then helps in widespread publicity of an issue to keep it in public attention.
- c) Act- The core committee with the volunteers of online portal will act on a chosen issue by either, a) advocating or lobbying for a policy intervention, b) recommending concerned authorities the resolving steps, or c) opting legal recourse like PIL etc, as the case may be.
- d) Follow-up- A constant follow-up in a systematic approach will be done by the Core Committee for timely solution to the case.

#### **How big is the problem that you are trying to address?**

India this year alone had allocated 39 billion US dollars to its social welfare and minor infrastructure projects. According to ex Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi who famously said that only 15% of total money reaches to the beneficiary groups, this year only 5.85 billion dollars will reach to the needy people. It is quite evident that majority of potential beneficiaries are not benefited under these schemes and despite Governments releasing hefty amount on the system of public infrastructure the condition of Indian roads is dilapidating with each passing day owing to widespread corruption and lack of accountability regimes. Governments in fact have developed systems and establishments to address all the issues and grievances, but cases of individuals reporting these issues through government system or judiciary are too few and far between. Nicholas Robinson, a research fellow in Harvard's Law School attributes the problem to our fixation on rights based approach and negligence towards shaping of chains of accountability. He claims that an accountability regime approach that focuses on how officials are monitored and controlled through grievances is both more descriptively complete and more likely to generate a wider range of useful policy prescriptions.

#### **How does your project use technology in a unique and innovative way?**

This project will use a website and mobile application pooled by a robust database management system. The forte of the system would be a very extensive and active user base who will be able to directly contribute to the system by reporting an issue/grievance, joining a cause, signing a petition, forming a representation, volunteering for meetings/legal proceedings, offering legal services, and by donating all of which can be done through various functionalities provided on the website and mobile application. The system will give all its users real time update on the proceedings in connection with an issue under consideration. This system shall also hold the data of various

government authorities for the direct redressal of any individual's grievance. Here technology acts as a platform for all the citizens not only to get their individual grievances being addressed but to team up for an issue of public interest. In contemporary India, where citizens barely find time to engage into activism, technology will allow them to secure their rights of social welfare and better quality of life.

**Quantify the total expected impact of this project if executed and explain how you calculated this number, including any assumptions made arriving at this projection.**

The total population of the cities of Mumbai, Delhi and Bangalore is around 41 million, out of which 16 million people use Internet. Considering there are 50% active internet users, 8 million people can be made aware about this online portal and its benefits. Assuming a 10% turnout, 800,000 people can potentially be active user of this system in these 3 cities. Youth United conservatively estimates that 2.5% or 20000 of these people can be trained extensively regarding the program in 3 years' time, who in turn will be the sure shot beneficiary of this project. Nevertheless, these groups of trained citizens, as Youth United estimates, can help citizens fix 10% of problems related to public infrastructure eventually impacting 20% (expected population who benefits from public infrastructure) or 8 million of total population of 41 million. Moreover, similarly, 10% of problems related to social welfare projects can be fixed impacting 20% or 5 million of urban poor population of 25 million. (Assuming only urban poor are the beneficiary of social welfare schemes)

**What are the 1-3 key indicators you will use to track impact and how will you measure these indicators?**

- a) Number of registered user on online portal: It will show the prominence of the project and its success. These users are themselves the beneficiaries who in turn can team up and work for various issues of public interest.
- b) Ratio of Number of cases accepted by authorities to Number of cases formed: The registered users with the help of Core Committee can form a case of public interest. However, the concerned government authority may or may not recognize the case and hence as discussed earlier legal recourse may have to be initiated for rejected cases. A high ratio will indicate higher acceptability of the project and hence greater impact.
- c) Ratio of number of unique legal recourse to number of rejected cases: This ratio will represent number of unique legal recourse initiated per rejected case. Youth United can show its commitment to resolve a case by initiating a legal recourse even when the case has been rejected by the concerned authorities. Higher ratio means greater chances of a case getting to its logical conclusion. All the indicators mentioned above can easily be measured by database management system of the website, which keeps track of all such information.

**What makes your core project team awesome, and why are you poised for success?**

Our core team primarily comprises of young professionals and students, supervised by an advisory body (proposed) of celebrated dignitaries in the relevant fields. The awesomeness of the members of the core team can be exemplified by members' commitment towards nation's development at such young age. The core team believes youth are the strongest and we can best serve the society and nation during our youth. Besides, most of the members are socially well networked and have immense knowledge about Indian polity, judiciary and Constitution.

**What organisations are also tackling this problem and what approaches have they taken?**

Action-aid and Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan (MKSS) are two such civil rights organizations which are working for crafting policy interceptions to address right based issues. However, the involvement of technology is minimal and their approach is primarily advocacy based. Their approach further comprises of partnerships with social organizations & governments; strategic engagement with the state; engaging with youth; involvement of media and communications; building knowledge partnerships; fellowship and cadre building. MKSS in particular believes in access to relevant information, which is a fundamental tool for ensuring transparency and accountability of the government, and of all bodies that affect public interest.

**What are the risks associated with your proposed project, and how will you deal with them?**

Like all activism based projects, this project is also vulnerable to possible threats and hostility of all the bodies, whose chains of accountability are being shaped and established by Youth United. Most of such bodies will challenge the authority, logic and authenticity of Youth United's action of holding them accountable for an issue under consideration. Having illustrious dignitaries and media on board will add to the prominence of the project which will keep the issue under public eyes possibly checking such threats. Issue of legal expertise will be addressed by a body of legal professionals.

**Other information:**

We have been given certificates of excellence from health department of Chandigarh for conducting various medical camps and health surveys. Youth United has also been rendered a state honour from Chandigarh Police for working in the field of drug de addiction. Besides, we have been acknowledged through certificates and media mentions in the field of children welfare, environment and education.

Youth United following an experimental strategy has been involved in various social welfare sectors like education, public health environment etc. However after much deliberation and research, Governing Body conceptualized this project as a measure to address contemporary India's problems.

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