The Future is Young



GLOBAL OPPORTUNITY YOUTH NETWORK: INDIA

THE FUTURE IS YOUNG

















The future is solution-oriented Dipali Bangar, 27 Pune







Gousiya Shaikh, 18, is from a neighbourhood where had to leave home with her two children. child marriage is still prevalent. Girls are rarely allowed to complete school and are married off in adolescence. For Gousaiya's mother, now 30-yearold Shainaz, the story was no different. She never attended school, was married at age eleven, gave birth to Gousiya at age twelve and her brother, Khwaja at age fourteen.

Shainaz decided, however, that she would change the stories of her children, especially her daughter. So when her husband and the rest of the community were opposed to sending Gousiya to school beyond class eight and wanted to get her married instead, Shainaz made the decision to defy this norm and continue Gousiya's education. As a result, she was ostracised from the community and

Gousiya has always been a brilliant student and her teachers sing her praises. She speaks with a confidence and passion that move the listener deeply, without the slightest hint of the hard life she leads. She knows of her mother's battles and sacrifices and is determined to ensure they bear fruit. Gousiya dreams of cracking the MPSC -Maharashtra Public Service Commission - exams and becoming a deputy collector one day. "At a very young age, I learnt that power makes the world spin," Gousiya says, adding, "and soon realised that power alone is not enough, money is needed too." Gousiya is on track to acquire both for herself - she is one of the most driven teenagers one is likely to

She is pursuing a bachelor's degree in arts, while also working multiple jobs to lend a helping hand to her mother. Her day starts at the crack of dawn when she gets ready and does some household chores. Then her first job starts – a group of girls her age comes over to their house and Gousiya tutors them in the art of henna handpainting. This class goes on for an hour, post which she goes to college. Gousiya has also enrolled herself into a graphic design class so to acquire a new skill and another possible income stream. The graphic design class happens after college hours, after which she goes to her school to teach a class on the Quran for younger children. Her day doesn't end there – she gets home, prepares meals, and post dinner, takes one more class for children from



the neighbourhood. With her seemingly unending energy, Gousiya connected with GOYN in early 2024 and attended many workshops, something that she talks about with great animation and enthusiasm. Even more than gaining self-confidence or learning life skills, Gousiya values the kinship she experiences in the programs and often talks to her mother and brother in great detail about everything that transpires in the workshops and seminars.

"There should be no difference between my son and my daughter," Shainaz says. In her daughter, are a fiery and disciplined ambition, born from Shainaz's courage, and nurtured by Gousiya's own determination to honour her mother's sacrifice and build a bright future for herself.













The future is persistence Yugeshwar Ram, 29 Ramgarh

The future is ambitious
Shravan Kumar, 22
Ramgarh





The future is community Chaitanya Bahudane, 21 Pune

Twenty-one-year-old Chaitanya cares deeply for his community, and minutes into a conversation with him, one realises that he reflects many virtues of Dr B.R. Ambedkar also known as the father of the Indian Constitution and the pioneer of the anti-caste movement in the country. He lives by Ambedkar's words - 'education is a medium for change' - and with this awareness, quickly became aware of the gaps in the Indian education system at a young age. He decided to pursue a career in the civil services to shift the education system so that good quality education was accessible to all. For Chaitanya, the COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns shone a light on the inequities in the education system like never before. As classes and lectures moved online, he noticed that most houses in his community did not have an adequate number of devices to follow these classes. On average, a household of two or three children would have only one smartphone to share, causing children to rapidly fall in their progress and learning. It was at this time that Chaitanya decided to take free tuition classes for all school-going children in his locality. While his classes brought about a marked difference in the grades of all who enrolled, it also brought about a behavioural change in the community - parents encouraged their children to attend his classes, especially older children - so they could become more career-oriented.

Chaitanya connected with GOYN in 2022 and was selected to attend the Fourth Annual GOYN Global Convening in Mombasa in 2023 - a highlight of his life so far. This was Chaintanya's first trip abroad and it left a deep impression on him. The distinct differences in the culture fascinated him, and he was moved by the warmth with which he was welcomed and treated throughout his stay there. Chaitanya was most







The future is just Anil Kale, 22 Pune





The future is determined Samar Rajput, 21 Barwani

The future is entrepreneurship Vicky Gole, 24 Barwani









Rahul's day starts at the crack of dawn. The twenty-six-year-old is a successful integrated farmer - he runs a hatchery, a poultry farm, and a goatery, alongside growing multiple crops through the year. Rahul spends so much time on his farm that he has constructed a small room there though his home is barely a few hundred metres away. Very often, when he needs to check on the animals, Rahul spends his nights in this room, surrounded by everything he has worked so hard to build. "I've always wanted to work with animals," Rahul says, explaining the dedication and care needed to run a poultry farm and goatery. But it took him a few years to have a life that would revolve around animals.

At a young age, Rahul quickly understood that he could not afford to study without simultaneously working to earn some money. So, while he was in college in Ranchi, he picked up a job as a librarian in a nearby university. He worked this job for two years, spending long hours at the library - working and studying hard. As his undergraduate program drew to a close, Rahul realised that he would also need to move on from this job - his earnings were barely adequate and there was no scope for growth. Soon after he got his degree, Rahul enrolled in a learn-and-earn diploma program in Bangalore.

The six-month-long program in manufacturing technology also provided him with work-learn opportunities and gain some

practical work experience as a technician in a lift manufacturing company. But he always knew that his work experience and education were only stepping stones towards being self-sustained. "I always knew that I wanted to have my own business, and

No learning or skills I've gained along the way would go to waste", Rahul says.

After returning to Ramgarh from Bangalore in 2022, Rahul spent a few weeks studying and understanding the local market in his district and identified a good opportunity in poultry farming and animal husbandry. He tried his hand at both for a few months but would often incur losses rather than turning a profit.

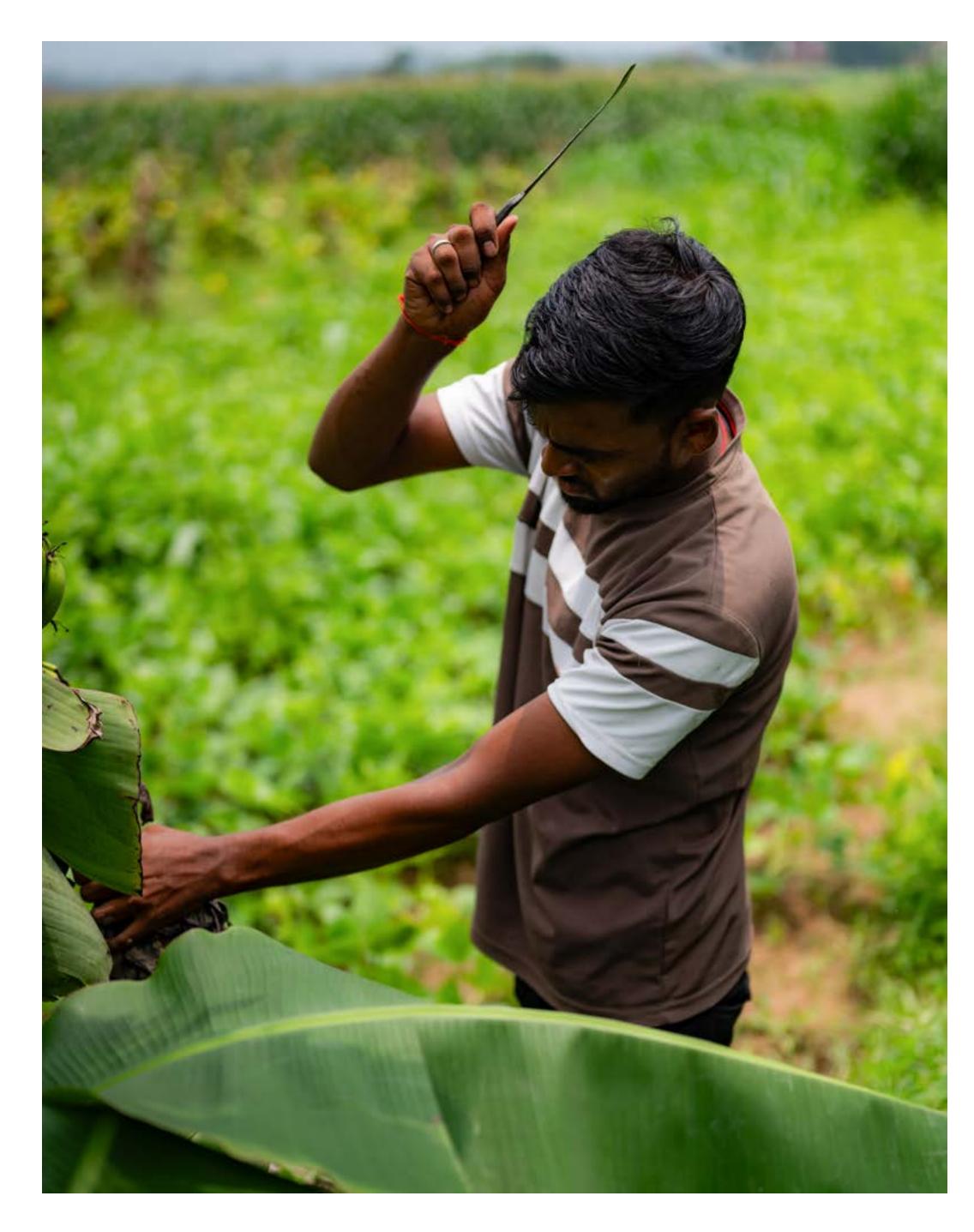
Connecting with GOYN came to Rahul



as a boon. He received a loan which gave his small business the much needed boost to take off. However, he says it was the counselling and training that he received that were invaluable - he was introduced to the concept of integrated farming - he darted out the door as soon as he finished the and learnt the value of diversifying his income sources rather than relying on a single source. Today, even his poultry farm consists of various breeds of chickens to diversify risk.

Rahul has since managed to pay off his loans and now runs a business that is profitable. "You need to be able to identify the requirements of the market," Rahul says as a tip for those wanting to be successfully self-employed, adding, "but more than that, you need to have a knack and desire to become a good businessperson."

Through the course of the conversation, the humidity rose sharply inside Rahul's on-field accommodation, signalling an impending storm. Rahul, however, expertly took this into his stride conversation, ticking off one task after another with practised focus and discipline.





The future is love Ovi Bhandalkar, 20 Pune

"Everybody deserves love", says 20 year old Ovi.
Ovi is a law student, a social worker, and a budding violinist when she finds the time. "I have always wanted to bring about positive and meaningful change - and as a transgender woman and an aspiring lawyer, I want to use my legal knowledge to improve my surroundings, and for the betterment of the transgender community across India.

Along with law school, Ovi also works with YRG Care, an NGO that provides essential care and medications to the transgender community. Under the NGO's guidance, Ovi has learned to counsel trans people across Pune and realised that most often, a big part of counselling is lending a patient and caring ear to all. Ovi has also realised that being trans herself, the people she counsels find it easier to confide in her - and she finds a reflection of herself and her journey in the people she counsels.

Ovi also tries to teach the community the importance of financial independence, instead of resorting to begging for money or doing sex work. Financial independence, she believes, is intrinsic to the trans-community living a better and safer life.

In early 2024, when a friend introduced Ovi to GOYN, she felt that this was exactly what she needed. "I have realised that there are various social problems in my country that need to be urgently addressed. GOYN has given me the opportunity to learn how to communicate and connect effectively and meaningfully with professionals and peers - this has contributed greatly to my personal and professional growth", she says. "But the most important thing I've found through GOYN is a community that accepts my journey and celebrates







The future is resilient Jayashree Shitole, 26 Barwani





The future is equal Kshitij Bhosale, 20 Pune













The future is good citizenship Nandita Gole, 21 Barwani

Twenty one year old Nandita is fascinated by history. "History teaches us that life is not just for living but also for contributing to society." This has been her learning from Swami Vivekananda, whom she considers a role model.

In history, Nandita has found a roadmap for the future. More than the past itself, it is patterns of how the past shapes the present that Nandita finds fascinating. With this comes the recognition that she has the power to shape the future through the life she leads today.

Through GOYN, Nandita has found a way to be a contributing member to society and be part of a larger whole. When she connected with GOYN in 2022 Nandita was particularly impacted by her learning about the concept of mental health and recognised that many of her fellow youth were struggling, with limited understanding of the subject and no access to a formal support system.











Anil, twenty-eight, knew at a very early age that he wanted to be his own boss. The older of two sons, Anil's education came to an abrupt end when his father injured himself while working on their farm - an injury that left him disabled, and unable to work. At the young age of seventeen, Anil suddenly found himself with the responsibility of being the sole breadwinner in the family and was forced to drop out of school.

At first, he started by working on the family farm where they grew a variety of crops but soon realised that the income from farming was not enough to run the family. That is when he took up his first job. Here, he learnt the skills that would go on to lay the foundation for his journey towards self-employment. The job was at an electronic

repair shop which also doubled up as an internet cafe, and Anil quickly learnt to manage the shop. After working this and other odd jobs for around eight years, Anil decided he wanted to start something of his own, at the age of twenty-five.

So three years ago, he borrowed some money from his friends and started his own internet shop called MP Online. This was a big business opportunity since his village had no such facility, and people would have to travel to the nearby town for small things such as availing net banking services or submitting school applications for their children. MP Online was exactly what the village needed and it did not take long for Anil to get a steady stream of customers. A year after starting MP Online, Anil connected with GOYN

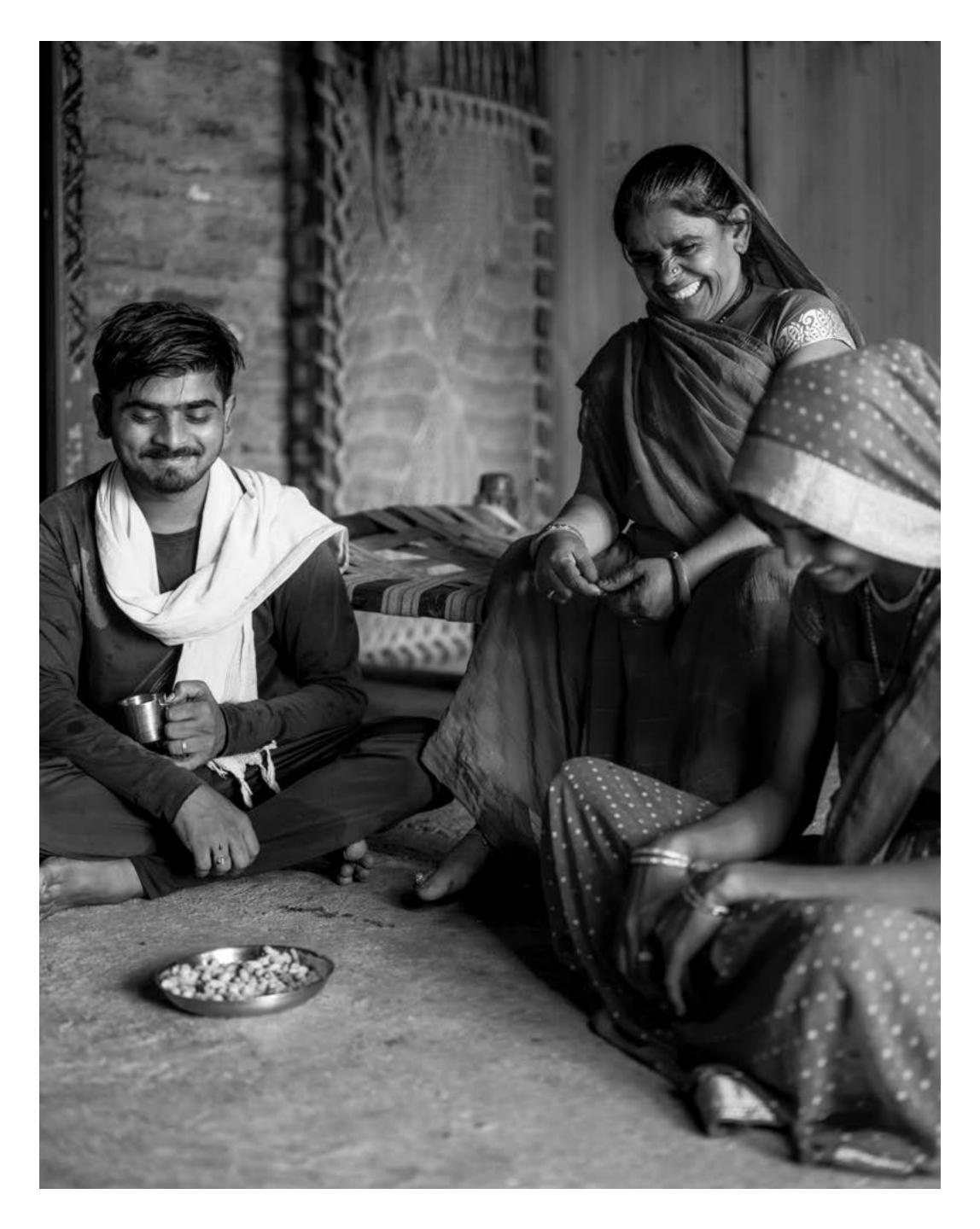
and enrolled for a course in financial management. He learnt how to break down costs and budget his expenses in a way that his requirements are met, but he is also able to save money every month. He also received a small loan to buy equipment for his shop. The combination of the training and loan enabled him to grow not only his business and income but also critically, his savings.

Anil's day starts early. His first task is to feed and tend to the family's goats and cows. Sometimes, they sell the milk for some extra money. Anil's father is still mostly bedridden, and his brother has taken responsibility of the farm. Still, Anil visits the fields to help out as needed.



From there, he goes to his shop where he spends eight to ten hours every day.

"I always wanted to work for myself and create jobs for others", he says. He has realised this dream - Anil now employs one person from his village at MP Online and pays him a monthly salary of Rupees 4,000. His dream is to keep growing and diversifying his businesses and keep creating jobs for young people in and around his village.





Jaydeo, twenty-four, is from an adivasi tribe. His family are among the poorest in the village, and his father makes bricks for daily wages at a nearby, informal kiln. At the young age of eleven, Jaydeo dropped out of school to join his father as a daily wage labourer at the kiln. For seven years he continued to work at the kiln and picked up any other daily wage work he could find. Still, their combined earnings were barely enough to make ends meet, and it was not possible for the family to break out of the cycle of day-to-day survival.

Opportunity came in the form of a local NGO that convinced him to pick up his studies again. However, this was not an easy decision since it would mean one less income for the already struggling household. So the NGO helped him find a solution to this problem - they gave him the idea to start coaching classes for younger children in the village to keep earning some money while he studied - something Jaydeo quickly discovered he had a knack for.

Finally, in 2018, Jaydeo took the plunge and re-started his studies. With some help from the NGO, he also started working as a tutor - with just three children at first. One of these children went on to top his class, and as a result, Jaydeos pupils grew to a batch of thirty in the next term. In teaching these children, Jaydeo discovered his hunger to learn and also help others learn.

Jaydeo connected with GOYN in 2021 - and he was selected to represent his community at GOYN's Third Annual GOYN Global Convening in Bogota in 2022. Even today, Jaydeo becomes emotional when he is asked to speak of that experience. "Where I come from, I could never even dream of such an opportunity" he says - his voice shaky, and his eyes shining with tears.

This was his first time outside Jharkhand, and the opportunity was celebrated by his school and the whole village. "When I was leaving for Bogota," Jaydeo says, "my father did not have much to give me, but he gave me a Rs.20 note to spend abroad."



The future is young - but how do young people view the future?

This book is a collection of bold dreams young people hold for the future, stories of journeys that have shaped these dreams, and the work each young person is already doing to build the future of their dreams.

The Global Opportunity Youth Network (GOYN) is a multi-stakeholder initiative hosted at the Aspen Institute and managed in partnership with the Global Development Incubator. GOYN follows a 'place-based' approach to build agency of young people and connect them to local and dignified economic opportunities at population scale.

Learn more at goyn.org // scan this qr to know more



The future is young
The future is now

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