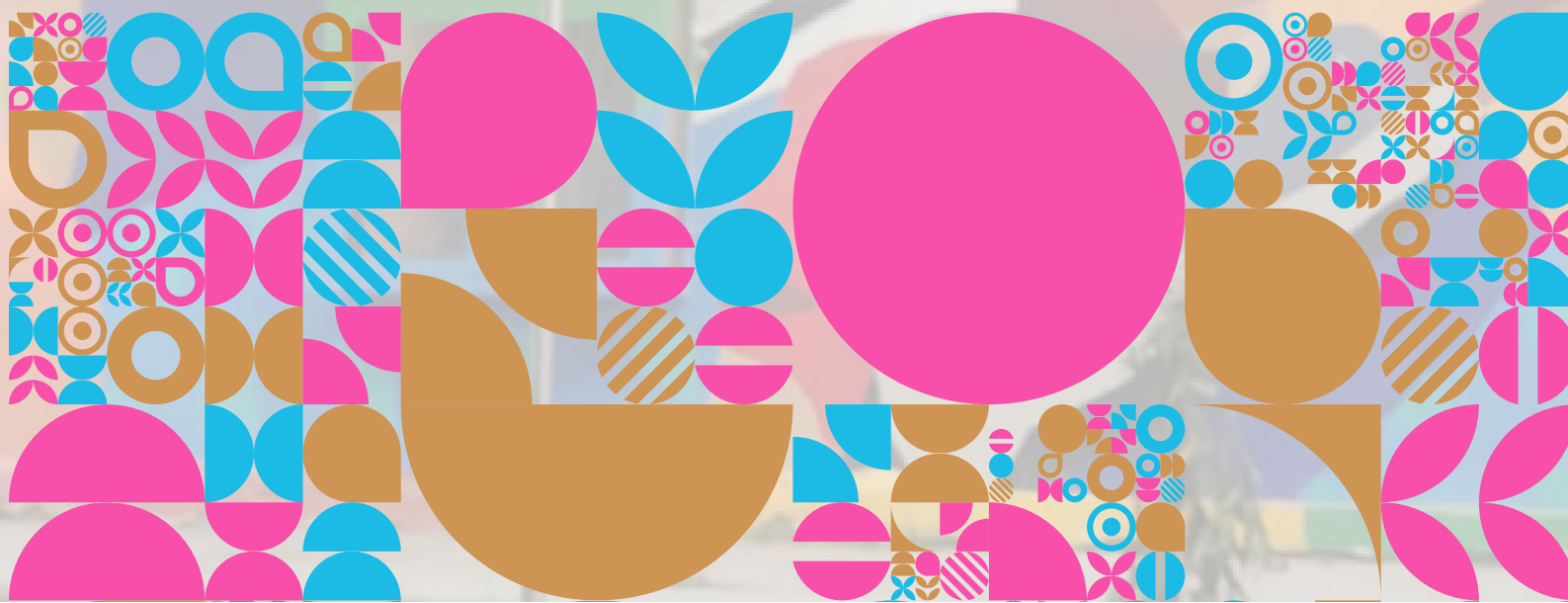




TRANS YOUTH MANIFESTO

A manifesto and recommendation handbook for trans-led organisations for inclusion of trans youth in decision making.

Background Art By Aravani Arts on Lodhi Road, New Delhi



Key Note



Satvik (He/they)
Board Member
TWEET Foundation

India has one of the youngest populations in the world and is expected to remain so for the next upcoming decades. Despite this, the participation of youth in governance, decision making and development processes is still low and the focus has not been shifted to the young key trans population needs so far.

This is due to several factors including a lack of leadership opportunities, sometimes limited understanding of the ongoing political, social and technical environment, limited space given to youth & limited interactions between the young people & decision-makers among others.

This Manifesto was designed as a recommendation tool to increase continuous engagement for sustained, participatory and meaningful dialogue with the youth from the trans community, who lack the opportunity and necessary platform to empower them as upcoming leaders.

This can also act as a handbook that leaders of organizations can use to act on key recommendations given by the young trans people to create as action items in their organization's strategy.

We at the TWEET Foundation, a trans-led organization with 42% of young trans people in its management team and 90% of young trans people in the overall employees strongly believe and are an example of the role young people can play in transforming society. Through the publication and distribution of this manifesto, TWEET Foundation wishes to make a humble contribution to the efforts being taken across organizations to empower the trans youth.

We hope that this manual can be used by all leaders and CBOs/NGOs/Organizations to train trans youth leaders who will add value to India's ongoing social, political and economic transformation in India. We want to bring light to the part that the experiences of young trans adults, their needs and solutions can be a harbinger of fresh ideas and solutions for the upcoming generations, it will revolutionize the trans movement in India.

Why Youth Inclusion

We believe that with each generation, we will have to adapt to new values and principles. Conflicts between youth and the older generation often arise from a difference in how we perceive the world, differences in learning and/or working styles, in practices or even in priorities of the work that is important for us. There is a perpetual imbalance of power between the youth, which is less experienced and also less pre-conditioned to bias and the older, more experienced and skilled decision-makers. The imbalance of power and conflicts can lead to barriers to inclusion in decision-making and negatively impact the harmonious work within a community.

We strongly believe the key to resolving these conflicts and creating a better tomorrow for the community is to first accept these differences and then use these different value systems and skill sets to come together to form strong mechanisms of equity, inclusion and empowerment.

WE THE TRANS YOUTH OF INDIA believe in removing our subconscious biases, bring in fresh, new ideas and perspectives in decision-making. We are open and honest about our experiences and demand accountability from those who make decisions for us. We have the willingness to learn and grow and become more aware.

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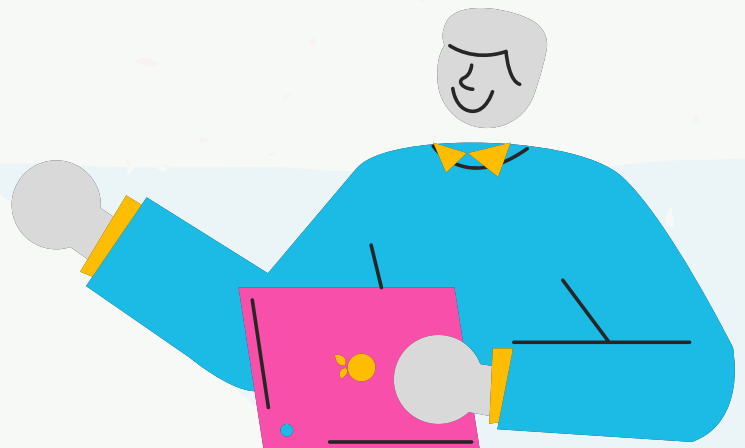
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Critical Analysis of the Ongoing Work

We reflected together and analyzed the ongoing work happening in India for transgender persons, especially the youth. We realized how far we have come from a time where we were still struggling to get legal recognition. It's only through the constant activism by trans leaders across India. Over the past years, we have also seen many non-profits, social enterprises, and corporates come forward to support trans youth in many ways - providing a helpline, fellowships, shelter spaces, health and legal support, skill-building and leadership-building workshops that further make us believe in the bright future. However, for us, it is important to reflect on how we can better include, listen and deliver meeting the needs of diverse young trans individuals today.

Here's what is working for us:

Overall, there is some systemic support that has gotten built. Social media awareness and connectivity helps us access services and enables us. Corporations are accepting trans people and identifying talent to hire, non-profits are providing shelter spaces and skilling opportunities. Healthcare systems are adapting, especially in metros, and educational institutes are becoming more inclusive.



Critical Analysis of the Ongoing Work

And what is not working for us..

While there's a lot that is going well, as young people, we always want more, we demand more and we are loud about it. Below are the top 3 things that bother us and that we want to bring to the light of decision-makers.

01 We feel current projects are often tilted towards what funders want and can fund. We feel organizations need to listen to the needs of the community and advocate with funders accordingly

“We often see skilling programs that lack holistic support and there are assumptions made that a free skilling program will solve all our challenges. Although we believe that skilling is important, we also need shelter, mental health support, and stipend to manage our daily needs and gender affirmation expenses. We need crisis support before we can focus on getting skilled and cracking a job.”

02 Leadership development workshops offer limited time & scope to learn things. There is a huge need for continued support for young leaders to take up the community agenda

“When we return from leadership workshops, we feel empowered to change things, but we feel lost after that. We need continuous hand-holding, funding resources and shadowing experiences to actually feel like we can make a difference in the society.”

03 Advocacy with policymakers especially on issues that concern larger trans population and the youth need to be done via community groups and collaboratives of organizations and not by individuals and single organizations. We feel its unfair for the larger community to not know of what advocacy is being done and if our issues are being raised by staying true to them

“Often we see when organizations/trans individuals go on behalf of the community to do advocacy. They talk from limited perspectives for eg - when we talk about trans people we usually talk about transmen and transwomen, and we don't end up talking about non-binary people or intersex persons.”

In this manifesto cum handbook, we, the young trans people, look at what **POWER** means to us, and breakdown each letter to see how each of these affect the decision-making and inclusion of youth in any organization and we provide some key recommendations to the organizations.

P **POSITION**
O **PPORTUNITY**
W **ISHES** 🏳️‍🌈
E **MPOWERMENT**
R **ESOURCES**

Key Barriers to 'POWER' for trans youth

POSITION

Most often privileges and positions of power go hand-in-hand. That is just how systems that value certain skills, intellect & experiences are designed to be. When we talk about inclusion and diversity, we try to showcase that our value systems can be diverse in themselves so that no systematic exclusion will occur. The same goes for including youth in positions of decision-making. It is often assumed that a young person will be less experienced and have fewer skills to be in decision-making positions. It is imperative that decisions of today impact the youth of tomorrow and it's of utmost importance that a balanced approach is taken especially when your work is impacting those of the youth.

Reflection Question: Amongst your management team and overall team what percentage of team members are of the age below 30? If your answer to any of the above is less than 30% whereas your key beneficiaries are the youth, we highly recommend you choose to include youth in your organization in decision-making roles.

Recommendations :

- 1. Hire trans youth in key-decision making roles wherever possible or create shared positions.**
- 2. Encourage young trans employees to make decisions at their own positions and levels. For example choosing the venue of the workshop, choosing the channels for advocacy etc.**
- 3. Create a trans youth advisory/steering committee for your key projects that specifically work to impact trans youth where key decisions should not be taken without approval from the young advisors.**

OPPORTUNITY

It is often told to the youth there are ample opportunities for them to grasp and learn from, however when systems are designed by people to whom opportunities seem easy they forget how most people can be left out by simple choices we make in offering any opportunities. On what media/platform do we post about upcoming hiring, in which language do we publicize an upcoming event or in which locations do we hold a capacity-building workshop that creates barriers for those marginalized by the use of technology to be present on LinkedIn, to be not able to read English fluently or not have location privileges of being in the metro cities.

Reflection: Think about the last job opportunity posted by your organization. Was it actively posted on channels where youth is often present? - Whatsapp/Instagram?

Recommendations :

- 1. Remove Barriers to Qualifications and Years of experience for positions of hiring to enable young people a chance to have a fair chance at the opportunity.**
- 2. Remove Barriers of language wherever possible: Invite applications via video resume, encourage people to apply in other languages other than English, and publicize jobs in languages that may suit the job description.**
- 3. Remove barriers of locations: Offer remote work opportunities, internships and free-lance work to support those who may not be able to work and stay in cities.**

WISHES

The wishes and needs of the community need to be considered at the centre of the work that we do. When we work with the trans community on a day-to-day basis, we often start assuming their needs, which can come in the way of taking a truly inclusive lens to our work. Its important to reassess the needs of the community on a regular basis.

Reflection: How many of the project proposals were created/implemented after need assessment in past year? Whose “voices” are missing in organizations and how can organizations create space for those voices to be heard and valued?

Recommendations:

- 1. Conduct needs assessment surveys/focused group discussions with diverse voices on the table to identify the gaps. Actively look to bring forth the voices of people at the intersection of caste, religion, and physical disabilities.**
- 2. Create feedback mechanisms for the services provided or events conducted and ensure that feedback is incorporated in the support you offer to trans persons.**
- 3. Actively ask for the needs of the beneficiaries - ask if they want travel support, internet recharge support to join online meetings etc.**

EMPowerMENT

Empowerment is the key for sustainable movement and development. While we can create spaces for the youth today, it is important to invest effort, time and resources in them to enable them for future leadership. Most often for organizations and leaders it seems easier and faster to get the work done by people who are already skilled and experienced. With minimal resources generally in trans organizations, it further becomes difficult to invest in capacity building of the teams. But empowerment needs to be seen as investment and resources need to be built accordingly.

Reflection : How many paid internships/fellowships have you offered to trans youth for their development in the past 1 year? If your answer is less than 2 then you must develop mechanisms to offer internships and fellowships to trans youth.

Recommendations:

- 1. Create Shadowing Leadership Programs - Allow young trans people to shadow the organizations leaders for a time period. Shadowing allows youth to see, hear, and experience what a future leadership role could look like.**
- 2. Offer paid internships/fellowships - This allows young people to get a kickstart at their career, experience real-life work situations and in turn build their skills in short periods.**
- 3. Provide hand-holding/technical support to young organizations. Check with young community-based organizations if they need support with an accounting team, technology team, marketing team etc. that can leverage the existing resources of large organizations.**

RESOURCES

Resources for trans people are scarce and when it comes to youth it becomes further challenging for them to have access to funding, networks, spaces and technical expertise. Allocating sufficient resources becomes an important part of empowering the youth to take their own decisions and build their own capacity.

Reflection: When was the last time you connected a young trans leader with your networks of funders/funding opportunity?

Recommendations:

- 1. Allow for at least 10–15% of any project budget to be decided by the youth for its allocation and how that should be used.**
- 2. Think of resources beyond funds such as - sharing your networks, sharing funding opportunities, offering office space, offering software licenses etc.**
- 3. Actively sub-grant activities to smaller collectives and organizations or hire trans free-lancers.**

Conclusion :

We believe many steps are already being taken by organizations and individuals to empower the youth today. However, it should not be treated as a favor but as a duty and as accountability for the key beneficiaries of the organizations. We wish to see a world where passing on the baton becomes a norm and a healthy balance is developed between youth and older leaders.

We hope this manifesto can become a tool for organizations to develop action plans for their organizations to develop key mechanisms and policies to further the cause of youth inclusion and empowerment.

Acknowledgements

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We thank you for your continued support in our efforts to contribute to Trans Inclusion.

Disclaimer : This document has been created to point out specific needs of the community where organizations can do better and is not intended to criticize the work happening today. If there is anything we can improve in this document or any issues that you see, please feel free to write to us and we would be happy to have a dialogue or change the content accordingly.

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