

2019

Analysis and Findings of HEASP, 2018-2019

YOUTH DREAMERS FOUNDATION

*To improve access to higher education and decrease voluntary drop-outs of socio-economic weaker sections through **Scholarship, Career Guidance and Life Skills Support***

1. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Title of the project	Higher Education Access Support Program (HEASP) <i>Enabling informed decision making through Career Guidance, Scholarship and Life Skills Support</i>
Overall Objective	To improve equity and access to higher education and decrease voluntary dropouts of socio-economically weaker sections; and equip them with knowledge & skills to uptake and address the challenges of 21 st century opportunities, through Scholarship and Career Guidance, and Counselling and Life Skill Support
Target Beneficiaries and Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students of Ashramshalas 12th class –Life Skills, Career Counselling and Scholarship Support and 10th class only Career Counselling - Aptitude test• 6 Blocks in Nasik (Kalwan, Surgana, Satana, Dindori, Peth, Trimbak)
Key Activities	Higher Education Access Support Program (HEASP) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Career Counselling Engagement• Scholarship Awareness Engagement• Life skills Engagement

2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Aim of the Project

The main goal of the project is to provide Career Guidance, Life Skills Support and Scholarship Support so that students get to know their own skills, professional interests and are able to mitigate financial constraints to choose an appropriate career and succeed their way into higher education and further for the socio-economic and cultural development of the nation.

2.2 Objectives of the Project:

- No one is denied higher educational opportunities due to poor socio-economic condition
- Youths of the targeted population make informed decisions about their career
- They are equipped with psychological competencies and interpersonal skills essential for uptake of opportunities and for addressing the challenges of 21st Century development context
- To provide youths with socio-emotional skills, life skills and tools so that they can apply the same in daily lives
- To create a successful pilot for the government and other organizations

3. PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION DETAILS

1. Location of the Project

The project has been implemented throughout two PO regions of Tribal Development Department.

- Nashik
- Kalwan

2. Project Beneficiaries

The targeted beneficiaries of the project include students of 12th (Life Skills, Career Counselling and Scholarship Support) and 10th standard (only Career Counselling - Aptitude test) of 22 schools

3. Project Components & Activities

It's 3-fold integrated approach encourages students to overcome administrative, personal, academic and societal barriers through a three level engagement system to counter financial constraints, lack of proper guidance, and lack of motivation & aspiration. The following three are the key components for the same:

Life Skills Engagement

To improve motivation of the students and empower them to cope with the academic pressure, social stigma, casteism, degradation and to build a learning community while pursuing higher education. And, an exposure program for the students to raise their aspiration levels and worldview

Purpose: To improve motivation and aspiration levels of the students

Career Counselling Engagement

To help students identify courses of choice from various 21 streams including performing arts, sciences, social sciences etc. through a career assessment test. The support team will engage students at the beginning of the academic year followed by nurturing throughout the year

Purpose: To enable students to make an informed career choice

Scholarship Awareness Engagement

To reduce this gap and financial barriers for the eligible students, we provide end-to-end scholarship awareness support, where we advise students/youth on how to seek out and apply for scholarships, highlight the best ways to boost their chances of receiving a scholarship

Purpose: To remove financial hurdles for the students

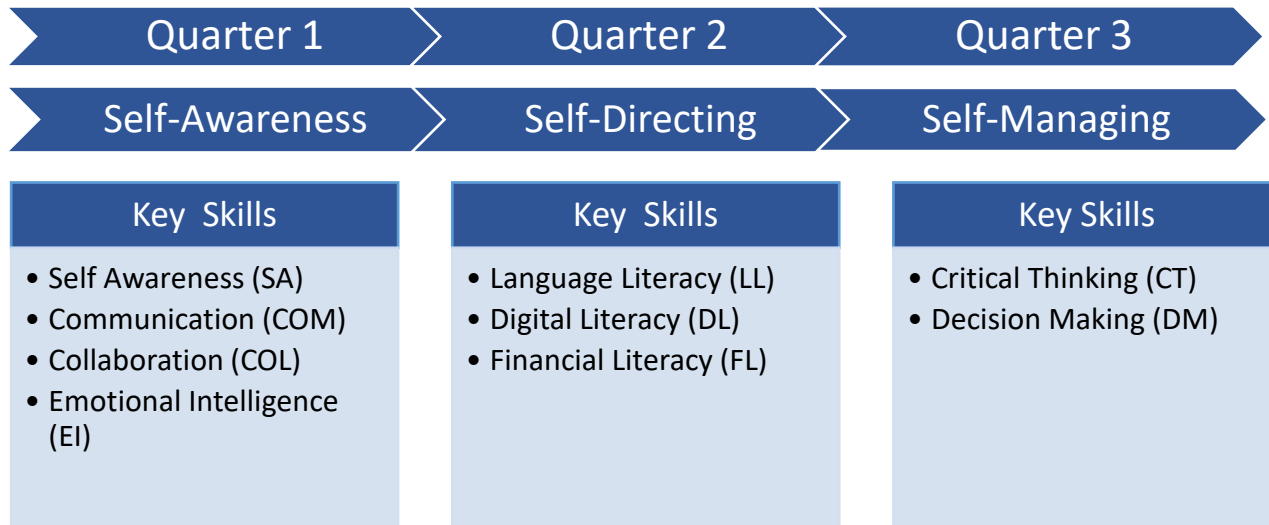
4. OUTCOMES AND FINDINGS

The year 1 of HEASP was focussed at identifying ground realities, developing a deeper understanding of the problems that students face, and pilot the efficacy of the tools used to deliver the program.

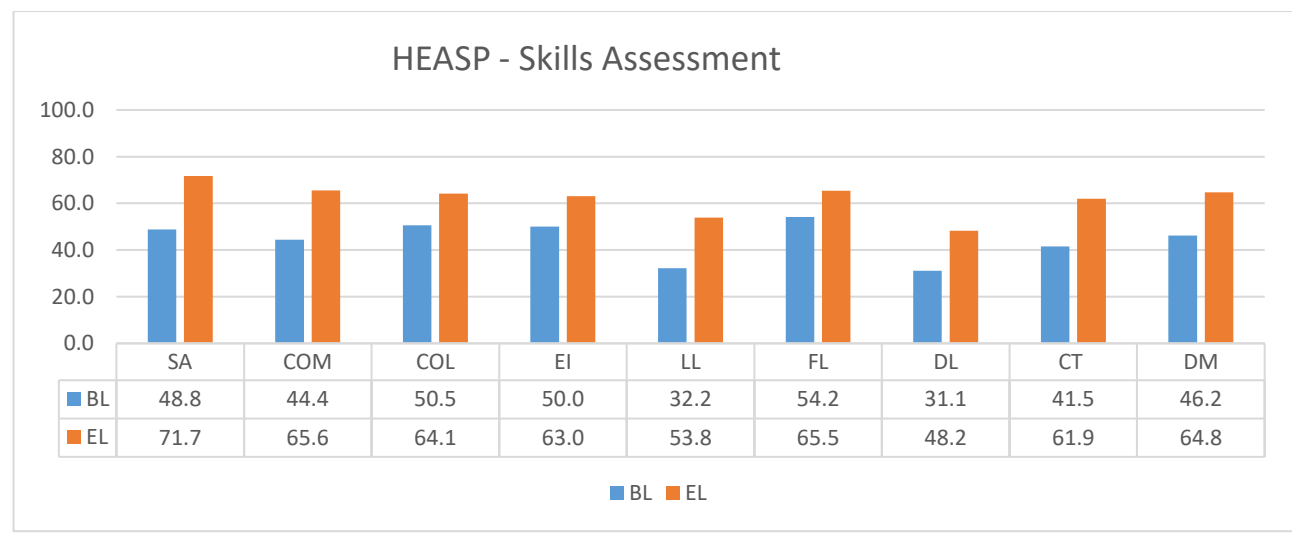
The overall objective of the program was:

- To provide students with knowledge and exposure of the career options,
- guide the pathways and provide skills required to access the careers that are mapped to personal interests and strengths, and
- enable students to develop a mind-set that will help them make informed choices and strive in their future as well.

The program that was implemented over a period of 12 months have been successful in achieving the objectives. Shared here is a consolidated data of the program outcomes, along with an analysis of the impacts and a careful investigation of some of the findings which has helped in drawing insight that are to be addressed in the following year.



To enable students to make informed decisions regarding their careers, students were provided with sessions whose objective was to develop students' socio-emotional skill along with equipping students with skills like self-awareness, communication, collaboration, critical thinking, language literacy, etc. over a period of 12 months. Shared below is the increase in each of the skills (as shared in the table above) from baseline to the end line.



To elucidate the journey from the baseline to end line, the following case studies have been shared.

Self-Awareness

At the onset of the program, which was also the first session, it was observed that most of the students were unaware about themselves; their abilities, current situation and problems that affected their lives on a daily basis.

Challenges they face:

Most of the students were unresponsive and hesitant when asked to share about themselves, for example; their likes and dislikes because they were not used to expressing their thoughts openly in their homes or even in the community.

Students were initially not able to articulate & share their own strengths, weaknesses, dreams or the potential threats that their immediate environment would pose because their most immediate influencers at home are not able to provide them with the necessary skill or scope to do the same.

Steps taken to address the problems/interventions by YDF:

Session on understanding self was done with the students, using various activities where they were asked to write about their likes and dislikes and share it with the class, whilst explaining how each individual was unique.

The activity also included a component where students had to imagine and write about how they would like to visualize their lives in next the five years.

Students were also asked to identify and articulate their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats; generic ones, so that they are more self-aware and realize scope for their growth.

Outcome/s:

Most of the Students were able to express their dreams, likes and dislikes.

Students who were hesitant at first, were able to articulate their strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats according to their dreams in a group set up as it provided them the support and confidence they needed to open up.

Beyond Outcome:

A fine example of self-awareness is explicit from the response of one of the students of Salher Ashramshala, Amol, who was able to articulate his dream career in a vivid manner; where he imagined himself as an IAS officer in next five years, solving the problems of Tribals in his area, while simultaneously working for the development of Ashramshalas there.

Communication

While students share/ express their thoughts, most of it was still in the written format. Oral communication was still a major problem amongst most of the students, which in turn stopped students in attaining their personal and professional goals.

Challenges they face:

Shyness and low self-confidence was a constant barrier to most students' effective communication. For example; most of the students hesitated in participating in role plays as they were too shy.

Other barriers included their current environment where they were not used to openly expressing their opinion; their emotions like being afraid of how others will judge them or the unfamiliarity of the language with which the communication was supposed to happen.

Steps taken to address the problems/interventions by YDF:

To be able to help students work across the barriers to communication sessions were taken where:

Students were introduced to the concept of the iceberg theory, the barriers in communication, why it occurs and equipped with tools to help them understand how to overcome them.

They were also encouraged to use non-violent communication as a tool and practise active listening and responding through a role play that helped them become more effective communicators.

Outcome/s:

At the end of the session, students were able to negotiate and influence others through a constructive feedback process. And seemed more confident while communicating their personal choices.

Most of the students also displayed emotions like empathy for their peers while communicating and made it a safe sharing space for everyone.

Beyond Outcome:

A striking case in point is how Nirmala from Devgaon Ashramshala, had mustered the courage to volunteer in a role play for the first time in her life. After which she happily shared that this was her first stage experience and while she was communicating during the play, it helped her not only overcome stage fright but also become a more confident person which she realized while talking to her teachers and engaging with other external people coming to her school.

Emotional Intelligence

Almost all the students were unaware of what constitutes one's emotional well-being and how it affects one's growth and development, both personally and professionally.

Challenges they face:

It was a constant challenge to get students to acknowledge and realize the factors that affected their emotional well-being; such as the fears they have or the stress that have to cope up with as they are in grade 12th, etc.

It was extremely new for them to talk about feelings and emotions in a reflective manner.

Steps taken to address the problems/interventions by YDF:

A session was conducted, that aimed at addressing the socio-emotional well-being of the students and help them develop positive relationship with others in their day to day lives.

Amongst others, there were activities on stress management mechanisms, given their current conjuncture.

Outcome/s:

Most of the students were able to identify and talk about their own emotions, especially the ones that they go through during the examination period and reflected on the distractions that affects their academic performance as well.

They also talked about the tools that could be used for managing negative emotions in their current environment and at future workplaces.

Most of the students displayed perseverance and used words alike for understanding others' perspectives, strengths and showed keenness to build positive relationships with others.

Beyond Outcome:

Vikas, a student of the Ashramshala in Mohandari, had reflected upon his own emotions and shared that from now on he will try to be understand others' perspectives and emotions and be more appreciative towards them every time.

Language Literacy

Most of the students were not at the grade level when it came to reading comprehension, speaking and writing in English. Even though these students did not primarily student in English, yet higher education and the employability scenario requires one to have a relatively good command over the language.

Challenges they face:

Low self-confidence and the non-availability of an English language rich atmosphere, made students refrain from participating or communicating in English, as they feared making a mistake.

Since students did not have a space to practise/use English on a daily basis, it was extremely difficult for them to put their thoughts into sentences in English, to communicate effectively.

Most of the students also had the inherent fear of the unknown and assumed English to be the most difficult language to master and hence did not even want to try initially and they never looked at the process of learning a new language as fun.

Steps taken to address the problems/interventions by YDF:

A detailed session on English language learning was done with the students, where the focus was helping them develop the four main skills of English language like listening, speaking, reading and writing through some fun activities like show and Tell, Listen and Draw, Tongue Twisters, role plays in English, etc.

Simultaneously, students were also made aware of the importance of English as a global language and its significance in higher education and beyond; along with providing them with the techniques and support of practising the language all by themselves.

Outcome/s:

At the end of the session, most of the students were able to understand the need and importance of learning English as a language and wholeheartedly participated in the activities that were done to help them develop their English language learning skills.

They also displayed a lot of interest in learning new words and understanding their usage in day to day lives and even asked questions in during the activities or whenever they felt the need to do so.

Beyond Outcome:

One of the students of Kathre Digare Ashramshala was so inspired by the session that in all the next sessions he continued to communicate in English with the Program Leaders.

Digital Literacy

Apart from English, digital skills or literacy was a big challenge for most of the students in the Ashramshalas that could become a potential dampner in their access to higher education. Most of the students barely knew how to use a computer, let alone confidently surf the internet.

Challenges they face:

It was an enormous challenge to get students to learn basic digital skills as these skills can later become deciding factors in the students' access to higher education; where digital literacy like having your own Gmail account, be able to use the internet for information gathering are absolute necessities.

It became all the more challenging as most of the students had extremely limited exposure and access to the world wide web, mainly because of their communities being engaged in primary sector jobs in the nearby regions; and providing the same in the short span of time that we had, was difficult with many schools lacking proper internet connectivity.

Steps taken to address the problems/interventions by YDF:

A thorough session on digital literacy was done with the students, where they learnt some theory and got a chance to do some hands on work as well.

The session included the basics of using a computer, the internet, along with an understanding and usage of digital tools like search engines (Google), Apps, e-mails, information gathering from websites; understand how to behave online or 'netiquette', etc.

In this session students were also encouraged to create their own Gmail id for applying to scholarships later and browse through the MahaDBT website and understand the various schemes and scholarships available for them as well.

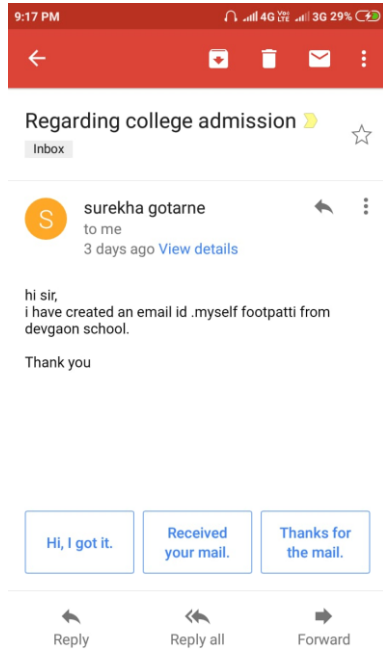
Outcome/s:

Almost all the students showed an equal amount of enthusiasm during this session. They were also equally curious to learn how to use the internet that would finally help them achieve their long-term goals on one hand and understand the immediate steps that they needed to take in terms of understanding about scholarship applications, etc.

Most of the students absorbed the knowledge provided to them during this session and duly submitted their assignments where they were supposed to create their own Gmail ids and send it across.

Beyond Outcome:

A screen shot of a mail, sent by one of the students of Devgaon, right after the session on digital literacy is shared here .A lot of students from almost each of the schools had written a mail and had sent to the program leaders. Almost everyone had shared that it was their first mail and thanked the program leaders for making them feel empowered.



Decision Making

Most of the students were unclear and uncertain about the different career pathways that they ought to pursue after passing from 12th grade.

Challenges they face:

The lack of proper role models and guidance in their community, and financial constraints, restricted most of the students from thinking about pursuing a variety of career pathways that are otherwise available to them.

This also led to many of the students in not planning for a higher education; especially girls for whom early marriage was the most logical next step, while others were content in continuing with the same profession as of their fathers' or brothers', for example; farming. Also, a considerable number of such students displayed low self-confidence and aspirational levels.

Steps taken to address the problems/interventions by YDF:

To help students become more aware about the opportunities that are available to them; sessions on reflection and goal setting was done, where students were exposed to different personalities who are considered role models in their field and help them reflect upon the traits these leaders displayed.

The activity was aimed towards broadening the students' vision of how one's passion, interests and skills can help one develop leadership qualities and succeed in life. To be able to articulate their likes, interests and passion, students were guided to set up and follow through SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Timely) goals, which would help them attain their personal and professional goals.

To enable students develop an understanding of a variety of professions, sessions have been taken and personal interest and skill identifying has also been done through psychometric test. The results have been shared with students as recommendations, which have been customized so that the options are more realistic and hence accessible, and are aligned to students' aspirations. Please find a sample of the same attached along with this report (Chankapur Ashramshala).

Financial constraints have also been one of the major reasons for drop-out at a large scale. Scholarship schemes that are available have been shared and sessions been conducted helping students to apply for the same.

Outcome/s:

At the end of the session, most of the students were able to identify their traits, values, skills and name them.

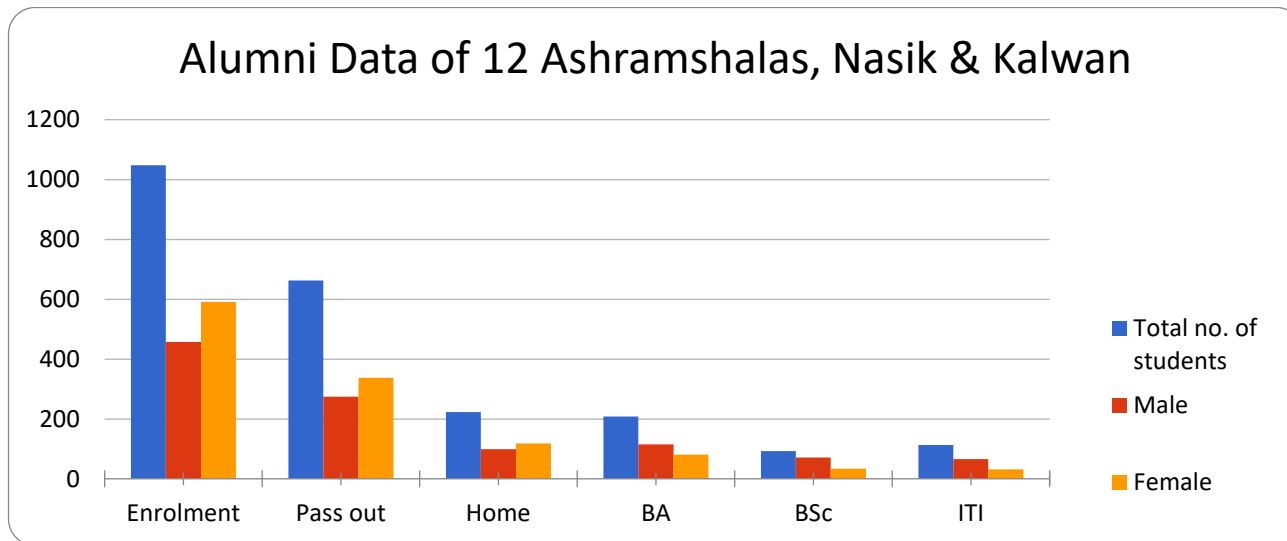
Most of the students were also able to use SWOTs (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) from the previous session and apply the same for setting their personal and professional (academic) goals.

Beyond Outcome:

A student of the Narul Asramshala, Vilas, had shared how he set his long term goals and wanted become the first person having a government job from his village and keep on motivating his juniors to pursue their career dreams by becoming a role model for them.

During and Post Intervention Findings

With the purpose of understanding the status of the pass out students, the team of YDF collected data from 12 schools. Out of the 12 schools with a total enrolment of 1048 students, data of only 8 could be collected because of lack of accurate record in the schools. Shared here are a few observations and its implications.

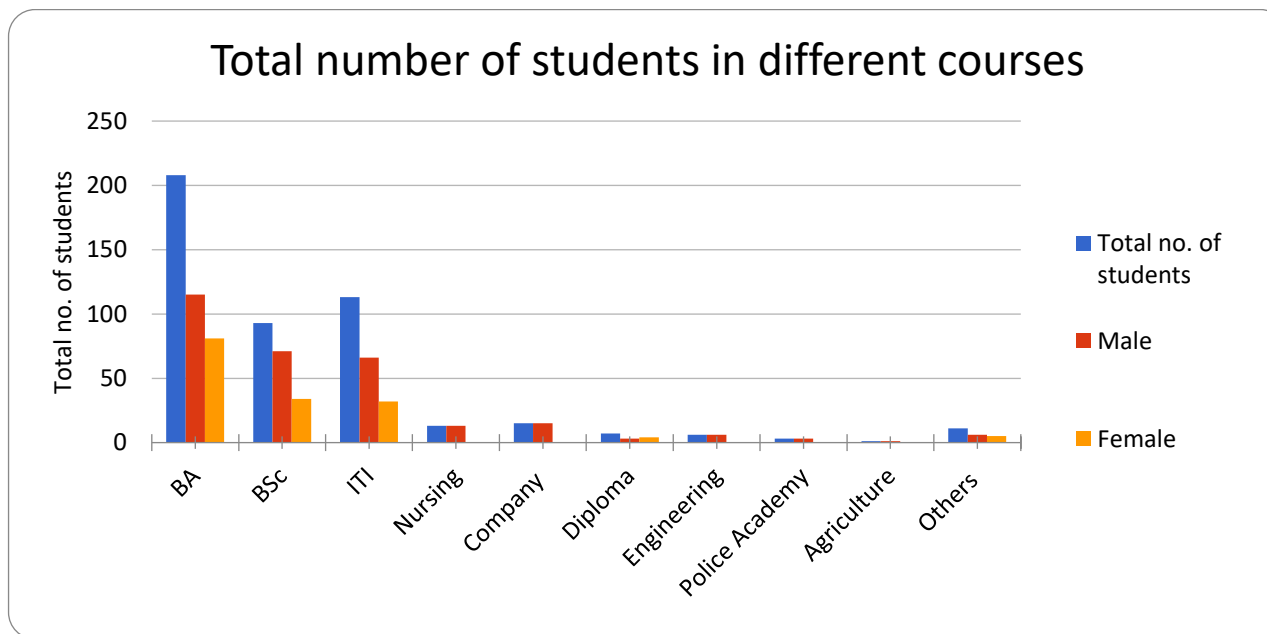


The above shared graph represents the data of 12 schools from Kalwan and Nasik districts, which were covered for collecting data of the students from the previous year. The schools are Palsan, Mani, Salher, Kathare Digare, Ambupada, Ganore, Kanashi, Chankapur, Nalegaon, Nanashi, Thanapada and Boridpada.

Observation based inferences:

- The percentage of female students enrolled in the schools is higher than the male students and so is the pass percentage. However, it is evident from the data that more female students are at either at home &/or are married after completing 12th, dropping out of the higher education.
- Naturally the transition of students from schools to higher education which in here happens to be college is much higher for male students than the female students. A deeper dive into the data that has been gathered revealed that not only female students but even male students from science sections tend to pursue BA over any other courses/colleges. Thus lack of further knowledge of the background of students as well as their interests has led us to assume convincingly that students' aspirations are limited to the immediate options that are available.

A further peek into the details will only establish the above mentioned point that more and more students tend to take up courses which are immediately available to them, and of which students are aware of.



- A majority of students choose courses or enrol for colleges to pursue Bachelor of Arts (BA) followed by Industrial Training Institute (ITI). And choices are also very gendered, where BA/BSC/ITI have more male students than female students, nursing has only female students and engineering has only male students.
- Apart from the courses or colleges a lot of students have joined jobs in company like Suzuki. For a student who is joining the workforce right after the 12th standard, a low paying job in lower ranking role is only inevitable.
- Lastly, those who are under the category of ‘others’ on the graph are either doing technical jobs like tailoring or have joined their parents in farming. A few in the occupation like painting has however helped us keep our spirits soar high!

Findings from the interventions on the ground:

A thorough data of 22 schools under the HEASP program were recorded of 2004 students. The objective was to understand students’ aspirations in terms of the careers/professions they choose, the courses they want to pursue.

An extended objective was also to understand if students have been able to take one step towards choosing a career for themselves or not, after they have received knowledge of professions and courses, and are made aware of their abilities and interests. Around 30 different kinds of professions have been shared by students, which is 3 times more than the previous batch who are enrolled or working. Here is a list of some of the professions students are willing to pursue:

1. शिक्षक, क्रीडा शिक्षक
2. पोलीस, डिफेन्स
3. आय.पी.एस., आय.पी.एस.
4. पेंटर
5. नर्स
6. वकील
7. आशा वर्कर
8. डान्सर
9. व्यवसाय
10. वायरमेन
11. फॅशन डिजाइनर
12. कृषी अधिकारी
13. वनरक्षक

14. सोशल वर्कर
15. जिल्हाधिकारी
16. पत्रकार
17. कॉन्ट्रॅक्टर
18. नौकरी

The detailed data sheet shared along with this document gives more details of the professions, shared here are only 18.

One key element of empowerment is the availability and access to information, that enables informed decision making. The fact that students could be made aware of a variety of professions through recommendations, which was an additional information even for those students who had clear idea of professions, it is a benefit, for that will help widen their knowledge affecting their choices.

The data, when looked closely reveals that several students are willing to go beyond the immediate constraints. For example, several female students want to join Police Academy, Defence or IPS and have personally enquired the process from the team of YDF. Several male students also want to pursue Nursing, unlike what last year's data reveals (although there is an absence of accurate data hence it is not completely reflective of the real scenario).

During the sessions students have also shared that lack of awareness of their current situation (academic performance, family needs and personal interests and strengths), limits their choices. A large number of students wish to pursue medicine or pharmacy, or law, as their personal goal is to make their parents proud.

It is only fair here to assume that a shift in the aspirations are emerging. Parents of these students are primarily cultivators, but majority of students want to shift to either secondary or tertiary sectors. However, the larger problem is that these students are a part of an ecosystem where such a shift is rather difficult because of the culture and the mind-set. A year of intervention has helped us understand only a fragment of how students are thinking. When students in large proportion will transition into higher education and persist, only then we can say that real impact has happened on the ground. Once these students start going for higher education they will lead as the first generation of influencer in their communities. For that a deeper and a more focussed intervention is the inevitable next step for us.

5. Conclusion and Suggestions

A yearlong intervention with the students, and regular interaction with the headmasters and teachers has helped us understand that the problems faced by students are majorly cultural issues (lack of role model in the community who can positively influence and show a pathway towards social and financial upliftment) but more importantly mind set issue (lack of knowledge about self and surrounding/environment that can offer opportunities that are accessible, and lack of the “I can” attitude).

Some of the issues have been tried to mitigate through our program. Students were provided with the knowledge of different profession and motivated to pursue the same. But the problems are multi-fold and beyond knowledge and skill set only.

Students take a lot of time to process information and comprehend, hence realizing individual goals, academic needs and skills takes a lot of time. Students also demand a safe space to share their problems for which students take time to respond. Some of the students have displayed faster growth but that majority have not shown similar traits. Many a times personal and individual conversations between the program leaders and the students have resulted into new information. For example, several female students have shared that their family will not allow them to study further. In the same group other girls have shared that they would go beyond their capacity and excel, when probed.

As an example an observation from one of the visits to Kanashi Ashramshala can be shared. Almost 80% students with Science from Kanashi Ashramshala, displayed rigor and passion to complete medicine in order to become doctor or pharmacist during decision making session. A culture of influence and peer motivation, where students take the ownership to go beyond their current capacity, which they have convinced themselves to be their optimum capacity will take longer than we had assumed.

Proposed suggestion: There are majorly 2 concrete suggestions drawing from above.

- The HEASP needs to spread across 2 years, so that students receive more face time with the facilitators. The entire program needs to become a part of the school curriculum, which will only be possible if the intervention time can be increased. The ideal intervention period would be the beginning of the secondary education, 11th standard so that students get more time to acquaint them with the program and develop a mind-set to work towards the change.
- Facilitator-student ratio needs to reduce, so that students get more focussed and individual attention. As an already proven fact, 1:30 still holds true as the ideal teacher-student ratio. The on ground program leaders have confirmed that an ideal class size would be 45 students for them.

ANNEXURES

- I. List of Ashramshalas**
- II. Sessions Overview and Detail**

I. LIST OF ASHRAMSHALAS

Sr.No	Project Office	Name of Ashram School having junior college facilities (11th & 12th)	Government/ Aided	Tehsil/block
1	Nashik	Nalegaon	Government	Dindori
2	Nashik	Nanashi	Government	Dindori
3	Nashik	Kahor	Government	Peth
4	Nashik	Aasarbari	Government	Peth
5	Nashik	Devgaon	Government	Tryambak
6	Nashik	Boripada	Government	Tyrambak
7	Nashik	Thanapada	Government	Tryambak
8	Nashik	Mhasgan	Government	Peth
9	Kalwan	Chanakapur	Government	Kalwan
10	Kalwan	Kanashi	Government	Kalwan
11	Kalwan	Dalwat	Government	Kalwan
12	Kalwan	Ganore	Government	Kalwan
13	Kalwan	Mohandari	Government	Kalwan
14	Kalwan	Khirad	Government	Kalwan
15	Kalwan	Narul	Government	Kalwan
16	Kalwan	Kathare Digar	Government	Kalwan
17	Kalwan	Mani	Government	Surgana
18	Kalwan	Palsan	Government	Surgana
19	Kalwan	Ambupada	Government	Surgana
20	Kalwan	Sarad	Government	Surgana
21	Kalwan	Salher	Government	Satana
22	Kalwan	Dahindule	Government	Satana

II. SESSION OVERVIEW AND DETAILS

Higher Education Access Support Program (HEASP)

--Accessing higher education through informed choices--

The SDG 2030 has narrowed down its goals in education focussing deeper on the ‘relevance of learning’, meaning to provide an equitable access to post basic education & training, as well on ‘global citizenship’ in a plural, interdependent and interconnected world.

A quality education is the foundation of sustainable development, and therefore of the Sustainable Development Goals. As a policy intervention, education is a force multiplier which enables self-reliance, boosts economic growth by enhancing skills, and improves people’s lives by opening up opportunities for better livelihoods. A large number of ST children drop out of school, 55% at the elementary level and 71% at the secondary level. This is 22% higher than the national average. In the scope of SDG, a substantial expansion in the number of scholarships available to developing countries, in particular least developed countries, small island developing states and African countries, for enrolment in higher education, including vocational training and information and communications technology, technical, engineering and scientific programmes, in developed countries and other developing countries has been mentioned.

Keeping the broader scope of SDG in mind and connecting it to the present need, the main goal of the project is to provide Scholarship, Career Guidance and Life Skills Support so that students and youths can make informed decisions regarding higher education and set personal career goals; and equip them with necessary skills to achieve the same in the current conditions and requirement of socio-economic and cultural development of the nation.

The sessions overview and tentative design is in the subsequent sections and are subject to change with respect to situations and understanding on the ground. The timelines are tentative which shall be customised aligning to the schedule of the schools on the ground.

Session Overview

Name of Modules	No. of Sessions	Month of Execution	Hours	No. of Participants
Understanding Myself	1	July - Sep	2 hours	1794
Setting My Goals	1		2 hours	1739
Me & My Communication	1		2 hours	1733
Understanding Emotions	1		4 hours	1764
Language Literacy, English	1	October - December	5 hours	1690
Psychometric Test/Career Counselling	1		4 hours	1655
Language Skills in Communication Digital Literacy	1		9 hours	1781
Making Responsible Decisions and Financial Literacy	1		8 hours	1673
Revisiting My Plan and Scholarship Awareness	1	January - February	3 hours	1707
Psychometric Test/Career Counselling	1		3 hours	1100