

# **YOUTH RESOURCE CENTERS**

## **Concept Note for Piloting Idea**

Youth are a critical resource of society. It is imperative that their development be a central component in the various development efforts and they be engaged in the development of these programs.

The rural youth in villages around Udaipur are largely illiterate or at most semi-literate. They often migrate for significant periods of weeks to months away from their homes for wage labour. During this migration, they are vulnerable to many forms of exploitation. Physical, emotional and sexual exploitation coupled with a risky life-style has made the threat of sexually transmitted diseases including HIV/AIDS very imminent and real.

It is not possible to stop migration in the near future without major changes in their home and village environment. In particular, the lack of opportunities to earn money in and around the house, absence of modern forms of entertainment, lack of access to things they see on television, depressing (often abusive) home life, and the lure of new experiences make migration attractive to children and families. However, Seva Mandir believes that it is possible to better educate them to understand the challenges they may face and help them develop tools to deal with situations that they are likely to encounter during migratory work.

Over the last few years, we have been interacting with the youth through different programs of reproductive health and education. Our studies show that the engagement has to be comprehensive and continuous. We also find that sustaining the interest of the youth is very challenging and requires a significant investment in human and material resources.

We propose to pilot the idea of Youth Resource Centers. These Centers will offer education (health, life skills, literacy, etc.), health counseling and recreation to them. The Centers will be equipped with technology like computers to help them learn, to sustain their interest and to provide marketable skills. Utilizing the mediums of theatre, radio programs and story workshops, we propose to combine entertainment with developing their creative talents. Our goal is to simultaneously reduce the pressure to migrate and to make them better equipped to deal with various challenges when they do decide to undertake migratory work.

We will develop education material in collaboration with members of GEO MediaNet and make it available to other organizations for evaluation and use.

To pilot this idea at two locations will require Rs. 1.5 lakh (\$3400) per annum for two years.