
A RESEARCH STUDY ON FACTORS CONSTITUTING PEOPLE'S EMPLOYABILITY

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Prepared for the
NEENV Project

SAHER
(Society for
Awareness,
Harmony and
Equal Rights)

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Preface

This report is the output of our study to investigate and address the issue of employability in our community.

Prem Nagar is a community of migrants divided along religious lines – Hindus and Muslims. It was the centre of communal riots during the Mumbai riots of 19XX. Since then the community carries the trauma within itself leading to a heightened sense of vigilance between the communities.

As the city moves on, merging itself into the global market place, there is a modernity emerging in the city. Social divides are being determined by knowledge and competency. Many from our community trickle into mainstream city life working as tradesmen, executives and entrepreneurs. But many get left behind. Lack of a good public education system, insular views and religious biases creates a marginalised youth. Afraid to venture out of the perceived safety of the urban ghetto, the Youth gets caught in a self-fulfilling prophecy.

NEENV is a program for such Youth. It will essentially facilitate the process of a systems interface between the Youth and the City. Rather than provide employment references, it works to create a higher employability quotient so Youth are equipped with life skills and technical competency to seek jobs or start enterprises and take their rightful place in the resource-rich economy. In order to create the appropriate intervention, it becomes necessary to employ the scientific method and temper it with our spirit of fervour and activism – our *Junoos*. Therefore we decided to survey the environment and capture data for further analysis and action. So, we surveyed the Youth and carried out statistical analysis. At the same time we surveyed the employers and other service providers. Then we created our intervention in the form of a community centre to address the requirements of the Youth.

The staff and volunteers, who are community youths themselves, carried out the surveys. Therefore there was an on-the-job training component to learn statistical sampling, recording data and how it is analysed. It took more time than it would take a professional market research agency to carry out the exercise. But we gained in our learning and through our capacity building. It was a time of reflection, remembering the deep trauma we carry within, introspecting and then working with an appreciate inquiry of where we are headed. Along the way, volunteers and staff kept changing, each passing the baton to another as a relay. And bit-by-bit the document got crystallised. Now it has a shape that can be presented to stakeholders for public discussion, feedback and further refinement.

This is a community asset and we offer it to the community with humility.

NEENV Team. 08-2009

बाबरा मन देखने घला इक सपना - २
बाबरे से मन की देखो
बाबरी है बाले - २
बाबरी सी धड़कने है
बाबरी है सांसे
बाबरी सी करवटों से निन्दियां तू भागे
बाबरे से नयन चाहे
बाबरे झरोखों से
बाबरे नज़रों को तकना
बाबरे से इस जहाँ में
बाबरा इक साथ हो
इस सपानी भीड़ में
बस हाथों में तेरा हाथ हो
बाबरी सी धुन हो कोई
बाबरा इक राग हो
बाबरे से पैर चाहे
बाबरे तरानो के
बाबरे से बोल पे धिरकना
बाबरा सा हो अंधेरा
बाबरी खामोशियाँ - २
धरधरती ली हो मखम
बाबरी मदहोशियाँ
बाबरा इक पुंघटा चाहे
हीले हीले दिन बताए - २
बाबरे से मुखड़े से सरकना ।

The Research Process

Sampling of Youth:

The pilot programme research project on “employability” was a combination of both qualitative and quantitative research. Both the methodologies were employed to understand youth and employability in the communities. Both the qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection and data interpretation were exercised to be more efficient in checking the reliability of the findings. The selection of the communities was done purposefully. Youth of Jogeshwari (e) falling between the ages of 18 to 30 was considered as the universe for the study. Majas Wadi, Prem nagar, Sarvoday Nagar, Bandra plot, Income Tax Colony, Meghwadi, Gandhi Nagar and Andheri Plot were the six communities meeting the needs of the research project. Selection of these communities was based on their socio-economic indicators, the geographical location, religious affiliation of the communities, their past history of going through communal disharmony, and more over SAHER’s association with these communities over many years. Another concern for exercising purposeful sampling method to select the community was to get representation of both the Hindu - Muslim youth as the communities were ghettoised on the basis of religion. For the purpose of data collection simple random sampling was applied so that all samples of the same size have an equal chance of being selected from the population.

Data was collected primarily through two methods – Questionnaire as a quantitative tool for data collection and focus group discussion (FGD) as a qualitative tool. 243 were the sample size for the research across the communities including youth from different religious background to gain a deeper inside into the correlation between employability and socio-economic background. We administered detailed interview guidelines with 72 young respondents (See appendix A). In addition to the questionnaire three FGDs were held for checking the accuracy and reliability of the quantitative data. All the three selected groups for FGD were very peculiar in their nature. 1st focus group comprised only Hindu male youth, the second was of only Muslim male youth and the third one was a mixed group of Hindu and Muslim females. Thus method of convenience and purposeful sampling was used for determining respondents for FGD. Each FGD was conducted with 7 to 9 members. All the three FGDs were run under dual moderators where in one moderator ensured that the session progresses smoothly, while another ensured that all the topics were covered.

PART 2

Qualitative Data

Our Story

*To write our story,
we must revisit our past
and look at the present
emergent reality.*

- Mumbai Riots 1992-93
- Our Community
- The Genesis of Social Action: SAHER
- The Articulated Vision for NEENV
- Employability; a view from our window

Mumbai Riots 1992-1993



For five days in December 1992 (6th to 10th December 1992) and fifteen days in January 1993 (6th to 20th January 1993), Bombay, *urbs prima* of this country, was rocked by riots and violence unprecedented in magnitude and ferocity, as though the forces of Satan were let loose, destroying all human values and civilized behaviour. Neighbour killed neighbour; houses were ransacked, looted and burned, all in the name of religion, as if to vindicate painfully the cynical observation of Karl Marx, "Religion ... is the opium of the people". Those fateful fifteen days saw the people on the streets opiate beyond the call of right and wrong.

Para 1.1, Report of the Justice B.N. Srikrishna Commission on the Mumbai riots of 1992-93.

Akhtar

Pursuant to the demolition of the masjid, my recollections are of crowds on the road, police vans patrolling the streets and asking the people to remain indoors, Maha Aarti. A sense of deep fear set in. A knock at the door, and suddenly late yielding policemen barged into our home and began beating my brother and me viciously. They dragged us away to jail amidst protests from Hindu populations that we should be handed over to them. We spent 24 days in detention and witnessed the most inhuman torture possible. I was beaten severely on my thighs, wrist, face and back. I am not left with anger as I see how people were manipulated.

My friends and I made attempts to unite our Hindu and Muslim friends by playing cricket together. We brought the youth together by play under the banner of *Naujawan Ekta Committee Cricket Team*. ...Razak, Khalid, Manohar, Salim, Imtiaz, Mehboob, Sanjiv, Adu, Rajan, Selva, Agnel...

We then moved to doing a community survey of youth and began addressing social issues through street plays. It was during these rehearsals that we realised the real issues we faced.

Unemployment leads to manipulation. I dream of a place where Hindu and Muslim youth come together, for *gup-shup*, share, and understand each other.

Rama

Though my association with SAHER physically came about only in 2002, my quest for peace and for people believing in peace started way back as a 13 year old. This was the year when I turned into a teenager and the history of modern India turned a shade greyer with the tragic demolition of the Babri masjid in Ayodhya. I caught snippets of conversations at home and outside justifying the act since it seemed to have 'taught a lesson to the minorities who must live according to the dictates of the majority'. Young as I was, conversations of hatred made me miserable and I started exploring how people from different communities constructed each other through various lenses.

It was only in 2002, during my fieldwork internship as a student from Tata Institute of Social Sciences that I realised how my feelings as teenager growing up in West Bengal were echoed in the lives of young people in Bombay who actually survived the infamous 1992-93 Bombay riots. I had met my calling in a youth group (*Navjawan Ekta Committee* or NEC) in Jogeshwari – with more Muslim members and just two Hindu members – that had turned its negative experiences from the riots to something as constructive as taking initiative to build peace across communities. Here was a bunch of youth from the community who did not believe in handing down services, but they

wished to enable people to realise their potential and power as citizens who had equal rights in a democratic country. The values of love, mutual respect, democratic thinking and an ability to take risk were at the core of why I chose to remain associated with NEC later renamed as SAHER.

We worked as volunteers for the next six years and tirelessly strived to tell people how important it was to come out of their self-built cocoons of 'my religion', 'my community' and 'my truth'. A step at a time, we gained people's confidence as we worked with young people to make them see that there are multiple realities in the world that need to be explored in order to foster respect for differences. Now, SAHER has two community offices in Jogeshwari and we work with youth and adolescents on issues of active citizenship and employability even as we in the team constantly seek learning from our exposure to different people, places and thoughts.

Currently, I work as the director of SAHER with the exciting task of building a team to steer SAHER into more intensive work with youth and adolescents on realising their potential to build careers and becoming active citizens with the ability to think critically and act responsibly.

Imtiyaz

During the riots in 1993, I was in my early teens may be 13-14 years old. The incident through which I was totally disturbed during the riots was like this:

Once I saw some people from our colony beating up a boy who was one of them and a friend within the group. The boy was shouting and crying that "I'm not a Hindu, I'm a Christian". The words that he shouted made very deep effect on my mentality. The major effect of the riots was on my family, and our business. Our business was totally destroyed and we had to face a very serious financial crisis. Due to this I couldn't continue my studies and had to start working with my father.

I joined NEC (Navjawan Ekta Committee) in 1996. I started playing cricket with them but I was not interested in NEC. Later on when I watched street plays performed by NEC I got interested in it. Earlier I had very negative thoughts about Hindus but after joining NEC my thinking changed and "We all are Equal" and according to me riots and terrors are spread by terrorist not by Hindus or Muslims.

Razzaq Bhai

The day the riots started in Jogeshwari, I was working in Malad. When I was returning home from work I saw a Rickshaw burning and saw some people standing with swords and wands, as I was reaching nearer to my house, I saw some of our people belonging to Muslim community started throwing stones, but I rescued myself from them and safely reached home. Then also the incident is still as it is in my mind, I still think of it that why these things happened.

After the riots we met people from the community and made them understand that we are equal there is no Hinduism or Muslim. I really felt very bad about the sufferings of the people during the riots. Earlier there were some committees in Jogeshwari who misused the money the relief fund money given by the government for their own purpose. Considering all this later on we decided that why can't we make an honest group of people who will work for the welfare of the people. But we did not have enough money to maintain the group and look after the welfare of people. We came up with an idea that why can't we sell milk during the month of Ramzan and earn money for the fund. We named our committee as Navjawan Ekta Committee; we performed many street plays and spread messages of religious equality through it. After some time people came to know about us and NEC and our welfare for the people.

Baba Bhai

In 1993 during the riots, one day in the midnight we were sleeping and suddenly someone broke down at my door and two policemen entered our house and I was hidden by my parents. But I was watching them, they were arresting male members of every house and were torturing them. This was the incident due to which the terror is still on my mind. I tried to make people understand that 'why are you doing such violence on other what is the benefit of this violence.' Before the riots we used to celebrate every festival with unity but after the riots there was big gap between both the communities. Later on we thought of creating a youth group which will work for the welfare people. The group was named Navjawan Ekta Committee, through this we started campaigning and street plays for awareness. I did not participated in street plays but I used to work behind the screen. Further slowly we decided to bring back that equality within people. Now I think that I suffered a lot as well as others peoples also suffered a lot, today I think that no one is Hindu or Muslim we all are human beings and our religion is humanity.

Gaus

My father used to make country liquor (illicit bootlegger), but my mother was determined not to let her children take up this occupation. I grew up in a slum in Jogeshwari with people constantly littering their surroundings and young boys wandering aimlessly with nothing much to do. I got to know SAHER in 2004 when I volunteered for an interschool sports meet initiated by SAHER and organised by local youth groups. I had always believed that as a Muslim, I must work for my community, but here I was exposed to the idea of bringing children from various communities together and also building a network of youth groups where they organise something with equal ownership and responsibility. This is what made me continue volunteering with SAHER.

I knew changes were happening within me, but I never realised them till I went through the processes of self-exploration and active citizenship module as part of SAHER's programme. I made sure to volunteer for all the Saturday sessions and one day I expressed a significant change I had seen in myself. I took out a toffee wrapper from my pocket and narrated how I never cared much about throwing litter in waste bins. However, the processes that I went through as a volunteer with SAHER instilled in me a sense of concern for my environment. I decided to begin with myself and now I never throw litter here

and there. If there is no waste bin around, I keep it with myself and throw it when I find one. I encourage my friends, colleagues and family members to do the same.

With my exposure to people from across communities and options of enhancing my skills, I feel like an open box now encouraging lights from different people and places peeping inside. My mind gets recreated everyday to accommodate multiple layers of realities and now I am a full time employee with SAHER managing its financial aspects across programmes

Our Community

Background

Jogeshwari falls under the Northwestern suburbs of Mumbai. SAHER's operational area comes under the Meghwadi Police station with its jurisdiction over 3.5 sq. kms, with a dense population of approximately 5 lakhs. During 1993 most people from Jogeshwari (East) were engaged in the garment business. The major occupation of people was service, hawking, housemaids, and auto-drivers. Women worked as housemaids and many were engaged in daily labour work such as, basket making, making paper bags, paper envelopes. There were also many who had temporary occupations like plumbing, carpentry and other such jobs pertaining to daily wage earning. Many were engaged in illegal activities too, such as liquor making, gambling and drug peddling. Some people were self-employed.

Between Oct- Dec 1992, this area also had its quota of *Ram Charan Paduka* processions, corner meetings and appeals to the Hindus to go for *Kar Seva*, at Ayodhya. Most of these activities were organized by Bhartiya Janta Party, VHP and Bajrang Dal

- Sri Krishna
Commission Report,
1998

The area has been prone to communal outbursts since many years. It mostly comprises haphazard buildings, with a mixed Hindu and Muslim population. The Hindu population dominates the peripheral settlements of Bandrekarwadi, Shiv Tekdi, Meghwadi, Majaswadi, Sarvodaya Nagar and Income Tax Colony. The central core within this comprises Makranipada, Chacha Nagar, Bandra Plot, Pascal Colony, Prem Nagar, Jhula Maidan and Idgah Maidan – dominated by Muslims (Sri Krishna Commission Report, 1998).

Despite the fact that Jogeshwari has been a witness to communal outbursts, the Babri Masjid riots were a class apart, owing to the organized nature of targeting a particular community.

The Context

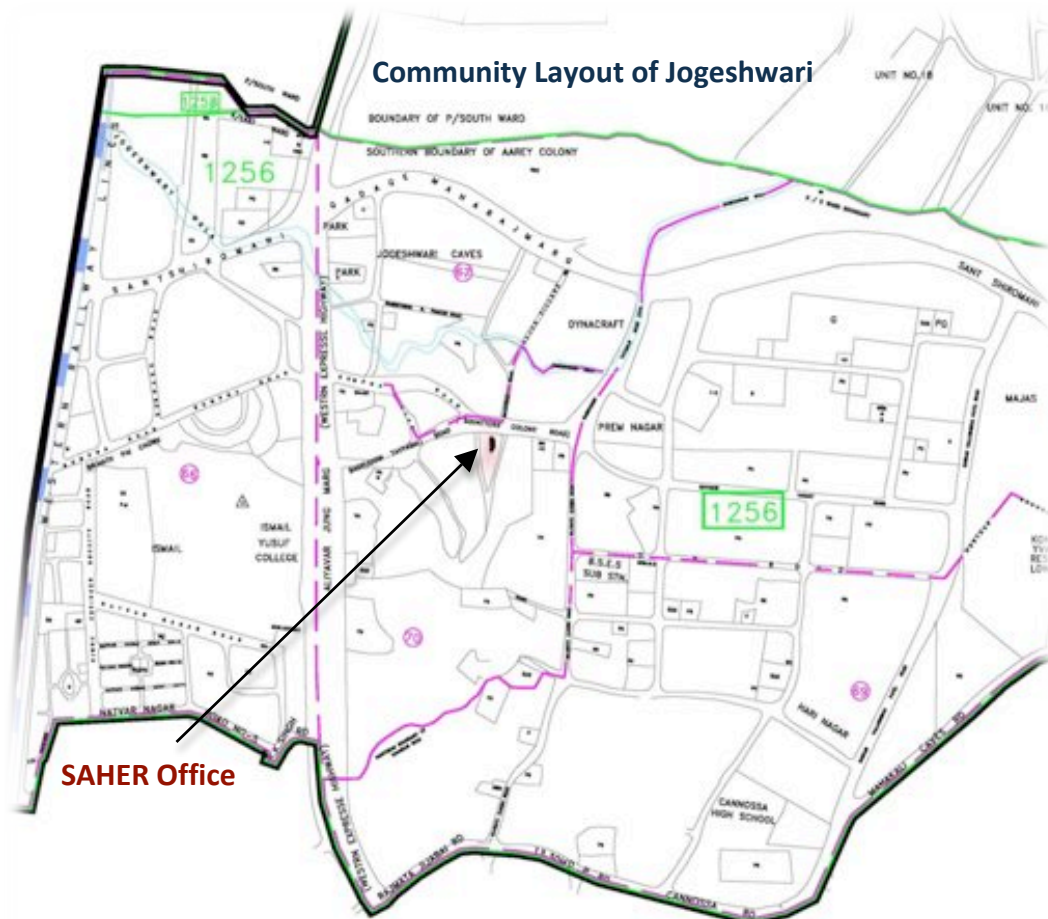
One of the worst implications of the communal violence in Jogeshwari in '92-93 was a growing sense of insecurity among the minority population. This resulted in a cross-migration of people, where the minority population (from both Hindus as well as Muslim communities) migrated out of the places, where they felt threatened. They settled in other places, where they were more in number since they felt secure, owing to closeness to their co-religionists. Settlement patterns, even otherwise demarcated across communal lines, were completely ghettoized after the '92-93 communal violence. One of the major implications was that it affected the way of life and trade relations of both the communities. The minority community felt extremely vulnerable in a situation, where they had suffered immense loss of life, property and livelihood.

The lives of the youth were thrown into a tizzy especially after the Mumbai riots of 1993. Most of them – who were teenagers or children, then – were subjected to gross injustice by virtue of belonging to a particular community. These events resulted in the loss of lives of their near and dear ones, leaving behind scars and painful memories for them. One of the greatest impacts was on the education of girls, especially those from Muslim households. They were forced to drop out of schools owing to the fact that most of the schools (both private and government) were situated in Hindu dominated areas.

It must be reckoned that communal violence and mob frenzy is momentary and ends within a few days. What linger on are deep scars of alienation, discrimination and mistrust, across communities. It takes decades to embalm these wounds that lurk in the minds of people.

Over the years, the people living in Jogeshwari (East) have received minimal support for any developmental activity or initiative, resulting in a growing scarcity of educational infrastructure in the area and furthermore, leading to large-scale unemployment among the youth. This in turn has led to a sense of alienation and deprivation among people who continuously struggle for their access to basic services.

Political parties and other power hungry groups use this alienation and deprivation among people to create potential vote banks. This in turn paves the way for vested interest groups – mostly with political affiliations – to wield their power over community resources and also spread misinformation among people leading to majority-minority feelings among communities.



Satellite Photo of North Mumbai



Satellite Photo of Prem Nagar



The Genesis for Social Action –SAHER

SAHER (Society for Awareness Harmony and Equal Rights), a Community Based Organization (CBO), registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860 (732/2005 GBBSD) and the Bombay Public Trust Act, 1950 (F-28871) working in Jogeshwari (East), Mumbai, has been mobilizing and working with youth, both local as well as from outside Mumbai. SAHER comprises young people between 18 to 35 years of age, who come from varied educational and religious backgrounds. (See Annexure 1: Our Team pg.10).

SAHER works within the value premise of accepting differences, equal rights for all, justice and social peace by adopting a holistic approach, to address the root cause of communal hatred.

SAHER has been actively responding to the needs of the local community since its inception in 1997, especially in the area of civic and political rights and promotion of communal harmony (See Annexure 2: Activities and Achievements -pg. 11). Over a period of time SAHER realized that its core strength is drawn from being a Community Based Organization, with immense acceptability within the community. Partnership and networking with several like-minded individuals and organizations has often helped SAHER add value to its work in the community and resulted in some achievements, both for the community, as well as for the team (See Annexure 3: Working with Partners and Advisors and Mentors-pg.13).

The Concern

The main concern is lack of social peace and growing communal polarization between communities. This stems from the environment in which young people in the area have been growing up.

To address this concern, the overall emphasis has been to work with adolescents and youth who are still at an impressionable age and open to accepting ideas. We have realized that as a person grows, his/her ideas about life and outlook gradually go through a process of internalization. This becomes so embedded in the person's consciousness that it becomes near impossible to do away with baggage of experiences and construction of thoughts. A continuous exposure to multiple realities and contextual situations, with adolescents and youth, can mould their minds to recognize and accept differences more easily.

: Our Vision :
**A world where differences are
recognised, accepted and appreciated.**

Objectives:

- To intervene meaningfully in the educational curricula of schools and colleges to make education a more holistic experience for children and youth
- To enable the youth in making informed choices in life by generating awareness among them about livelihood options and their socio-political rights
- To ensure public participation in political processes so that communities do not fall prey to divisive politics.

Core Strategies:

- Working with the youth: To provide spaces to young people to interact and explore their abilities, such that they begin their journeys as agents of social change. The attempt here is to ensure that the youth recognize their abilities and identify their rights to be in a position to realize their mutual relationship with the environment
- Building awareness: To address the issue of social peace through civic awareness and facilitation of collective action that caters to the common needs across communities, irrespective of socially and politically constructed differences and identities
- Bridging the gap between communities: To develop an understanding of a heterogeneous social context by breaking stereotypes and undertaking activities that involve people from various backgrounds

Programmes and Activities

Parwaaz: Our interactions with children and youth in the past have helped us realize how significant is the younger generation in bringing about positive changes not just in communities in which they live, but also in contributing to the larger environment. To develop a sense of ownership, responsibility and sensitivity in young minds, the most important level of intervention could be the introduction of life-skills activities in the educational curricula at schools and colleges. Parwaaz entails activities that work towards creating such interactive spaces for youth from various backgrounds and we are supported in this by Pravah, Delhi.

Parwaaz is a process where youth from the college go through a journey of self exploration while learning collectively. It is an interactive space where experiential learning is used to enable youth to:

- Explore their abilities and dreams, such that they begin their journeys as agents of social change
- Understand that there are multiple and diverse realities in the world and to recognize and respect differences
- Imbibe skills to deal better with conflicts and negotiate day-to-day relationships in any sphere of life
- Develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards community resources and environment

- 50 youth have participated in this programme so far and the third batch has started with 35 college going youth

Neenv: A programme that focuses on the critical issue of livelihood for youth. The aim is to enable the youth in making informed choices in life by generating awareness among them about livelihood options. 35 youth have completed courses in computers, Spoken English and Fabric painting. The Current focus is to prepare a database of skills sets available among youth in the community along with a database on services required by people around. This would be followed with identifying and partnering with organizations interested in building capacities of such youth to enhance their skills or introduce new skills. The core objectives of the programme are to:

- Build a collective of young people, who recognize their self-worth and are aware of their rights
- Facilitate a process whereby youth receive information on available opportunities and are guided towards making informed choices

3 youth have completed this training and 1 has been absorbed into ITC Grand Maratha Sheraton, Mumbai as an apprentice trainee for 3 years. 15 young men and women from the community have begun their weekly sessions on life skills and perspective building while 20 people have registered for basic computer courses.

Mohalla Hamaara: In SAHER, we believe in learning from people continuously. Towards this end, this programme focuses on:

- Research studies to enhance our understanding about how youth think about various issues that affect them. Currently we are engaged in studying perceptions of youth about ghettoisation in our community and this is being supported by PUKAR
- Responding to immediate needs of the community regarding civic issues, electoral rights etc.
- Capacity building of our own team which is largely community based through exposure visits and interactions with people from various walks of life
- More than 2, 000 youth and children have participated in workshops, public meetings, interschool sports meet and other voluntary activities.

As represented in the above diagrammatic representation, Mohalla Hamara is our foundation for developing context-specific youth development programmes. Whilst Parwaaz enables youth to explore the self and expose them to multiple realities, development does not stop at this. Neenv was initiated to enable college going youth, that are at the threshold of choosing a career path, explore opportunities around them. It was for youth from the community, that lacked formal education and find their potential wasted. Neen will enable them to recognize and tap their potential optimally. All these interventions lead to more awareness and constructive thinking among youth leading to spaces that are inclusive and based on interdependence across communities.