

Thoughtshop Foundation

Registered as: Society | **Founded:** 1993

Head Office Location: Kolkata, West Bengal

Region of Impact: Pan-India

Annual Budget (2012-13): INR 57 Lakhs (\$95,000)

Adolescent Girls Budget (2012-13): INR 25 Lakhs (\$42,000)

Staff Strength: 6 full time, 16 part-time



Overview

Thoughtshop Foundation (TF) develops **innovative** behavior change communication tools to effectively engage, educate and empower individuals and communities, on issues such as adolescent reproductive health, gender equity, and child rights. TF's tools are designed for peer education and consist of unique, interactive group activities, games and visual aids. It trains youth leaders to work with other youth using these tools in order to drive change in their communities. Its tools are developed through extensive research and field testing, and are adapted for diverse languages and audiences.

Adolescent Girls Program

TF's Youth Resource Cells (YRC) program was started in 2007 to empower adolescents for addressing social challenges such as gender inequality, early marriage, and domestic violence. It seeks to build the capacity of youth leaders and their community-based youth groups (i.e. YRCs) through a holistic curriculum for personal development. The program helps girls explore personal issues of identity, choices and goals, and gain awareness of gender equity and adolescent sexual and reproductive health. Youth leaders use TF's participatory methodology to develop their peers and become strong role models; the peer-education format leads to greater engagement of group members. These YRCs then become self-sustaining support groups that play a vigilance role, take collective action and build awareness in their communities.



Milestones

- 1997: Created *Champa* toolkit for adolescent girl sexual health ed.
- 1999: Started ASK, a youth helpline
- 2006: Selected for Oxfam's south-east Asia wide 'We Can' campaign
- 2007: Piloted the YRC model
- 2009: Implemented YRC program

Impact to Date

- Over 400 girls empowered through YRC curriculum
- Over 2,500 families engaged through community outreach, which includes at least 1,000 girls
- Over 24 YRC groups developed in 24 communities, directly impacting over 600 adolescents

Model

- TF delivers the program directly to a cohort of youth leaders at its center, using its interactive methodology; these leaders form groups of 20-25 young people (majority of whom are adolescent girls) and the program is delivered by them through local group meetings/activities
- The YRC program consists of a 12-18 month foundation curriculum covering personal development, life skills, adolescent reproductive health and gender awareness, and community action projects to engage at least 100 families.
- After completing the foundation, groups are engaged in more advanced courses such as peer counseling training, using the same peer education format
- Program delivery is conducted entirely by youth trainers and facilitators from previous cohorts; since 2007, TF has completed the foundation program with four cohorts consisting of 24 YRC groups in total, most of which are in rural areas surrounding Kolkata

Theory of Change

Transformation of self leads to transformation of society; if young people become partners in the process of social change rather than beneficiaries, then they can be empowered to achieve their full potential, and develop ownership and responsibility for themselves, their peers and communities, which in turn can bring about positive and sustainable social change.

Growth Plans

TF plans to build upon its work with the existing 24 YRCs (~400 adolescent girls, ~200 boys) to have greater outreach as well as develop a strong exit strategy to ensure sustainability of impact.

- **Leverage existing groups to reach more adolescent girls and developing a strong exit strategy:** TF plans to develop 10 of the older YRCs into independent community based organizations (CBOs) that will partner with local schools to reach over 3,000 girls in the next 3 years and build their capacities using the YRC curriculum. It plans to leverage its large team of youth facilitators to ensure the impact of its curriculum is not diluted through scale.
- **Strengthening younger groups:** TF will work with the remaining YRCs to further develop youth leaders through advanced courses, and help them develop a network with other YRCs to take on larger scale community projects.

	2012-13 (a)	2013-14 (e)	2014-15 (e)	2015-16 (e)
Total Org Budget (INR Lakhs)	57	60	60	60
Total Adolescent Girls Budget	25	25	25	25
No. of Adolescent Girls	400	400	1,000	2,000

Note: Since TF plans to continue working with its existing set of YRCs and help them reach a larger number of adolescent girls by partnering with schools, it expects its budget to remain steady despite the increase in outreach, driving down its cost/beneficiary significantly while maintaining quality of impact.

Leadership & Management

TF's founder, Mira Kakkar, has over 20 years of experience in behavior change communications. Its project directors, Himalini Varma and Santayan Sengupta, are graduates of the National Institute of Design, Ahmedabad, and are skilled at developing innovative tools and systems for the social sector. The organization's core 4-person team is supported by 12 youth trainers and facilitators, who lead all program activities.

Partnerships

TF conducts research, develops project tools and provides training for/with partners like UNICEF, USAID, CARE India, Youthreach, and CINI. It implements the YRC program for Indienhilfe in its districts. It was selected by Oxfam GB to develop campaign materials for the 'We Can End Violence against Women' campaign, which was implemented across South Asia by over 2000 partners.

Funders

TF works with several well-known international funding agencies on their projects. Oxfam GB funds TF for research and content development for projects on diversity and women's leadership, and has funded other projects in the past. Sir Ratan Tata Trust has been funding the YRC program since 2009.