



# YRA FIFTH Strategic Plan 2021-25

## YUVA RURAL ASSOCIATION

Registered under Society Registration Act, Bhopal, M.P, Registration No - BPL/1973U/s 44, 10775/2002  
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# YRA FIFTH Strategic Plan 2021-25



# BACKGROUND

## YUVA RURAL ASSOCIATION

Yuva Rural Association registered on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2002 as society from Madhya Pradesh and the first Strategic Plan was developed for the period of April 2003 to March 2006. After implementing successfully next strategic plan was prepared for the period of April 2006 to March 2011. Till then YRA was focusing more on the Human Rights, issues of deprived constituency and helping these constituency at eleven levels of interventions starting from popular education, awareness generation to demonstrations and advocacy with the government for policy and program change from the perspective of welfare of deprived communities. Tribal, small and marginal farmers, landless laborers were the main constituency with focusing on women, youth and children. YRA was spread in three states of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujarat to address issues of disadvantaged people from the overarching framework of Millennium Development Goals, ecological sustenance at one side and Good Governance at another. Therefore, YRA's thematic areas were 'Natural Resource Management and ecological balance', 'Welfare of disadvantaged communities and Good Governance' and 'Gender and social equality'.

# STRATEGIC PLAN

## 3rd Strategic Plan

It was in the year 2011, YRA developed the 3rd strategic plan (2011-2014) that turned its approach and decided to consider district as unit for all interventions. In the review of all earlier strategic plans, it was realized that the impacts of our interventions were not measurable or we were not able to count and point out the beneficiaries of our interventions, may be because our interventions were mostly at the level of policy advocacy, research, campaign, networking etc. Therefore, making districts as our intervention units and families as direct beneficiaries 2011-2014 plan was prepared. However, there were many challenges during this strategic period, both external and internal. The year 2011 was the year when YRA became totally independent in terms of financial resources as YRA got registered under FCRA. The year 2014 and 15 was very tough for the organization to sustain. Many senior staff also had to leave the organization. There was no proper strategic plan for this period.

## 4th Strategic Plan

With a gap of 1-2 years In 2016 YRA developed new strategic plan where in the thematic area changed as "Livelihood" with larger perspective, including employability, family income, health, education, water and sanitation etc. NRM, Social and Gender equality and good governance were cross-cutting areas in this plan. The geographical area was confined to Vidarbha and Marathwada, but except Parbhani we could not spread much in Marathwada. Even in Vidarbha we narrowed down our spread from 8 districts to 5 districts only. Purposely in this period YRA appointed special designated position of "Communication and fund-raising officer". But this did not serve the purpose due to lack of capacities. Even the organizational structure proposed for Fourth Plan was not possible because of the slow growth in program development and reduced financial support from international development partners.





# 5th Strategic Plan

YRA completed the fourth Strategic Plan (2016-2020) and initiated the process of new (fifth) strategic plan. In fact, the process was to be started from March 2020, but due to COVID 19 and lockdown the process got delayed. Unfortunately, the year 2020 YRA had no particular Strategic Plan but continued on the guidelines of the earlier plan. Nevertheless, the process for the next Strategic Plan (2021 to 2025) was proposed as below.

## The Change Agent:

In the process of preparing Strategic Plan there has to be The Change Agent who has to lead the process as change agent and take the whole responsibility of the risks, challenges and putting up the new strategic plan in practice with the changes at all levels. An idea of exploring new younger leadership to take up the role of Change Agent was discussed in the Governing Council Meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2020. Accordingly, it was explored but realized it would be pre-matured and decided that **Mr. Datta Patil** being founder member of YRA, should continue as Change Agent for this plan and while implementing this plan groom the second leadership.

## The Facilitator :

It is important to have a facilitator for the entire process of designing and facilitate preparing the strategic plan. It is always better to have external expert to play this role. The Governing Council suggested that Ms. Seemantinee Khot, then time Vice-President of YRA, could play the role of facilitator and Ms. Anita Borkar and Mr. Mohan Surve, both members of Governing Council may support her. A second thought was given to this suggestion and was considered that all are sitting in the Governance and they know the organization closely. Any way! as governance their inputs will be valuable and also available in the process. In this context we should explore someone else having good experience in OD facilitation. Accordingly, the name of **Mr. Shirish Joshi** from Pune was suggested. Ms. Seemantinee Khot also supported this name and so Datta Patil approached him and explained the process and role. Mr. Shirish Joshi accepted to facilitate the Strategic Planning Process pro-pono.

## Mandate by the General Council of YRA

The Governing Council in its meeting held on 16<sup>th</sup> May 2020 discussed the note on Strategic plan 2021 to 2025 and mandated to go ahead. But due to Covid- 19 pandemic, it was not processed as discussed. Then it was recommended to the General Council held on 12<sup>th</sup> Dec 2020 for their mandate. The General Council also mandated the process to go ahead with Strategic Plan process. It was expected that the entire process will take place between Jan and Mar 2021 and actual implementation could be started from April 2021. But again, due to the second wave of CORONA, it was not possible to complete the process as decided. Somehow online workshops and meetings were conducted and facilitated by Mr. Shirish Joshi as the facilitator during March 2021 and June 2021 that was documented by an intern and final draft was written by the Change Agent, Datta Patil. The draft strategic plan document was circulated among stakeholders and their comments were incorporated during July- Sept 2021. Finally, The General Council in its meeting held on 18.10. 2021 decided to practice the **Fifth Strategic Plan (2021-2025)** with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021.



A two days long workshop on reviewing the Strategic Plan 2016-2020 was conducted on 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> Jan 2021. This session was conducted by Datta Patil, Director General of YRA attended by 28 staff members.

# Review of the last Strategic Plan 2016-20

## Following were the major review points:

The last Strategic Plan was well articulated with the write-up, concepts, and process. The strategic plan review meeting was scheduled for April 2020, but due to the COVID-related lockdown, this did not take place on time.

The core purpose of the strategic plan, which is to provide broad guidelines to the organization in its thematic and strategic interventions, programs, HR, capacity building, resource mobilization, resource planning, financial planning, organization structure, systems, values, leadership, and work culture etc. was very well covered. "To facilitate empowerment process of the underdeveloped, distressed communities and facilitate them towards their overall welfare" was the core purpose of this strategic plan (2016-20)

## The vision and mission of YRA

The vision as "An empowered and capable society with all human rights, equity, peace, justice and security without any discrimination on the basis of cast, class, creed, ethnicity, religion, gender, age and language; leading towards sustainability". And the mission as "YRA is committed to facilitate social transformation through socio-economic empowerment of the rural poor by establishing their access over rights and resources that will promote social equity, ecological balance and enable them to participate in good and responsive governance through their organizations and institutions" were correctly articulated and the efforts towards achieving both were consciously made.

**Thematic focus:** Sustainable Livelihood from broader perspective including health, education, food and nutrition, water and sanitation along with cross-cutting themes of Gender justice, NRM and good governance were rightly identified at the time of last strategic plan and the same was implemented consciously.

## The intervention strategies were:

- Innovations in livelihood around agriculture, forest, water and others
- Convergence of government programs
- Skills, technology development/ transfer
- Credit, insurance, market
- Institutional and organizational building
- Policy advocacy
- Awareness building
- Attitudinal change

**Most of the intervention strategies planned were adopted.**

- Sustainable agriculture and irrigation
- Soil & water conservation
- Forest conservation
- Bio-diversity Management
- NTFP base livelihood
- Small ruminant base livelihood
- Health and MCH
- Quality education
- Sanitation and safe drinking water
- Non-farm micro enterprise
- Financial inclusion



**After reviewing, the group came to a conclusion that a few of those proposed programs had been successful, but some programs had not been widely implemented as projects**

**Operational strategic orientation included the following:**

- PO/PI- formation and facilitation
- Convergence and collaboration
- CMP- Common Minimum Processes
  - From Giver to Facilitator
  - Inviting Volunteers
- Alignment with SDGs & Climate Change
  - To work with Networks and alliances
- Best practices documentation and research
  - Demonstrations
  - Awareness and counseling
  - PRI strengthening.

**The group came to the conclusion that overall, with a few exceptions, most of these had been well attended to.**

- The geographical area proposed in the previous Strategic Plan, i.e. 8 districts in Vidarbha, extendable to Marathwada and MP if required, had been closely met.
- There was a difference of opinion on whether the constituency identified in the previous plan (dalits, tribals, SMFs and landless, BPL, youth, children and women) had been focused on. Some staff members felt that focus had been kept, while others felt that perhaps these constituents had simply been served because of the nature and location of the projects, not consciously.
- The review of the Organizational Structure showed that it had not been well-actualized, and it was felt that this issue also needed to be addressed in the coming Strategic Plan. The human resource situation needs more review, and budgeting for the needs has to be planned better.
- Review of Governance showed that although some of the recommendations from the previous plan had not been followed, still the General Council and the Governing Council were functioning well.
- The review of policies and systems showed that almost every requirement was in place, with the exception of policies on child protection and data privacy.
- The review of leadership and human resources showed that although these issues had been addressed in the previous strategic plan, no progress had been made in these areas. This critical issue needs to be more closely reviewed and attended to in the coming plan.

### The previous strategy to bring in financial resources had included:

- Existing funding partners
- Share strategic plan with new funding partners both Indian and Foreign
  - CSR, Indian trusts and Government funds
- Community contribution, consulting assignments, crowd funding.
  - Separate fund-raising position

However, these strategies had either been unsuccessful, or were successful simply by chance & not by plan. Hence this is another issue that needs to be closely addressed in the new strategic plan.

### The review process came to the following conclusions:

- Every year Strategic Plan to review in AGM& staff
- Appointing appropriate positions as per structure
  - General cost allocation policy to bring in.
- A provision for appropriate fund to take care of Core Expenses.
  - Annual operation and budget plans to develop
  - Next plan to be in place from Oct 2021.

The session provided certain insights through thorough review which could be considered in the next strategic plan.

**Round of discussions towards building next Strategic Plan:** Facilitated by **Mr. Shirish Joshi.**





## How do we perceive YRA today?

The first round of discussion (16<sup>th</sup> March 2021) was held on the current perception of the board and core staff about YRA. The facilitator invited each member to share own perception/s. The perceptions came out are consolidated as below:

### Environmental Challenges:

- The shift was due to a difference in internal reality as well as external reality.
- The image of the sector has gone down.
- The shift in Last plan was necessary because of situation revealed in environment scan



### Organization Development:

- YRA has been a cadre building organization.
- YRA has big identity in Maharashtra because of sustained work
- Themes – YRAs contribution is increasing in networking known nationally
- YRA is a learning organization
- We aimed high, and we have reached a respectable level
- Our mission and vision are still leading us to rights based advocacy.
- Systems and policies are in place.
- The governance is reflective. Very strong. Always shows us mirror. Facilitative monitoring.
- All legal & statutory compliances are regular and in time.



### Programs and interventions:

- YRA has moved from rights-based to unit-based welfare interventions. Certainly, there are some impacts of this shift.
- Advocacy is necessary, but scale has been lost by working with individuals
- The need based planned interventions were surpassed by opportunistic project interventions with funders agenda and their perspective more.
- 4 levels of interventions: Individual level capacity building; community level implementation, regional / state level networking amongst NGOs and state / national level advocacy –could be thought of in the next Plan.
- We should look for multi-thematic projects
- Look for facilitating capacity-building for other NGOs
- Livelihood from broader perspective – we could not link all the areas
- Could not link with families, BCC did not happen
- We need to develop programs from a livelihood lens. We need to focus more on getting consensus in communities about what is needed by them.



## Human Resources:

- Huge staff turnover.
- Inefficiency and lack of commitment among the grass-root staff observed.
- Could not develop internal expertise or bring in experts as staff.
- Internal capacity-building used to be very good, not happening now
- Passion and profession conflicts.



## Funding & Finance:

- The project funding brings in limitations for the organization.
- Organization has survived because of implementation mode. CSRs – formed genuine partnerships.
- We should approach government funding.
- Non-funded common minimum interventions



## Constituencies:

- Historically covering vast geographical area of three states but has come down only to one state, one region due to the overall shift.
- Should expand our identity in terms of vision and mission
- Geographical area appropriate
- Rural youth – strong work in the past, decreased now.
- All 8 districts – work not equal.
- Outreach has gone down, uneven presence
- We should increase geographical presence.
- The poor & marginalized was not focused.
- Community dynamics are very strong – need to be understood
- The community stand-points have been changed. They feel the organization gains, they don't.
- We need to know the unit for which we are working e.g. family or a village.
- We need to reach to the last man/ woman.





## YRA's historical strength

- Our inheritance or legacy is advocacy, which has formed the basis of our identity
- First, we used to assess the wants and needs of people. Now we do not truly understand, and so cannot articulate to funders for partnership.
- Core competencies are not built to the extent expected
- Core capability remained in capacity building, PO/PI formation, facilitation and advocacy.
- Style of functioning and identity.
- YRA changed all three.
- Staff needs to be viewed in terms of competence, capability, and identity
- As an organization, we do not know what we have gotten into. Organizations successfully develop a set of paradigms, behaviors etc. Changing it is very difficult.

## Stakeholder's workshop

One day workshop of the stakeholders was held on 5<sup>th</sup> Dec 2021. The concept of the strategic plan and background as also the draft document was presented in the workshop and it was opened up for their suggestions and comments. More than 50 stakeholders were present in the workshop and they gave valuable suggestions mainly related to the interventions they feel most important. All those suggestions and recommendations have been incorporated in the final draft.



# The Plan

On the basis of all reviews, environmental scan, internal realities, external challenges and the need of the hour, YRA arrived to prepare Fifth Strategic Plan comprehensively as follow.

## Core Purpose:

YRA's core purpose is to facilitate human kind for the better human life & contribute towards Global Goals- Leave No one Behind. Helping people to help themselves.



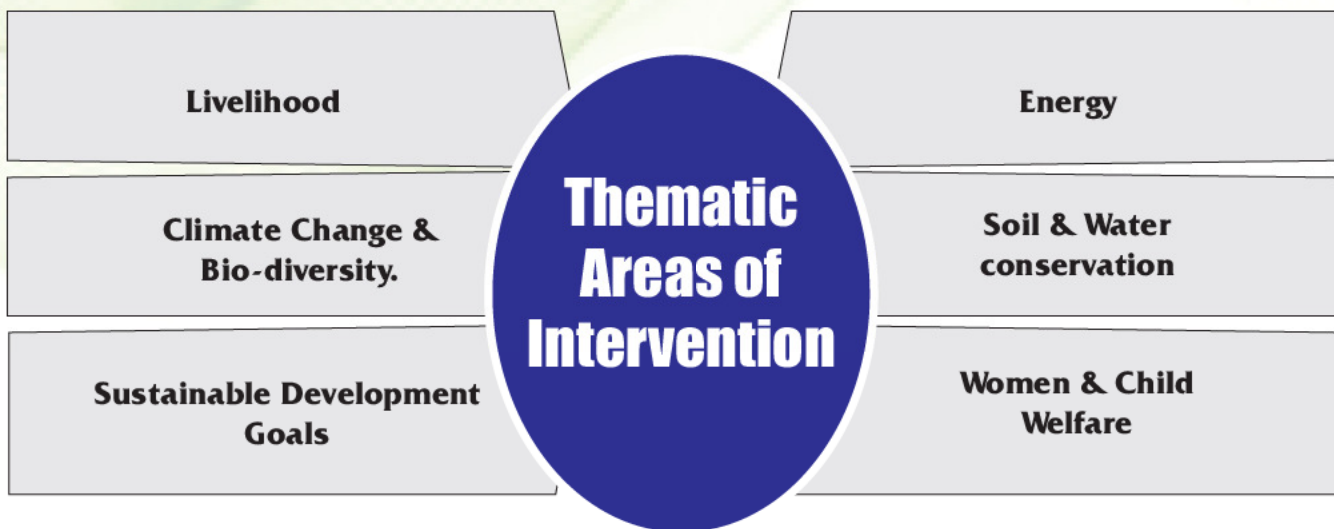
## Vision:

**Better human society with equal opportunities and participation towards sustainability of the Planet.**

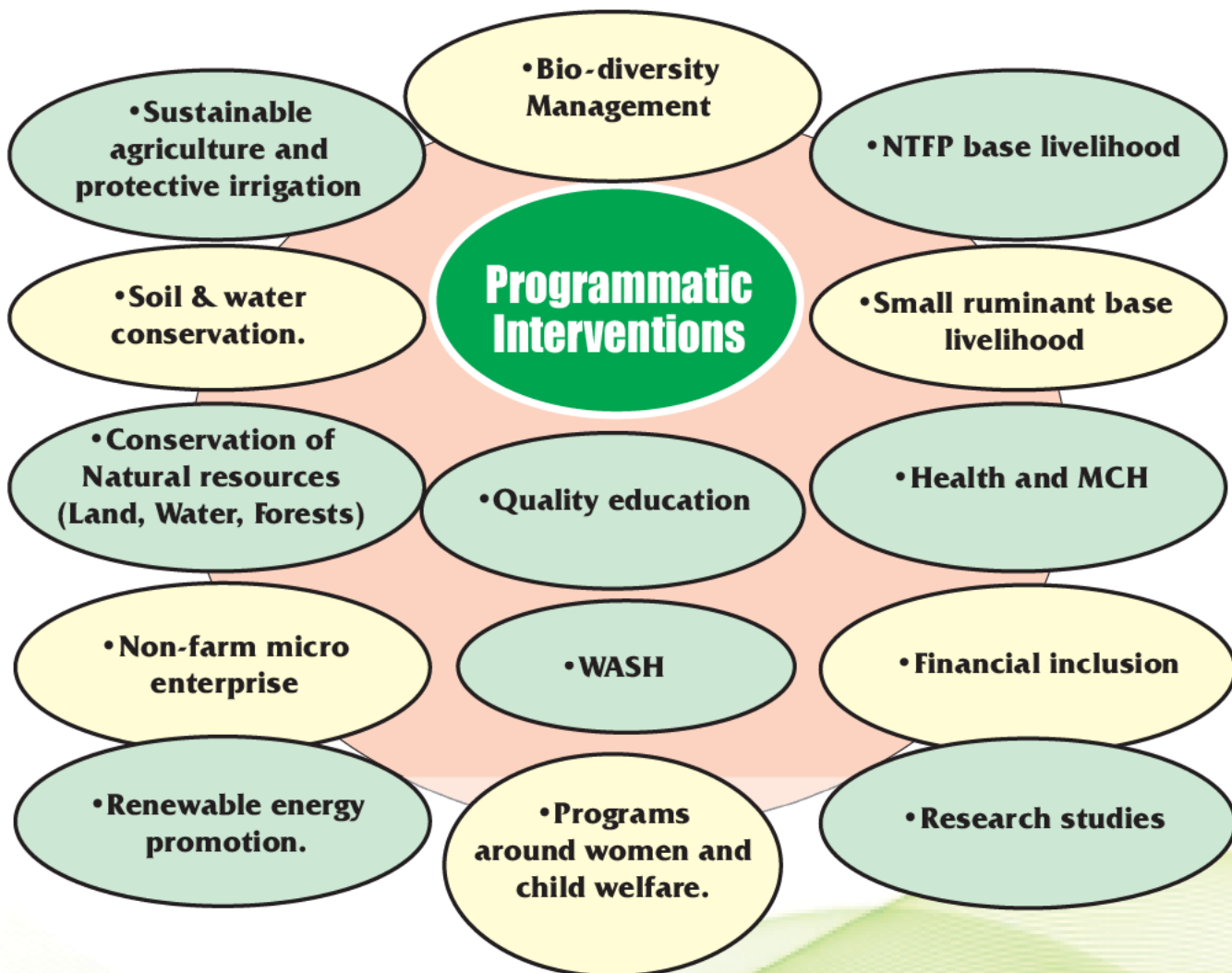
## Mission

**YRA is committed to support and facilitate the needy, poor and marginalized people to make them harness equal opportunities and participate equally, aiming “No one Live Behind”.**





Improving quality of life, including quality education, health, hygiene, nutritious food, safe drinking water



# Operational Strategic Orientation

YRA will focus on following operational strategies

- **Facilitate exercising rights:** The state and central government have enough pro-poor policies, programs and budget approved. Most of them are towards achieving the basic human rights and Sustainable Goals mandated by UN and member states. YRA's strategy will be focused on facilitating the exercising those rights and SDGs among the poor.
- **PO/PI building and capacity Building:** The poor is not organized and so they are exploited. YRA will facilitate their coming together for their own development through their collectives in the forms of their Organizations and Institutions. Only building organizations and institutions will be inadequate and so YRA will focus on their capacity building.
- **Direct facilitation:** YRA will remain as facilitating organization during this strategic plan. Various processes will be adopted in capacity building till the organizations and instructions become self-dependent.
- **Cadres at grass-root level:** Youth and women will be selected on the basis of leadership qualities; those could play the roles of Community Resource Persons (CRP). They will be given required training including skill training as required.
- **Replicating and scaling up the “Development Models”:** YRA has evolved certain development models as demonstrations which could be replicated and scaled-up in other parts of the state. YRA will focus on that during this plan.
- **Need based livelihood programs:** innovative, local, environment friendly and need based livelihood activities will be promoted.
- **Demand creation:** The poor and marginalized people are not aware of their rights and demands. We will make them aware so as they will demand their development.
- **Focus on BCC:** Attitudinal change among people has to be focused through BCC.
- **Four level interventions:** Capacity building at individual level, facilitate implementation at community level, networking at regional level and advocacy at national level.
- **Networking & Collaborations:** YRA is engaged with various issue-based networks, nationally and statewide. It has been win-win for both YRA and the networks and so YRA will continue this relationship with the networks and alliances. YRA initiated a state level network of the organizations in Maharashtra and will lead the same till the leadership will get changed democratically.
- **Annual Plan & Review:** YRA will derive annual plan of action every year out of the strategic plan 2021-2024 & the same will be reviewed collectively in the end of that particular year.



## Geographical area

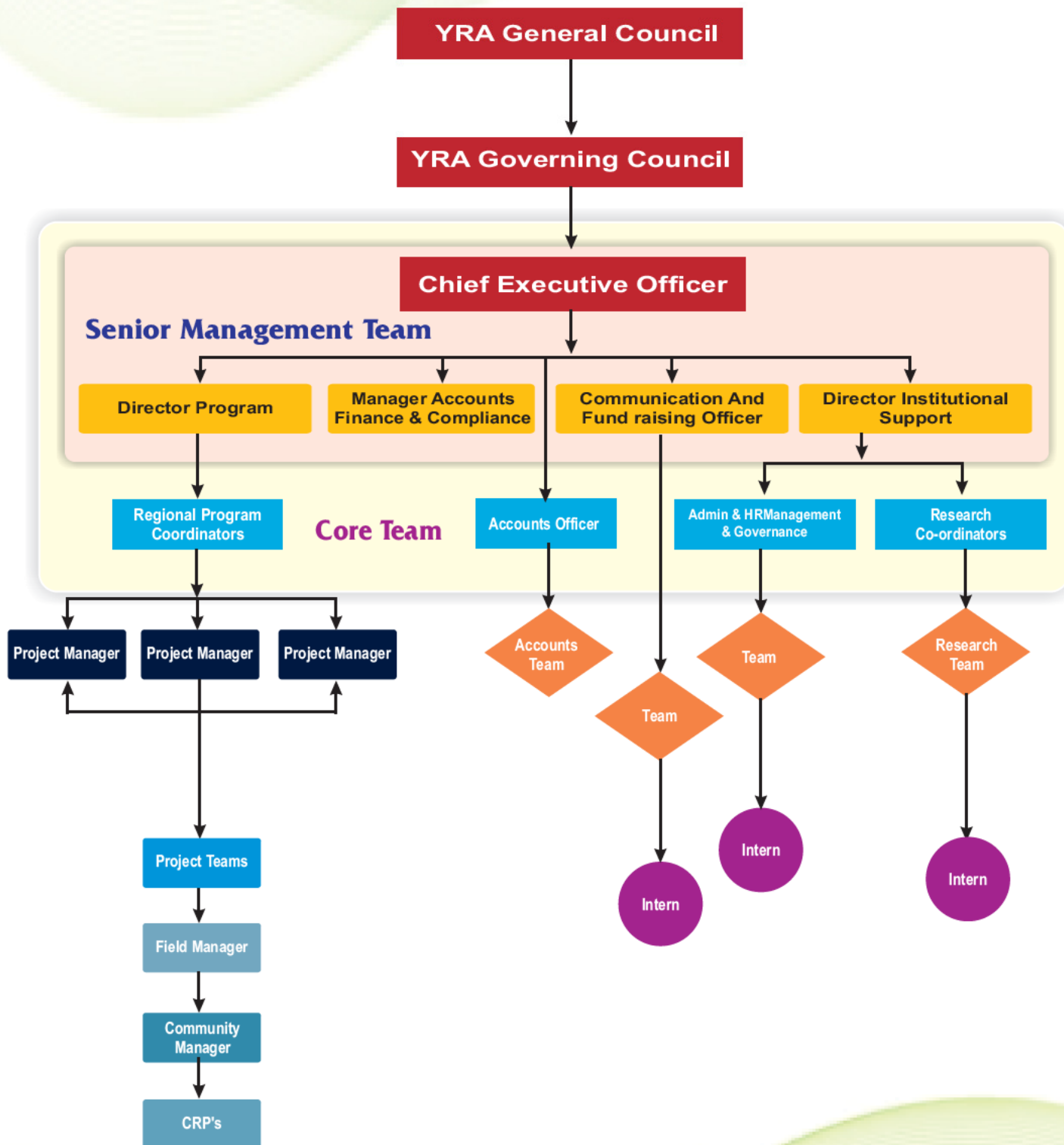
YRA was spread in three states- Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Gujrat in the initial stage. But withdrew from MP and Gujrat only because of the non-availability of competent and committed human resources. The fourth Plan guided to limit the geographical area to the Vidarbha & Marathwada regions as direct interventions and get engaged with larger processes at the state and national level. YRA will continue the same for fifth plan.

## Constituency:

Rural and tribal youth, women, children and men from the deprived, vulnerable, poor, marginalized and unorganized communities such as small & Marginal farmers, landless labors, forest dwellers, schedule/ nomadic tribes will be included in the YRA's constituencies for the fifth strategic plan.



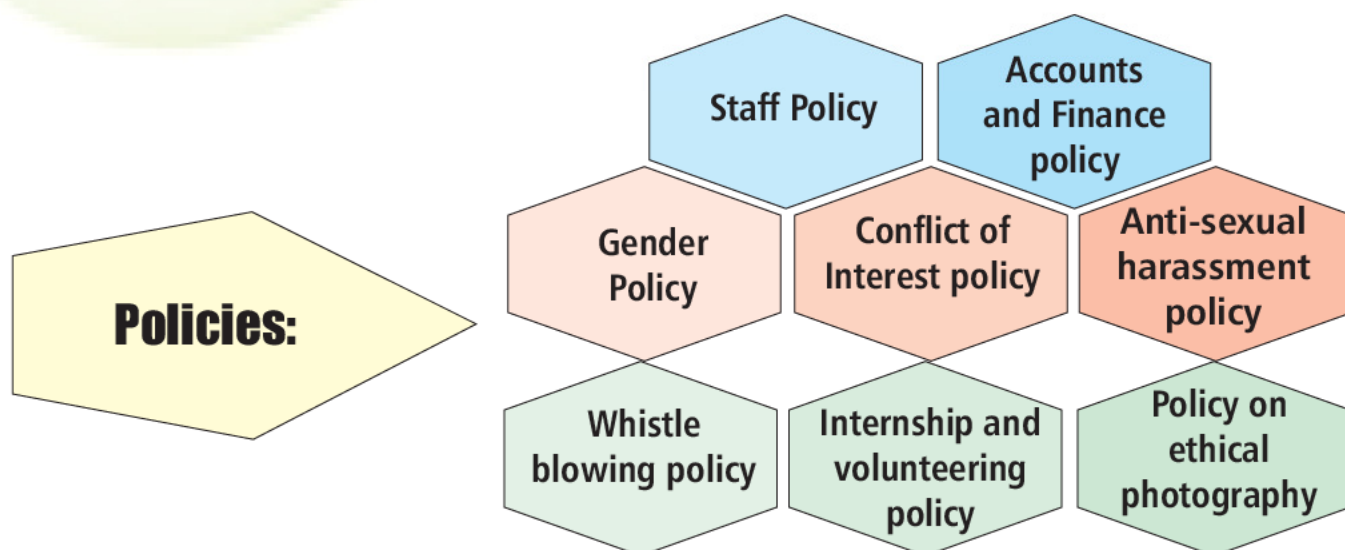
## YRA- Organizational Structure





## Governance:

The review of members in the governance will be done in the beginning of this plan. More numbers of members, especially from the young professionals, will be included through proper process. People from different background such as health, soil & water conservation, WASH, business, human resource etc. will be invited in the governance.



All the policy documents will be reviewed in the first year for any amendments according to the changes in the environment. All the staff will be given due orientation on all the policies of the organization. Mid-term review of policy and practices will be conducted once a year in the presence of Governing members. Necessary steps will be taken as per discussions and decisions every year.

## Systems:

There are systems developed with regards to administration, human resources recruitment, performance appraisal, salary payments, daily monitoring, monthly reports, monthly/ quarterly project reviews, quarterly staff workshop and so on. All such systems will be checked, reviewed in the beginning of the plan and decided the frequency of reviewing each of the system and followed strictly.

## Leadership:

The current leadership under the guidance General Council and Governing Council is provided by Mr. Datta Patil. The same could be continued till the end of this plan. But considering the exit of Mr. Datta Patil in the end of this plan, a process of creating and grooming the second leadership need to be initiated from March 2023 very consciously, that will gradually be completed by Dec 2024. It means from 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025 there will be new leadership in place. The sixth strategic plan will be initiated by the new leadership as change agent in the quarter Jan-March 2025 and new strategic plan will be ready to implement from April 2025.

## Human Resources:

Human resources has remained a big issue in YRA right from beginning. In the fifth plan, strategically there will be core staff as full time as per the structure suggested in this plan. A cadre of grass-root CRPs will be promoted in big way. Interns from Specialized areas such as website, communication, research, social media and thematic areas proposed will be promoted and hired. The group of experts in the thematic areas of interventions will be evolved as the 'panel of consultants and experts' consisting of retired officers, those will be available any time on low honorarium. Services of Interns, experts and grass-root CRPs will be the real human resource strength for the organization.

Apart from this the competencies, expertise, capacities of the core staff in specific areas will be consciously developed through external and internal training. Some efforts, such as individual counselling, staff development workshops, staff welfare will be attained to retain the core staff and reduce the attrition rate.

## Financial Resources:

It has become very difficult to raise funds and connect with donors, funding partners and getting government funds to run the activities. During the discussions on strategic plan, it has been proposed to explore various sources of funding as below.

1. **Self-sustainability models:** YRA has been working on livelihood and with farming communities. YRA also has owned land and small training center in Washim district. YRA can evolve certain activities around this assets that will fetch some contribution from the community and stakeholders to take care of core expenses of the organization towards sustenance. The team of staff with the help of experts will evolve activities like medicinal plant garden, soil testing lab, water testing lab, organic vegetable production and distribute on production cost, hiring the center for other NGOs for their trainings and meetings to take care of the maintenance.
2. **Community Contribution:** Most of the individual family and community level activities, resulting in to direct benefits can contribute as 'Community Contribution' to take care of minimum part of core expenses of the organization.
3. **CSR Partnership:** YRA will develop projects in partnership with CSR.
4. **Revolving funds:** The revolving Fund could be developed to continue implement "Common Minimum Programs" or "Core Programs" such as women's empowerment, kitchen garden, child rights, facilitating exercising the government flagship programs etc.
5. **Individual donations:** Individual donations from the tax payers against 80-G benefits will be explored for funds.
6. **Fund raising Activities:** Other fund-raising activities such as 'crowd funding', 'events' will be explored.



# Conclusion

**The General Council Meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> Oct 2021 has mandated this fifth strategic plan and the first implementation plan will be prepared for a period of six months i.e. 1<sup>st</sup> Oct 2021 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Then onwards annual plans for each financial year will be derived and implemented respectively. Every year the plans will be reviewed by the General Council. The last financial year of this strategic plan will be April 2024 to March 2025.**



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