Volunteering for Change in Chhattisgarh

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With a Master’s degree in Social work (along with an MBA and a law degree!), Anil shares, “My first experience with volunteering and community development was in 2006 when I was selected as a National Service
Volunteer (NSV) with NYK Sarguja. This was my home and I wanted to figure out a way to work with my community to address the multiple issues that we face like poverty, youth unemployment, etc. Sarguja is also home to a large population of marginalized communities like persons from tribal communities, persons with disability, and others.

In December 2015, Anil joined UN Volunteers and since January, 2016, has been focusing on working with marginalized communities to empower them socially as well as economically. He has managed to reach out to 40 youth with disabilities through the formation of 4 Helping Hands Youth Clubs in the district.

Through these clubs, Anil provides information about government schemes and programmes and facilitates learning and skill development for the young people. He is also passionate about empowering young women from tribal communities and has created opportunities for one women’s self-help group to set up a small restaurant and for another to start a food delivery service from home which delivers meals to local workplaces.

Started in June 2016, Anil’s latest project, English Learning Centre, is another innovative approach to connect volunteering to community building. Young people from NYKS youth clubs will teach English to children under five years of age in an informal pre-school setting. Talking about the impact of this programme, Anil shares, “The Centre has a two-pronged objective. First, it will engage unemployed youth in a way that they can further develop their own soft skills and secondly, it will provide a learning platform for the most marginalized young children to prepare them for formal education.”

Shimla Ravi, a person with a disability who is a National Youth Corps Volunteer at the NYK Sarguja office, recalls, “I initially got to know Anil through the Helping Hands Youth Club where he encouraged me to become independent. I recently completed my B.A. degree and have been volunteering at the NYK office since then. I have learnt a lot after coming here and my family is also elated that I have started stepping out of the house and working for the community. Anil has been very supportive and encouraging throughout.”

What motivates this 33-year-old UN Volunteer to work for the marginalized? Anil shares, “I have grown up in Sarguja and been working for the betterment of the community for many years. I don’t see myself doing anything else. This is my community and I feel like all the members are my family.”
• India • volunteering schemes • youth

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 8: Decent work and economic growth