

Content

Every workshop Ishaan's team conducts is context-specific due to the wide scope of implementation. Before each session, the team convenes an internal panel to determine structure and depth of discussion - ensuring consistency across four variables:

- Age group of participants
- Geography (rural/ urban; conservative/ liberal contexts)
- Prior education level (including access to sex education)
- Institutional setting (Private schools/ NGO or government run institutions)

Because across all these settings the cultural context, baseline awareness and therefore understanding, and parental consent expectations differ substantially.

Furthermore, our mentors are also trained extensively through larger sensitisation programs such as the one organised by the British Council in Manila, where their Philippines team received comprehensive training.

Example 1 - Rural Rajasthan (ages 8-12)

Working with young children in a conservative rural setting required care around parental consent and age-appropriate framing. Explicit discussion of sexual orientation was avoided entirely; instead the workshop was built on a foundation of empathy and lived experience. The session opened by discussing typically ingrained gender stereotypes within rural communities in India - what are women typically expected to do at home, and what images do children conjure when they picture a doctor, a soldier, a singer? An interactive exercise then asked children what they wanted to be. Naturally, several boys expressed interest in singing or dance; several girls wanted careers in the military or sciences. They were then asked about how they would feel if denied the opportunity to pursue these careers by family/ teachers/ society.

A simple variation of the “Blue eyes/ Brown eyes” experiment then followed: sweets were distributed only to children with a particular hair colour, while others were left out. Children were asked how it felt to be excluded through a discussion around fairness - and then asked to connect that feeling to being denied the right to dress, speak, or live as oneself.

This led organically to a discussion of identity: that who you are and how you express it is deeply personal, and that no external authority - not society, not peers, not family - has the right to prescribe it just as they wouldn't have the right to prescribe what professions these children were allowed to enter for that would just as arbitrarily discriminatory as the experiment above. The LGBTQIA+ community was introduced not through the lens of sexual orientation but as people who are told by society to be something they are not - a man told he cannot wear a skirt, a woman who has a wife rather than a husband. Grounded entirely in the empathy the children had already articulated.

Naturally, several questions around social decency and social prescriptions came up throughout the session; in addressing these questions children were asked to think back to the activity - “if this wasn't about girls/ boys (any other exclusion parameter) but rather about black/ brown

haired kids - how would you feel being left out? Don't you think they would be feeling the same way?"

Members of the State Transgender Board partner with the team on these sessions and advise on content to ensure compliance with legally stipulated boundaries for dissemination to minors.

Example 2 - Conservative contexts / older audiences (Bangladesh; Prayagraj)

For older participants in more religiously conservative settings, the workshop followed a parallel empathy-first structure but engaged more directly with the role of patriarchy in reinforcing gender stereotypes and, by extension, stigma toward the LGBTQIA+ community.

A distinguishing feature of these sessions is the deliberate inclusion of accepting religious voices. In Prayagraj, for instance, prominent Hindu religious leaders who affirm acceptance were invited to introduce the conversation (this was done only through public introduction of speakers prior to the event to avoid religious confrontations) - ensuring that the message of inclusion was not perceived as a western or secular imposition, but as consistent with local spiritual values of love and forgiveness.

The guiding principle across conservative geographies is the same: ground everything in acceptance first. Advocacy follows from connections and not confrontation.

Each workshop, thus, moves participants from a common, self-evident experience of empathy - feelings of exclusion, the desire for self-determination - toward an understanding of how those same principles apply to people whose identities fall outside dominant social norms. The content does not begin with LGBTQIA+ issues; it arrives there only after establishing shared emotional ground.

Reach

Geographic footprint

Sensitization sessions have been conducted across 13 cities in 7 countries spanning South Asia, East Africa, West Africa, and the Middle East.

Country	Cities
India	Jaipur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Prayagraj, Delhi
Pakistan	Lahore, Islamabad
Bangladesh	Dhaka
Burundi	Gitega
Ghana	Accra
Philippines	Pampanga, Quezon City

Direct workshop participants

Sensitization workshops have reached an estimated 2,000 participants across all cities listed above. The team acknowledges that this figure is based on headcount estimates rather than formal attendance registers for all sessions, and the photographic evidence and partner confirmations for the sessions have been provided along with the registration sheets that were available. A conservative, verifiable subset of this figure can be provided upon request.

Out of these 2000, approximately 150 queer individuals have reached out for mental health support allowing the team to appoint local mental health specialists for clusters of schools and, in severe cases, connect these students with a mental health helpline specifically designated for queer individuals.

By conducting multiple check-in sessions, the team has also observed a decrease in anonymous reporting of hate incidents through survey forms along with a concurrent increase in seeking professional help via appointed therapists, indicating the structural efficacy of the program.

Pride events

Beyond sensitization workshops, the team has co-organized Pride events in six cities across India (Jaipur, Kanpur, Lucknow, Chandigarh, Dehradun, and Prayagraj); 1 in the Philippines

(Pampanga); and 1 in Italy (Brindisi) - in partnership with local NGOs. Aggregate footfall across these events is estimated at approximately 10,000 people.

Several of these events received local and regional press coverage, which is available as corroborating evidence of scale. Photographs from the events are also available.

Footfall figures are estimates based on event attendance in conjunction with NGO partners; formal ticketing or registration was not used for most events.

Mentor training

An internal sensitization stream has trained approximately 100 mentors - including team members - who are now equipped to independently carry the program's methodology forward.

Training has been conducted for national teams in:

- Manila
- Abuja
- Jaipur
- Gitega
- Along with multiple online training workshops for the teams in the Middle East

This multiplier effect means the program's reach extends beyond direct participant numbers - trained mentors continue conducting sensitization in their own communities and institutions. Institutional partnerships

The program operates through a network of over 50 NGO partners and over 30 university and student union partners. These relationships have been central to enabling access in conservative or high-sensitivity geographies, and to ensuring that sessions are embedded within trusted local structures rather than arriving as external interventions.

1. Instagram profiles

<https://www.instagram.com/swayam.initiative/>

<https://www.instagram.com/swayampakistan/>

<https://www.instagram.com/mabuhay.swayam.ph/>

<https://www.instagram.com/representbharatofficial/>

2. Photographic evidence -

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1h8Gi7H9QM2zDxU8MhMILT4GVhk5Tz10R?usp=drive_link

3. Youtube -

Speaker at International Youth Conference 13 -

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MyuFtw8aoYA&t=2781s>

4. Advocacy -

largest transgender rights protest organised by a youth-led initiative in North India, scheduled for 28 June 2026 - currently in final stages of organisation:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DX2f7dUE20q/?img_index=1

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DZCt8FMsFxo/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/DYCXf8MkmPE/?img_index=1

5. Registrations -

Online Sessions:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BZ8GIIPDkArhazYpZIH8eBCm-dlUcF36Mj1G-mV38Yk/edit?usp=sharing>

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VP0kcK519Kxl1mi8tKJVZbXLXQB-qAHtBR1s15Q4lXk/edit?usp=sharing>

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1BcKVnw_YkFvGMMhJMV_NCcbEW4c5XuyeM81Vpy5Yxy4/edit?usp=sharing

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1lgP0b-K8AWu64BwNZHSzeDAo_32rTVqaLDUP0vJnIYU/edit?usp=sharing

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1kS_jttVQlv1h3GGkmb2ZpqoV9mrVQwImtQGmyJtnZXw/edit?usp=sharing

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/11IWt3KFIPIFmpqHOuccjncrwwkaut3u-4nJU7YAPBc0/edit?usp=sharing>

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1wDyZzRc_pBSOWg1rlq9rrerPSPmK9O8EIZB3ZXUOoik/edit?usp=sharing

Community Meet-up:

Kanpur -

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1UVCrAACKOFFh12NqeVsHsWRZ5q7LcSW8gNIFbxnaB34/edit?usp=sharing>

General (India):

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/15iJaLJgz4hd29jn6lkdQWmlRVj7D49MF4VSCSyNVL4w/edit?usp=sharing>

Economic re-skilling:

Prayagraj -

https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1Xy1xiWI--IFqwprx1j1SUowNQ4jv_GNWTTY6eNC6i0s/edit?usp=sharing

Kanpur -

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1528giboezuABN8Ty34qMGAL5aXCcP-21Qh67ektKba0/edit?usp=sharing>

6. News -

Dehradun Pride - <https://epaper.navodayatimes.in/delhi/2026-02-01/dehradun-times#pages/4>
<https://www.leftviews.in/social-justice--rights-83204/news-65050/lgbtq-rally-in-dehradun-64949>

Swayam co-organised this event in partnership with The Voice of Warriors Foundation. Press coverage attributed to primary organiser, The Voice of Warriors Foundation; collaboration evidence:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DTx99UTEoil/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/DUJRJ8AkcFn/?img_index=1

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DUOS8iHDpLF/>

(Swayam logo is also visible on the common banner for NGOs)

Kanpur Pride -

<https://www.bhaskarenglish.in/local/uttar-pradesh/news/lgbtq-community-holds-pride-parade-in-kanpur-transgenders-dance-demand-rights-bihar-minister-joins-celebration-136375988.html>

<https://www.bhaskar.com/local/uttar-pradesh/news/kanpur-transgender-lgbtq-pride-parade-2025-video-updates-136380678.html>

Swayam co-organised this event in partnership with The Kanpur Queer Welfare Foundation; collaboration evidence:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DSHN4wvjpWY/?img_index=1

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DTfM95mkk0d/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DTBJZxfIRUj/>

(Swayam logo is also visible on the common banner for NGOs)

Jaipur Pride -

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/photos/india-news/jaipur-s-own-queer-parade-gulabi-adds-color-to-the-pink-city/photo-mrXhwQtrNINzPJbtZ7qkMN-1.html>

Swayam co-organised this event in partnership with The Nai Bhor Sanstha. Press coverage attributed to primary organiser, The Nai Bhor Sanstha; collaboration evidence:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DUIX68rkoPv/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DU5dKCxk1Su/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DVMFiKQjr5M/>

(Swayam logo is also visible on the common banner for NGOs)

Pampanga Pride -

<https://thevoicenewsweekly.com/hundreds-join-pinanari-pride-fest-2026/>

Swayam was one of the organisations that had put up an information booth for gender sensitisation and economic reskilling, helping with the organisation of the pride march. Press coverage attributed to primary organiser, JCI Angeles City Culiati; collaboration and participation evidence:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DZSVL7AkzUD/?img_index=2

https://www.instagram.com/p/DZfD7z6E2SW/?img_index=1

The Swayam Philippines logo is also visible on the banner in the aforementioned link)

Additional Direct Media Coverage -

- <https://epaper.topstory.online/epaper/edition/2974/july-/page/8>
- <https://epaper.navodayatimes.in/delhi/2026-07-16/main-edition#pages/12>
- https://www.bhaskar.com/local/new-delhi/news/new-delhi-ishan-bajaj-swayam-lgbtqia-network-global-youth-initiative-138442540.html?ref=MTg0NzUzMTYwMDg2NjUyOTI4MA%3D%3D&_branch_match_id=1605908617545357011&utm_campaign=138442540&utm_medium=sharing&_branch_referrer=H4slAAAAAAA8soKSkottLXT0nMzMvM1kvKSCzOTizSS87P1TcP9E1LtLR09TFJsi9KTbP1DUK38KsKrfINiSz3dUk38ssKrfQP8TTxdVQ1dgEitTggqtSiosy89Pikovzy4tQi2%2BDEtMSiTAD8ZrCoZQAAAA%3D%3D
- <https://www.navodayatimes.in/news/national/ishan-establishes-lgbtqia-network-swayam-reaches-25-countries/297425/>
- <https://epaper.navodayatimes.in/delhi/2026-07-11/main-edition#pages/9>

Future vision and upcoming work

IMMEDIATE TIMELINE - JUNE & JULY 2026

15 Jun

National mental health awareness event - Online, India

400+ participants expected across India. Addresses the intersection of queer identity and mental health - a direct response to the 150+ students who reached out through the existing helpline and identified mental health support as their primary need.

Evidence:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DZSfWdtxQE4/>

20 Jun

Discussion panel - University of Ghana, Accra

An initial sensitisation and discussion panel on the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, recently passed by Ghana's parliament. Conducted within a university setting in partnership with Righttify Ghana and with legal faculty advising on permissible scope - ensuring the session operates within the exemptions the law provides for academic and educational discourse. Framed as a civic awareness panel, not advocacy.

22 Jun

Trans rights fundraiser - Manila, Philippines

Community fundraiser to support transgender rights initiatives in the Philippines, organised in coordination with local partners.

Evidence:

https://www.instagram.com/p/DZUMKaKERz9/?img_index=1

27 Jun

Quezon City Pride Festival - Philippines

Collaborating to host one of the major pride events in the Philippines.

28 Jun

LANDMARK Cross-national protest against the Indian Trans Amendment Bill - 35 cities

A coordinated protest across 35 cities in India against the Trans Amendment Bill - the largest youth-led transgender rights mobilisation in the country's history. The protest is being organised in conjunction with NGO partners and the State Transgender Boards. It represents the culmination of two years of community organising and coalition-building across Swayam's partner network.

Evidence:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DZP2COOuDca/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DZCt8FMxFxo/>

https://www.instagram.com/p/DYCxf8MkmPE/?img_index=1

https://www.instagram.com/p/DX2f7dUE20q/?img_index=1

5 Jul

LEGAL Jan Sunvai - Delhi, with opposition parties

A public hearing on the Trans Amendment Bill, conducted with opposition party representatives in Delhi. This marks Ishaan's first direct engagement with formal legislative processes at the national level - moving from community organising to institutional advocacy.

Post 5 Jul

LEGAL Writ petition - Supreme Court of India

Following the Jan Sunvai, Swayam will file a writ petition in the Supreme Court of India challenging provisions of the Trans Amendment Bill. This is a significant escalation - from sensitisation and community events to constitutional litigation - and reflects the maturity of the movement Ishaan has built.

Late July

FIRST Panel on queer ecology - Kuwait

The first-ever panel discussion on queer ecology in the Middle East, hosted in Kuwait. Represents a significant geographic expansion into a region where such conversations have no prior precedent in a formal setting.

Evidence:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DZNBbsPyqYE/>

22 Jul

Sensitisation session - Accra, Ghana

A larger sensitisation session in Accra responding to the passage of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill — the most significant such session conducted in Ghana to date. Structured identically to the June 20 session: university setting, legal faculty oversight, partnership with Righttify Ghana, framed within academic exemptions under the law.

LONG TERM VISION - YEAR 1-5

Year 1 - Infrastructure and legal offensives

1. India: Queer-friendly therapist designation scheme
In partnership with state governments, appoint a designated queer-friendly therapist per cluster of government schools, creating a structured mental health pipeline for LGBTQIA+ youth within the public education system. The iCall TISS helpline has already demonstrated the scale of this need; this scheme institutionalises the response.
2. India: Cross-aisle lobbying and legal challenges to the Trans Amendment Bill
Following the Supreme Court writ petition and Jan Sunvai, engage cross-party -

including the BJP - to lobby for specific Lok Sabha amendments. Simultaneously, open pro bono city-level legal avenues for remittances against the bill, creating a distributed challenge that doesn't depend on a single court outcome.

3. Middle East: Emergency support pipeline
Working through embassies and international institutions, establish legal aid pipelines and safe community spaces where vulnerability is highest and formal infrastructure is almost entirely absent. An anonymous helpline modelled on the iCall TISS framework would provide crisis support. The prize's global visibility makes embassy-level conversations possible in a way grassroots organising alone cannot.
4. Middle East: Sensitisation with religious leaders, Queer Muslim Project partnership
Conduct sensitisation sessions with religious leaders at mosques and Islamic institutions - a geography where Swayam has presence in Kuwait and the UAE but hasn't yet engaged religious communities directly. Mirrors the Prayagraj model: acceptance-first, grounded in the community's own spiritual values, led by trusted local voices.
5. Ghana: Constitutional challenge to the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill
In partnership with Rightify Ghana and pro bono legal partners, mount a formal constitutional challenge following the model of the Indian Supreme Court writ petition. The prize provides both the resources and the international legitimacy to make this viable.
6. Philippines: Supporting LGBTQIA+ candidates in November 2026 elections
Work with local partners to support LGBTQIA+ candidates standing in the November elections - moving from advocacy to direct political representation, on the basis that legislative change requires legislators personally invested in it.

Years 2–5 - Movement infrastructure at scale

1. Africa (ECOWAS): First-ever pride marches in Ghana and Benin
In partnership with ECOWAS, organise the first pride marches in Ghana and Benin - two countries where Swayam is already established but no pride march has ever been held. The Benin march co-organised with Agir Contre l'Exclusion. These are not symbolic gestures - they are the culmination of years of behind-the-scenes community building and legal groundwork.
2. Pakistan: First pride march
In partnership with Pride Pakistan and Echo for Equity Foundation, organise Pakistan's first formal pride march - a visible, organised public assertion of LGBTQIA+ existence in one of the world's most conservative contexts. Among the most ambitious and most consequential items on the long-term agenda.
3. Global: MNC remote employment pipeline
Partner with multinational corporations to create remote job pipelines for LGBTQIA+ individuals, particularly where local employers remain hostile. Remote work removes the local employer from the equation entirely, creating economic security that doesn't depend on local social acceptance catching up with the law.
4. Global South: A pride alliance
The capstone: a formal solidarity network connecting pride organisations across the Global South and conservative nations. Movements demanding constitutional rights

cannot sustain themselves in isolation. A coordinated alliance creates shared legal resources, mutual protection, and collective political leverage. Swayam's existing footprint across India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Ghana, Benin, Burundi, UAE, Kuwait, and the Philippines makes it uniquely positioned to seed this.