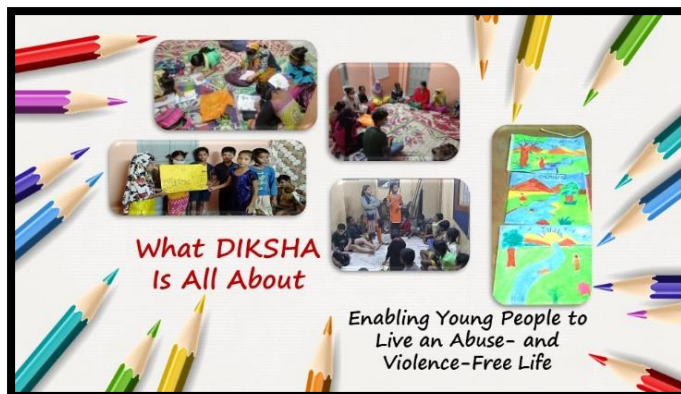


The genesis of DIKSHA lies in an experiment that Paramita Banerjee had started with a MacArthur Fellowship for Leadership Development. Located in the Kalighat and Wattganj Red Light Areas of Kolkata, West Bengal, the initiative aimed at creating a non-intrusive and nonjudgmental space for 10-19 year old girls and boys to voice, debate, discuss, and resolve issues around gender and sexuality. This pilot programme of involving girls and boys together as equal partners in change proved to be a learning process for both the participants and the interveners. The wall between them broke down as the youth took leadership roles. DIKSHA was born as a concretisation of that learning.





### Our Dreams

**Vision:**  
*A gender-just world free from hierarchies and inequalities where all young people can access and exercise their rights.*

**Mission:**  
*Creating safe spaces for young people (6-25) through building up their inner strength and integrating individual development with community needs.*





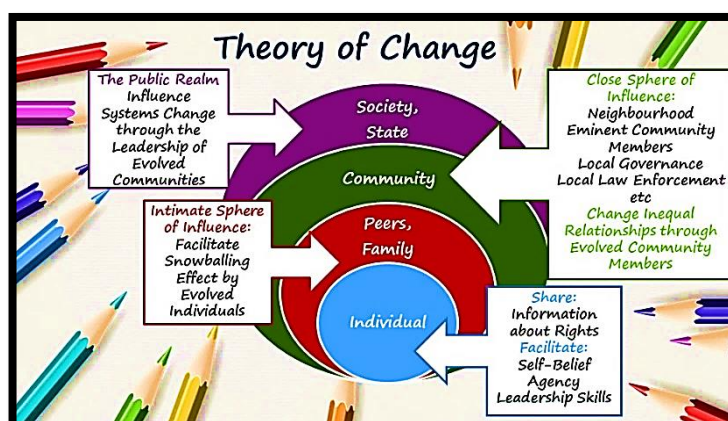

DIKSHA invests in young individuals (6-25 years) to facilitate their evolution as leaders who can change their communities and move forward to transform an ecosystem that reinforces hierarchies and inequalities.

### DIKSHA at the Grassroots

Direct action with young people living in Red Light Areas remains one of the core functions of DIKSHA to date. Both girls

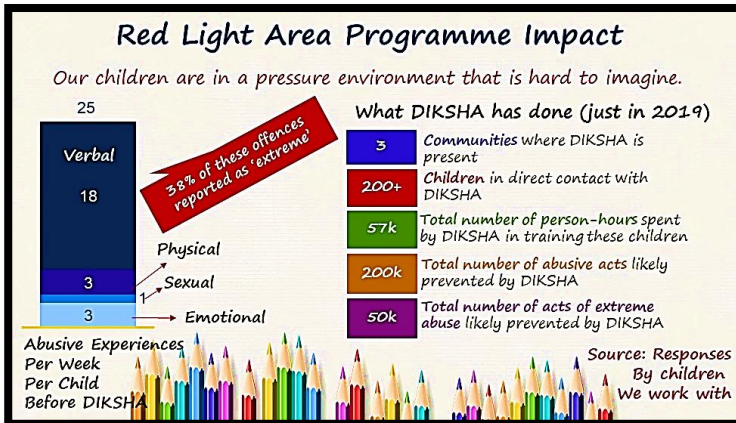
and boys growing up in Red Light Areas are vulnerable to being sucked into the sex trade economy: girls as paid sexual service providers and boys as pimps and traffickers. DIKSHA enables girls and boys to change this pre-determined narrative and write their own life-scripts. Gender relations transform in this process of working together as equal partners in change. So does the power structure of the entire Red Light Area.

DIKSHA has no moralistic hangups with the sex trade per se. However, we stand firmly against forced dependence on the sex trade economy, as also against sex trafficking and the involvement of minors in the sex trade. As the hierarchical power structure of the Red Light Area based sex trade breaks down, the consistently stigmatised and left-out women and children gain greater control over their lives and redefine the contours of how the sex trade operates. Prevalent exploitative practices get eliminated in the process.



## Red Light Area Programme Impact

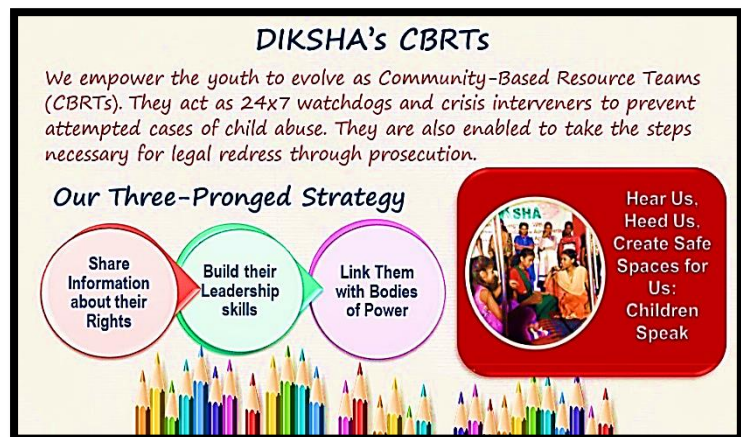
The quantitative impact of DIKSHA's RLA programmes is best captured through its emphasis on ensuring child protection through the direct participation of adolescents and youth. A Violence Mapping conducted in 2019 with 200+ children from three different grassroots communities reveals that DIKSHA's intervention with children could reduce cases of extreme abuse (verbal, emotional, physical, and sexual) from 38% to 16% in the span of one year. Translated into figures, that implies about 50,000 cases of extreme abuse averted in 12 months. Out of the total incidents of 260,000 abuse experiences in a year, DIKSHA could eliminate a total of 250,000 – as reported by those on the receiving end.



The core strategy of our grassroots activities involve the creation of community-based youth volunteer groups empowered to intervene in crisis situations. These groups, Community-Based Resource Teams (CBRT) in our parlance, take care of both prevention and protection. As 24x7 watchdogs, they are always available in the community to prevent any attempted cases of abuse and

violence. We build their leadership skills and establish direct linkages between the CBRT members and the bodies of power such as local self government representatives (councillors), local law enforcement officials (the police), school teachers, etc.

The snowballing impact is impossible to capture in numbers, as the young leaders we train then change their neighbourhoods and schools. We will be happy to share our incredible stories of change with anyone interested.



## The Anti-Trafficking Impact of DIKSHA's Red Light Area Interventions

On an average, Red Light Areas feature as destinations in anti-trafficking programmes. We have learnt in course of our work that they are source areas as well. Underage marriages arranged by mothers and/or elopement cases initiated by teenaged girls result in a backdoor entry into the sex trade. These girls from one Red Light Area get trafficked into another in a different part of the country, with the so-called husband/boyfriend as the trafficker. This practice has been controlled in our work areas through the prevention of underage marriages, and other precautionary actions like prior information collection about the potential groom/boyfriend, etc.



Sexual abuse of teenaged girls by the mother's non-paying live-in customer (usually known as the Babu) is another technique used to facilitate intergenerational forced entry into the sex trade. The simple, though difficult to digest, logic is: a sexually violated girl is no longer good to become anyone's wife, i.e. for family life. So, she's better deployed in the sex trade to start earning. Pre-DIKSHA days in Kalighat, for example, has real-life cases of forced intergenerational entry into the sex trade for up to three generations. This has been entirely eliminated in the Kalighat Red Light Area.

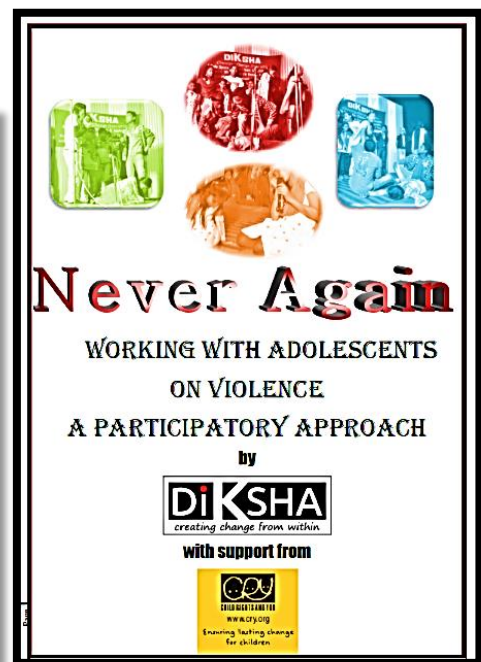
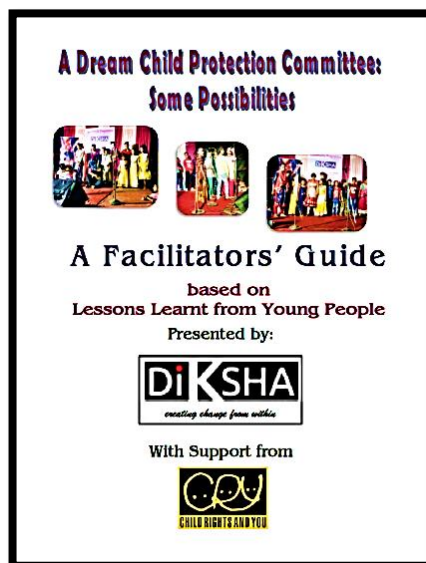
The Rakhi Teams, collectives of adult women living in the Red Light Areas where we work, play a critical role in this endeavour. They act as the watchdogs to prevent fresh forced/trafficked entries into the sex trade. They also act as backup support for all CBRT initiatives related to backdoor trafficking attempts such as underage marriage, elopement, and child sexual abuse.

In this connection, DIKSHA has been involved in rescue work in collaboration with other NGOs in different parts of the state of West Bengal, as also in other states of India. The other aspect of DIKSHA's rescue-related work concerns surveillance of underage fresh entries into the sex trade in our work areas, and taking the necessary actions for their rescue and reintegration with their families. Successful interventions in Kalighat over the years have resulted in total elimination of this practice there. However, DIKSHA continues to do this work in its other intervention areas to achieve the same results there also, in due course.

## DIKSHA as a Resource Organisation

DIKSHA has generated Training of Trainers Manuals on Child Protection and Youth Leadership Development that are used by government child protection agencies in the state of West Bengal. That increases the circle of DIKSHA's influence to cover all the children (0-18) in the state. According to a [report](#) by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India, the 0-18 population in West Bengal was 32.1 million as per the 2011 Census. In addition, DIKSHA team members have individually and collectively conducted trainings on Child Protection for the police force in Kolkata and the entire state.

DIKSHA has also conducted Child Protection trainings for relevant government officials, government school teachers, and the local police for five different wards of the Kolkata Municipal Corporation. As a live demonstration of DIKSHA's principle of youth empowerment, DIKSHA's young leaders have worked as youth co-facilitators and youth co-evaluators for reputed donor agencies active in the state of West Bengal.

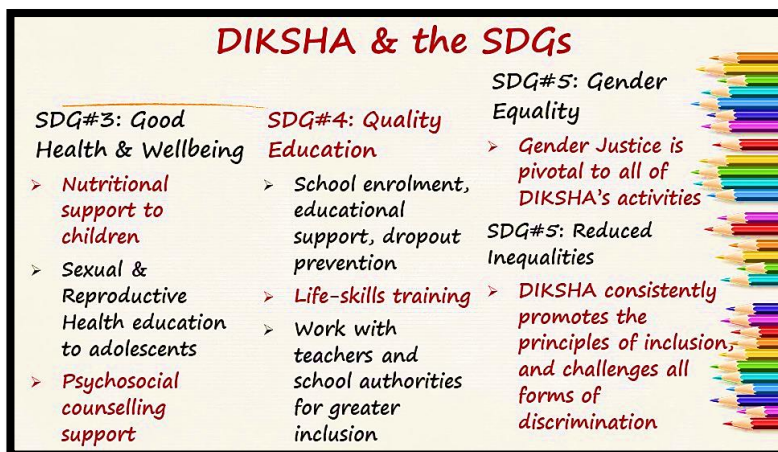


## DIKSHA's Alliances and Networks

DIKSHA works in close collaboration with several organisations working with marginalised young people within and beyond the state of West Bengal. Prominent among these are Praajak in West Bengal, ARZ: Anyay Rahit Zindagi in Goa, and Bakul Foundation in Odisha. In collaboration with these organisations, DIKSHA has been a party to generating reports on the child labour situation and the conditions of children in red light areas in several states of India. These have been submitted to the National Human Rights Commission, and the National Commission for the Protection of Child Rights for advising the central and state governments on necessary policy changes. DIKSHA is also an active member of the West Bengal Child Rights Coalition for the effective implementation of the POCSO (Protection of Children from Sexual Offences) Act.

## DIKSHA and the SDGs

DIKSHA works with a focus on SDGs 3 (Good Health & Wellbeing), 4 (Quality Education), 5 (Gender Equality), and 10 (Reduced Inequalities).



**DIKSHA & the SDGs**

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| <p><b>SDG#3: Good Health &amp; Wellbeing</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nutritional support to children</li> <li>Sexual &amp; Reproductive Health education to adolescents</li> <li>Psychosocial counselling support</li> </ul> | <p><b>SDG#4: Quality Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School enrolment, educational support, dropout prevention</li> <li>Life-skills training</li> <li>Work with teachers and school authorities for greater inclusion</li> </ul> | <p><b>SDG#5: Gender Equality</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Gender Justice is pivotal to all of DIKSHA's activities</li> </ul> <p><b>SDG#5: Reduced Inequalities</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>DIKSHA consistently promotes the principles of inclusion, and challenges all forms of discrimination</li> </ul> |
|---|---|---|

As a [Catalyst 2030](#) member, at both the national and the global levels, DIKSHA is now amplifying its Protection-through-Participation approach of youth empowerment at international platforms through partnerships with globally active youth-focused agencies like the Learning Planet. DIKSHA is also playing a major role in capturing grassroots voices for the People's

SDG Report that Catalyst 2030 is generating for submission to the UN General Assembly in September 2021.

## Become a DIKSHA Dost

Dost is an Indian word for friend. We are happy to have numerous DIKSHA Dosts across the world. Do you want to join hands for a gender-just and inequality-free world where every young voice counts?

- ✚ Become an Ambassador for DIKSHA, wherever you are
- ✚ Donate your Time and Skills
- ✚ Sponsor our Children
- ✚ Sponsor the Publication of our Incredible Stories of Change
- ✚ Source Stationeries, Cards, and other Items for your Official Needs from us
- ✚ Facilitate Funding Support and Collaborations
- ✚ Come and Meet Our Children: Be Inspired to Become a Changemaker



**Grassroots Voices at a Global Forum**

**Catalysing Change Week | 3-7 May 2021**

**4 May @ 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm CEST**

**FROM YOUTH PERSPECTIVES TO YOUTH EMPOWERMENT - PART 1**

Session Hosts: Dream a Dream, Design-a-thon Works, Youth4Youth, DIKSHA  
Speakers: Youth representatives from partner organizations in India, Netherlands, UK, and Nigeria (TBD), Mr Anindit Roy Chowdhury, Director - Programmes and Policy, Save the Children India

Catalyst 2030 organizations working specifically with Youth are invited to join the official launch of the Youth Empowerment Circle. Your members present their challenges, co-create solutions to be taken into the next policy session.

TAGS: Youth Empowerment Circle

3. Good Health and Well-being | 4. Quality Education | 17. Partnerships for the Goals

Admin Office: 7/3, K. P. Roy Lane, Dhakuria, Kolkata – 700031  
 Community Drop-in-Centres: 146, Kalighat Road, Kolkata 700026;  
 Five Star Club, 6/2, Munsiganj Road, Kolkata 700023;  
 37/5A/H/3, Kabitirtha Sarani, Wattganj, Kolkata 700023  
 Call: Lopamudra at 9830668114 / Email: [lifeatdiksha@gmail.com](mailto:lifeatdiksha@gmail.com)  
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