



TRAVELLERS' UNIVERSITY

# ROUTES TO ROOTS

YOUTH LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME



- DEEP TRAVEL FOR DEEP CHANGEMAKING -

[www.travellersuniversity.org](http://www.travellersuniversity.org)

# PAST & PRESENT OF THE PROGRAMME

Travellers' University has conducted three cohorts of the 52 Parindey Fellowship since 2021. Through these cohorts, we have engaged young individuals in immersive learning journeys rooted in travel, reflection, and grassroots engagement.

**3** Cohorts

**11** A livelihood Areas

**22** Changemakers  
from 15 States

**143** Grassroots initiatives engaged  
across 27 States & UTs

"52 Parindey Fellowship is where I faced my dreams, aspirations and deepest fears all together. This Fellowship gave me an experience kit which has the remedies or pointers for many situations I might face in my life, while pursuing this A livelihood. The experience of the fellowship could be called a small life cycle itself, and I suggest every dreamer out there try going on a journey of self(lead) exploration."

- **Susruthan, 2023-24 Alumna**



Our changemakers have travelled across the country, engaging with a diverse ecosystem of grassroots organisations, community leaders, and practitioners working on regenerative livelihoods and social transformation, while discovering purpose-driven pathways of leadership. They have gone on to work with grassroots organisations, pursue regenerative livelihoods, and initiate community-based projects addressing social and ecological challenges.

Building on the learnings from these cohorts, the programme has now evolved into '**Routes to Roots**' youth leadership programme, with a strengthened focus on nurturing long-term leadership and A livelihood pathways.



# ALIVELIHOODS & ALTERNATIVES AS RESPONSES TO THE METACRISIS

In an era marked by intersecting crises of ecological collapse, socio-economic inequity, political polarisation, and personal disconnection, the flaws of dominant development models have become highly evident. These systems, rooted in exploitation and extraction, are harming people, communities, and the planet.

*As these challenges converge, urgent questions emerge:*

*How can we forge pathways of hope and resilience?*

*What forms of work can sustain both humanity and the Earth?*

**The Youth Leadership Journey** calls on courageous youth to confront these questions. We explore responses to the Metacrisis through two interconnected lenses:

- **Alivelihoods:** Purposeful, regenerative livelihoods integrating personal meaning with social and ecological wellbeing.
- **Alternatives:** Different ways of being, doing, imagining, and gathering that counter exploitative and extractive systems.

Through travel as a pedagogy for learning and action, the programme empowers emerging leaders to explore the self, pursue Alivelihoods, and cultivate the skills to address the Metacrisis, bridging purpose and action to nurture resilience in themselves, their communities, and the world.

# ALIVELIHOODS



**Alivelihoods** are fulfilling and meaningful livelihoods which have the ability to:

- Make the one pursuing it feel alive, joyful, and content (individual/personal level)
- Facilitate localisation, build local economy and create resilient economic and social structures (community level)
- Regenerate our planet, showcase resilience to climate crisis, and reduce global inequities (planet level)

## Participants engage with practitioners across diverse Livelihood areas, including:

### Learning & Education

Alternative learning initiatives, farm schools, forest schools, unschooling, place-based education, community libraries, youth development, and pedagogies for social change.



### Arts, Culture & Media

Arts for social change, community media, media for social and ecological justice, storytelling, theatre, music, and cultural practices that nurture transformation.



### Food Systems & Agriculture

Natural and organic farming, permaculture, agroecology, agribusiness, forest-based food systems, and regenerative agricultural practices.



### Ecology, Conservation & Regeneration

Biodiversity conservation, forest making, ecological restoration, eco-architecture, sustainability, and community-led environmental stewardship.



### Waste & Circular Economy

Solid waste, e-waste and biowaste management, composting, upcycling, and circular economy initiatives.



### Community Resilience

Community work, rural self-reliance, reimagining cities, localisation, social justice, and community development.



### Wellbeing, Facilitation & Inner Work

Wellbeing and facilitation, mental health, healing practices, and approaches that nurture individual and collective resilience.



# ROUTES TO ROOTS – THE PROGRAMME –

Routes to Roots is an 8-month youth leadership journey designed to support young people in building the knowledge, skills, and mindset needed for sustained engagement in changemaking. Rooted in travel as pedagogy, the programme is built on learning from lived realities, grassroots wisdom, and diverse communities and practitioners responding to complex social and ecological challenges.

Through immersive grassroots exposure, reflective travel, mentorship, and self-directed learning, participants develop systemic awareness, personal clarity, and emotional resilience. Travel enables them to step outside familiar contexts, encounter multiple worldviews, and cultivate empathy and adaptability.

Collaborative learning spaces and community engagement anchor the journey, allowing participants to integrate their experiences into action. Over time, they grow into long-term pathways of changemaking, stepping into roles of sustained responsibility and contributing meaningfully across initiatives, organisations, and communities.



# ROUTES TO ROOTS - STRUCTURE & TIMELINE -



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## **Phase 1: Foundation**

(2026 July 7 - 2026 August 6)

Orientation Workshop & Online Learning Modules: Grounding in key concepts, building community, and preparing for the journey ahead.

## **Phase 2: Travel Learning & The Pursuit of Livelihoods**

(2026 August 9 - 2026 November 27)

Immersive travel across the country: Engaging with grassroots practitioners, documenting stories of change, and deep reflection, through the approach of self-directed learning.

## **Phase 3: Action Project**

(2026 November 28 - 2027 February 22)

Translating learning into impact: Designing and implementing a values driven project, followed by programme closure and celebration.

## **Peer Reflection & Community Exchange**

Regular online gatherings throughout the 3 phases to share experiences, challenges, and learning, cultivating sustained community building and collaborative problem-solving.

# DOCUMENTATION

**Stories from the Ground:** Documentation is a core component of the Youth Leadership Journey, designed both as a **learning process** and a **knowledge contribution to the wider ecosystem**.

As participants travel and engage with grassroots practitioners, they will document these lived experiences through **text and photography**, creating rich, grounded narratives of individuals and initiatives working on social and ecological change. They are also encouraged to optionally explore diverse creative mediums, including illustration, video, audio, and other forms of expression, based on their interests and skills.

In the third phase of the programme, participants will also document their own **Action Projects**, capturing the process, challenges, and learnings emerging from their on-ground engagement.

The documentation process is intentionally designed to deepen reflection and meaning-making, enabling participants to engage more meaningfully and personally with their experiences. **Writing and storytelling become tools for integrating learning, strengthening self-awareness, and developing a nuanced understanding of the contexts** they engage with.

Importantly, these stories contribute to building a repository of grassroots narratives and Livelihood pathways, offering accessible, relatable examples of individuals and communities engaged in meaningful work, for other young people seeking directions in life.

# WHAT THIS JOURNEY OFFERS

## **Knowledge, Mindset & Skills**

Build the foundation for long-term, meaningful, values-driven engagement.

## **Clarity & Purpose**

Discover your direction, values, and motivations.

## **Leadership Skills**

Develop self and collective leadership rooted in empathy and resilience.

## **A Lifelong Network**

Join a community of young changemakers from across the country committed to regenerative futures.

## **Deepened Understanding**

Grasp the Metacrisis and explore Avelihood pathways.

## **Reflective Practice**

Learn to document, reflect, and share your journey.

## **Hands-On Experience**

Engage in community work, project design, collaborative action.



# WHO IS IT FOR?

- Youth of age 21+
- Seeking a meaningful livelihood in changemaking
- Prior exposure to social, ecological, or community work (volunteering, internships, grassroots engagement, etc.)
- Strong interest in moving from short-term engagement to long-term commitment
- Willingness to commit to the full 8-month immersive journey
- Openness to exploring A livelihood pathways aligned with personal values
- Interest in experiencing travel as a pedagogy for learning
- Action-oriented with a willingness to apply their writing skills
- Looking for a joyful, challenging, and immersive learning experience
- Open to individuals from diverse backgrounds; no specific academic qualifications required

"The fellowship has been a transformative journey that gave me clarity in choosing my future path. I had the opportunity to experience diverse methods of facilitation, including music, theatre, dance, and storytelling. Traveling through different spaces, slums, govt schools, and tribal areas taught me how to adapt and engage meaningfully in varied contexts. This experience not only shaped my skills but also strengthened my heart's calling to create spaces where learning feels joyful, inclusive, and alive."

**- Gayatri Pardeshi, 2021-22 Alumna**



# APPLICATION PROCESS

Participants will be selected through a comprehensive 5 step process, including application responses and conversations, focusing on:

- Depth of intent and motivation
- Openness to learning and reflection
- Alignment with programme values
- Potential for long-term engagement in changemaking



## **Via Application**

The selection for the programme involves the following steps:

- 1- Application review and longlisting
- 2 - First interaction
- 3 - Task/exercise
- 4 - Group discussion
- 5 - Final interaction

## **Via Nomination**

This year, we are inviting organisations to nominate youth they work with. While the nominated participants will go through the same selection process, they will be financially supported by their nominating organisations.



# FINANCIAL SUPPORT

We are committed to ensuring that financial constraints do not become a barrier to participation. Each selected participant will be eligible to receive a maximum support of **₹60,000** during the programme for travel, food, and the action project phase.

In previous editions of the programme, financial support was given as a grant to participants. **But from this edition, financial support received will need to be paid back within 18-24 months of the conclusion of the programme. This is crucial to ensuring the sustainability of the programme.**

Participants will have the option to choose between **receiving the full, partial, or no funding support**, based on their personal needs and context. This enables wider access while encouraging a spirit of shared responsibility within the cohort.

Please note that the above-mentioned amount **constitutes only ~ 20% of the total expenses** the organisation incurs per participant. We are sharing this information to indicate that the programme is highly subsidised.

Your choice of financial support **will not influence the selection process in any way**. We review all applications based on alignment, intent, and readiness for the journey.

# APPLY HERE



<https://tinyurl.com/routestoroots26>

"My fellowship journey was a deeply transformative experience that expanded both my understanding of communities and of myself. Traveling through diverse geographies and engaging with grassroots initiatives allowed me to see how resilience, creativity, and dignity are woven into everyday life in ways often overlooked by mainstream narratives. It gave me the courage to unlearn rigid ideas of development and embrace community-led, context-rooted approaches as pathways to true transformation. Above all, the fellowship nurtured in me a sense of humility, reminding me that learning is a lifelong dialogue between people, culture, and the land."



- Kavya Chinda, 2022-23 Alumna

## FAQs



### **If I do not speak or write in English, can I still apply?**

Yes. We are currently able to support participants in English, Hindi, and Malayalam. This reflects the linguistic capacity of our team rather than any hierarchy of languages. We welcome you to reach out to us to discuss how we can best support your participation. Please note that a basic understanding of English will be helpful for engaging with certain aspects of the programme, such as workshop sessions, and we are happy to discuss this with you to ensure a comfortable and enriching experience.



### **Do the fellows travel together or individually?**

Each fellow travels individually and creates their own travel-learning plan with the support of the TU team.

### **Who will identify the Mentors/ Alivelihood practitioners?**

The research for the mentors is done by the fellow. The TU team plays a guiding role in this process and the mentors are mutually decided by the fellow and the team.




### **Who is going to arrange food and stay?**

Food and stay will be arranged by the participant. We encourage you to explore life beyond the transactional economy and develop relationships with local people (Mentors and community members) in the course of managing your food and accommodation.

# FAQs


## **What support will I get from the team while on the field?**




We anticipate you would need support in planning, designing and meaning-making. There will be a mentor attached to each participant who provides guidance during the journey, checks on logistics and helps solve any problem that arises. Group check-in meetings will be hosted every 10 days, a community-sharing space for everyone to share reflections, challenges and creative solutions. These online sessions provide an avenue to learn from each other's sharing and being part of their journeys. Additionally, you will have resources shared by us that will guide you in daily reflection and meaning making.

## **How do you address safety while on travel and on the field?**

Safety is a top priority, both physical and psychological. We rely on a community vetting process and the participant's own instincts to assess safety. While the programme involves travel to remote places, we limit the local travel till sunset. However, an individual's sense of safety varies depending on gender identity, prior travel experiences, etc., and we work with each participant to understand their thresholds and co-create conditions for safety. The TU team is accessible 24/7, and participants are provided with a network of safe spaces across the country for emergencies.



## **Can I have any other working/studying engagement during the programme?**



No. This is a full-time programme with no scope for any other work/study engagement during the course of the programme.

# ABOUT TRAVELLERS' UNIVERSITY

At Travellers' University, we believe in the transformative power of youth leadership to create meaningful social change. Our unique approach uses Travel as a Pedagogy, designing immersive, experiential journeys that weaves together grassroots engagement, hands-on learning, and deep inner reflection.

Our work focuses on nurturing young people to critically engage with the world around them. We empower young learners to explore the profound connections between themselves, the communities they engage with, the systems they are part of, and the rest of nature. By nurturing critical perspectives, equipping youth with practical tools, and creating spaces for purposeful action, we unlock their immense potential to address the pressing challenges of our time.

Our vision is to cultivate a generation of conscious leaders, individuals who live with purpose, work with integrity, and lead with compassion. Together, we strive to build a more sustainable, equitable, and just world.



# GLOSSARY

**Alivelihoods:** Livelihoods oriented towards social, ecological, and personal wellbeing, nurturing people and planet alike. If pursued by a considerable number of people, they hold the capacity to heal the planet.

**Alternatives:** Practical activities, policies, processes, technologies, tools, and frameworks that counter dominant social, economic, political, and developmental models that are exploitative and extractive.

Read in detail: <https://vikalpsangam.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/Alternatives-Framework-7th-Avatar-digital-v1.4.pdf>

**Equitable:** A situation where everyone receives the support and resources they need through affirmative actions.

**Just:** A situation where the underlying causes of inequity are addressed.

**Metacrisis:** The overarching, systemic crisis of our civilisation's underlying operating system, encompassing failing institutions, outmoded economic models, and limiting worldviews that generates and interconnects the many acute global crises we face, from ecological collapse to geopolitical instability.

**Self-Directed Learning:** A learning process in which learners take initiative to design and pursue their own unique learning paths.

**Sustainable:** A situation where all life forms on Earth flourish and sustain, and material resources are not depleted.

**Understanding Interconnectedness:** The ability to recognise how different systems are connected to and influence one another.

“And where we had thought to travel outward, we shall come to the center of our own existence. And where we had thought to be alone, we shall be with all the world.”

- Joseph Campbell -  
The Hero with a Thousand Faces



Scan the QR for previous participants' reflections.



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