

CYSD — The Organisation That Odisha's Civil Society Calls When It Needs to Know Something

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Social Justice & Tribal Welfare

Published: May 2026 · Last reviewed: —

In 1982, a group of young people in Bhubaneswar founded CYSD — the Centre for Youth and Social Development — on a relatively simple premise: that the poverty and marginalisation of Odisha's tribal communities was not a problem to be managed from outside but a problem to be understood and addressed from within. Forty-three years later, CYSD is simultaneously a direct-service organisation, a research institution, a policy advocacy body, a training academy, and Odisha's most comprehensive civil society reference library.

That combination is unusual. Most organisations choose one of these roles. CYSD has argued, persistently and with evidence, that you need all of them simultaneously — that direct field presence without research produces programmes without learning, that research without advocacy produces knowledge without change, and that advocacy without direct presence produces policies without roots.

Who They Are

CYSD works across eight tribal districts of Odisha — Koraput, Malkangiri, Rayagada, Nabarangpur, Bolangir, Kalahandi, Keonjhar, and Mayurbhanj — in 29 blocks, covering 798 villages, 124 Gram Panchayats, and 36,578 households, directly reaching 2.39 lakh people. Through partner organisations, their approaches are replicated across all

districts of Odisha.

Their strategic focus for 2022 to 2027: livelihoods for tribal and rural poor, humanitarian response and DRR, governance and rights, and gender-responsive planning — with specific attention to women, smallholder farmers, and migrants in both farm and non-farm sectors.

The Income Numbers

CYSD's programme documentation from 2018 to 2023 shows tribal household annual income increasing from Rs. 47,256 to Rs. 68,688 through alternative livelihoods — a 45 percent increase over five years. This is not income generated by a single project. It is the cumulative effect of CYSD's integrated approach: improved agricultural practices, NTFP market linkage, SHG microfinance, skill development, and government scheme convergence operating simultaneously in the same communities.

The leadership numbers alongside this are equally significant: 316 vibrant community leaders and 2,600 youth leaders developed through CYSD's community leadership programmes. These are not programme participants. They are people who now lead their communities independently of CYSD's presence.

The Technology Tools That Changed NTFP Access

Two technology innovations from CYSD's recent work deserve specific attention. The BANASHREE application — a digital tool for NTFP gatherers — helps tribal communities document, value, and access markets for non-timber forest produce. The NTFP Mapper, developed alongside it, documents the NTFP resources of specific forest areas, giving tribal communities an information base for FRA rights claims and NTFP enterprise decisions.

These tools were not developed by a technology company and handed to communities. They were developed by CYSD in partnership with the communities who use them — which is why they work in the field conditions of Malkangiri and Koraput

rather than only in a Bhubaneswar office.

Disaster Response Since 1999

CYSD's humanitarian response record spans from the devastating 1999 super cyclone — the benchmark event for Odisha disaster response — through the COVID-19 pandemic (2020-22) and the 2022 floods. Each response has built institutional capacity for the next. CYSD has facilitated preparation of 530 Village Disaster Mitigation Plans (VDMPs) across 89 Gram Panchayats in seven districts — community-owned plans that exist before any disaster, not after. They have trained community youth as "Climate Change Warriors" capable of rapid response and coordination with district administration.

The Gender-Responsive Budget

Since 2013, CYSD has been facilitating Gender Responsive Budgeting analysis for the Odisha state budget — helping stakeholders understand what the state budget actually delivers for women, district by district, scheme by scheme. This is unglamorous but consequential work: it creates the data language that women's rights advocates need to hold government accountable for gender allocations that exist in policy but disappear in implementation.

The Library

CYSD's Library and Information Centre — the CYSD-DRTC in Bhubaneswar — holds 8,400 books, 2,700 mimeographs, 80 archived and bound periodicals and journals, 14 journal subscriptions, and CYSD's own publications across four decades of field work. It is Odisha's most significant civil society knowledge repository. For any Odisha NGO conducting research on tribal welfare, community health, livelihoods, or governance — this library is the starting point.

Contact and Further Reading

Website: cysd.org | **Library:** cysdelibrary.org | **Contact:** Bhubaneswar, Odisha

Key evidence:

- CYSD profile document (VANI India): Rs. 47,256 to Rs. 68,688 income increase, 316 community leaders, BANASHREE app, 530 VDMPs — sourced from CYSD programme records
- Give.do CYSD profile: 2.39 lakh direct reach, 36,578 households, 798 villages, 29 blocks
- CYSD website: cysd.org — 2022-27 strategic objectives, Agriculture Production Cluster facilitation

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