

## Case study — Youth and Civil Society

An alumnus of the Madras Christian College, Dhanu's brush with public policy began through a **Liberty and Society Seminar (LSS)** organised by the **Centre for Civil Society (CCS)** in Cochin in 2003. A person with varied interests, Dhanu holds a Masters in Physics, Humanities, and a diploma in International Business.

During this period, he also travelled extensively, and volunteered with non-profits in Cochin. Dhanu found the experience at the LSS unique and interesting. "Apart from engaging the participants very effectively, it also challenged many set notions and ideological perspectives of the participants," he recalls. "My interest sparked, and I became an avid reader on all issues related to public policy and civil society action." In July 2004, Dhanu, along with six friends, founded the **Centre for Public Policy and Research (CPPR)**, with the objective of promoting research entrepreneurship.



As much as Dhanu is motivated by the engagement with social issues and local concerns, and a desire to intervene and influence them, he also firmly believes in bringing citizens, especially young people together, to get involved and take charge of their community.

CPPR reaches out to them through seminars, talks, discussions in colleges, and also film screenings and research activities. Over the years, Dhanu has seen the number of students associated with CPPR swell. Some of them have also evinced an interest in active politics. In the near future, he plans to generate formal funding support from academic and funding institutions for CPPR, and also explore ways to generate income through research related projects. He also dreams of creating an empowered civil society, where each citizen will participate in its governance.

The **Liberty and Society Seminars (LSS)** that are conducted by **CCS** provide college students and recent graduates a greater understanding of society, economy and culture within the classical liberal framework. The format of the LSS is interactive with discussions, working groups, documentary videos and field trips.



Until March 2007, nearly 1,700 students have attended 44 such programmes. The programme has generated an encouraging response, with an increasing number of participants like Dhanu, who, inspired by it, started upon the path to bringing about change within the society.

The **Youth and Civil Society Initiative** of the Trust recognises the potential of young people and the role they can play as agents of change. Collaborating with the Trust within this flagship initiative are other organisations such as **Pravah**, New Delhi, **Partners for Urban Knowledge, Action & Research**

(PUKAR), Mumbai, **Foundation for Education and Development (FED)**, Jaipur, and **Samvada**, Bangalore.

The initiative now looks at mainstreaming youth development in development action and addressing livelihood concerns of young people.