

Community Impact Case Study FY20

Teach For India, Pune



I. Case Overview

In Pune, the 'Oxford of the East', Teach For India alumni are working collaboratively to expand access to secondary and tertiary education for all of Pune's children, while emphasizing a holistic, high-quality education in the process. One of the fastest-growing cities in the Asia Pacific region, Pune is an educational, cultural, and technological capital of India of 6.6m inhabitants whose schools serve 660,000 students.

Launch Year 2009

Fellows 163

Alumni 220 in Pune

81% of alumni in the city continue to work in the education sector. They are leading 13 schools (of the city's nearly 190 schools), several teacher training organizations and other NGOs uplifting children and communities, and many classrooms alllll AA@s teachers.

Student progress

- Since the landmark national Right to Education Act (RTE) in 2009, access to primary education has become nearly universal throughout India
- Many more secondary classrooms are available, providing students with easier access to pass out of standard 10th in an English Medium School, a door-opening opportunity from many parents and community members for students
- 91% of the 7,500 students being taught by Teach For India fellows passed Standard 10 in the last 3 years with more than 15% securing distinction
- Dozens of students in Pune have led or participated in student leadership initiatives such as the [Maya Musical](#), [the Greatest Show on Earth](#), and [Kids Education Revolution](#) (KER). Fifty student revolutionaries from KER are creating change in their schools and communities by finding solutions to the problems they see around them.
- Greater focus on early childhood development and inclusive education within certain communities in Pune than there was before

II. Pune Community Context



Often called the “Oxford of the East,” Pune is an education and cultural capital. A city of 6.6 million today, it is home to one of India’s top universities, which has about 800 affiliated colleges, and serves 45% of foreign students studying in India. Freedom fighters during the fight for Indian Independence were educated there. The city boasts one of the first women’s colleges in the nation, founded by a lower-caste woman, Savitribai Phule; the University of Pune was recently renamed after her. Both she and her husband are founding figures for the Dalit community and its social movements in India today.

In addition to its higher education sector, Pune is also a manufacturing-based economy and, more recently, a technology hub in the region. As a result, STEM, entrepreneurship, and other 21st Century knowledge and skills are necessary to secure middle class jobs for the city’s children. Fluency in

English is also considered to be a door-opener.

Despite these opportunities, the dropout rate is higher than the national average. While India has dramatically expanded primary school attendance largely through the Right to Education Act, the law only applies until 8th standard. Meaning, by age 14, many students lack meaningful options to progress with their education. For a long time, students in English medium schools lacked any viable educational option.

Infrastructure matters. Due to crowded schools, most children experience a half day of schooling versus a full one. These low instructional hours impact learning and it also leaves children with few options after the short school day ends. Only half of students can identify letters in English. Less than two-thirds of children in class 4 were able to read simple text in Marathi, the primary language. Other opportunities for further systemic change include creating or improving supports for students with most need (e.g., inclusive education, vocational education, and expanding SEL, arts, and sport in school).

Living in the city also means experiencing its people’s vibrancy and diversity. Jai Mishra, a Teach For India alum who leads a community center where children can go after the school day ends to continue to learn and build community, says, “Every community in Pune is different, and they change over time. My community is like a small India: you’ll find different religions, castes, and other backgrounds.” Jai grew up impacted by poverty and other issues his students share, and he sees the assets they bring: “my kids aren’t coming from one family,” Jai says. These dynamic family and community arrangements have “helped me to identify strengths and how I can leverage those. I can identify all of the influencers so I can work with them. The collective piece is strong here.”



III. Growth in Collective Leadership in Pune

There are two complementary stories of collective leadership in Pune: one centers on improving school leadership, and the other emphasizes the importance of out-of-school learning and development, rooted in community.



On the first, TFI, Pune, its alumni, and partners have expanded quality educational access to thousands of children. First, TFI is staffing English medium schools; despite the need for English language skills in the workforce, the city struggled with low hiring pools for English speaking teachers. TFI filled this gap in primary schools. However, after primary school ended, thousands of 14-year-old students who enrolled in English medium schools did not have an option for a quality English medium secondary school because they did not exist. Students could either attend a Marathi medium school and struggle to comprehend or leave school. TFI alumni have expanded those options through schools such as iTeach: eight iTeach schools now serve nearly 2,000 children. Akanksha, a partner of TFI, also expanded this pathway with schools. English medium schools previously delivered the highest dropout rate of students; that is no longer true.

TFI, Pune alumni are influencing government education programs to improve the quality of leadership. Leadership For Equity (LFE), founded by a TFI alum, runs training programs for 40,000 Maharashtran Education Officers, who oversee local school systems, to provide the tools to lead a system and improve results for students. TFI alumni and staff lead learning around the problem with corporal punishment and discipline alternatives; corporal punishment has reduced hugely in the last decade. The India School Leadership Initiative, Thermax Foundation, and other alumni-led initiatives build the capacity of key government and school system stakeholders.

In addition to leading quality schools and influential training programs, alumni have founded social enterprises to transform students’ out of school experience and learning. Because school hours are low and many students are behind grade level, TFI alumni have developed opportunities for students to stay engaged, continue learning, build community, and have fun. Just For Kicks is an established football tournament, for both boys and girls, that boosts physical activity, mental health, and teaming skills. LifeLabs provides science kits to schools and Pie Jam teaches children coding and technology literacy to build STEM skills, a requirement in Pune’s and the global economy. Alumni have founded nine community centers which are in the communities where students live and provide safe spaces to continue learning and instruction, build community, and support healthy social-emotional development.

Pune Children Zone provides care for Pune’s little learners and their families. Several alumni-led initiatives around adult literacy, the arts, vocations, parent mobilization, hygiene, nutrition and health, and more.

“Alumni and fellows plug each other in to these different opportunities so our students are being provided with an excellent education,” said Keshar Mokha, the City Director for TFI-Pune. “Everyone has formed their own approaches, their own pieces of the puzzle. It’s a collective effort.”

IV. Role of Teach For India in Pune

Since its launch 12 years ago, the Teach For India, Pune community has sparked proof points in classrooms, schools, and community spaces with an eye toward systemic, sustainable change. Key strategies include:

1. Proof points demonstrating student growth and leadership

Teach For India relays its students, meaning that students are taught by Teach For India fellows throughout as much of their schooling years as possible. This strategy creates an opportunity for the team to continuously learn and improve upon impact. Holistic development is a priority: in addition to academic achievement, the team prioritizes supporting student initiatives, often rooted in entrepreneurship and the arts. Dozens of students in Pune have led or participated in student leadership initiatives such as the [Maya Musical](#), [the Greatest Show on Earth](#), and [Kids Education Revolution \(KER\)](#). Fifty student revolutionaries from KER are creating change in their schools and communities by finding solutions to the problems they see around them.

2. Expanding access to high-quality education through partnerships

Through innovative schools, student-centered NGOs, and relations with key stakeholders, TFI, Pune and its alumni community and partners created a school pathway where there wasn’t one before via access to quality English medium secondary schools. This effort involves collaborative work alongside alumni, the government (for essentials such as buildings and permissions), and private actors for funding and connections.

3. Providing talent that strengthens the ecosystem of education and community support

TFI, Pune is a talent provider for the city: 81% of alumni in the region continue to work in education. Alumni-led organizations work with 5,500 of Pune’s students. 14 alumni-led schools in the city address the gap of secondary access. The team and alumni community are viewed as respected, connected, and influential voices in education.

V. Looking Ahead

As Teach For India, Pune looks ahead at the road left to run, they are prioritizing, among many things, alumni pathways and collective action. Based on their challenges, achievements, and learnings over the last decade, Teach For India, Pune is prioritizing specific pathways to achieve their city vision: teaching, teacher training, and community engagement. Read more about Teach For India - Pune’s work and future plans [here](#).

Authored by Sarah King, Harvard Graduate School of Education, Doctoral Candidate

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