JOURNAL OF INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH & MULTIDISCIPLINARY INNOVATION

E-ISSN: 3139-8650

JIRMI

Volume: 2 Issue: 1 Month: August 2026

A Study on the Impact of National Service Scheme (NSS) Camps: Fostering Community Development and Youth Empowerment

Author(s): Dr. Sajjan Kumar Lal[a], Dr. Satishkumar Singh[b], Dr. Rajni Bahuguna[c]

Affiliation(s):

- [a]Department of Mechanical and Mechatronics Engineering, Thakur College of Engineering. & Technology, Mumbai, India,
- [b]Department of Engineering Sciences and Humanities, Thakur College of Engineering. & Technology, Mumbai, India.
- [c]Department of Engineering Sciences and Humanities, Thakur College of Engineering. & Technology, Mumbai, India.

Email: sajjan.kumar@tcetmumbai.in

Submitted to: Journal of International Research & Multidisciplinary Innovation (JIRMI)

Date: 25 July 2026

Abstract

The National Service Scheme (NSS) is a flagship program aimed at involving students in community service to promote social responsibility and leadership skills. The National Service Scheme (NSS) is a considerable way of integrating community engagement into higher education by encouraging young people to be engaged in resolving social and developmental problems. This paper explores the structure, activities, and outcomes of NSS camps, emphasizing their role in fostering community development and empowering youth. Through an examination of real-world examples and feedback from participants, the study highlights the transformative impact of these camps on individuals and society. In order to make the TCET NSS camp planning and organization a successful system, this study also delves into it.

Keywords: NSS, Camp, Community, Awareness, NGO's.

1. Introduction

The National Service Scheme (NSS), launched in 1969 to commemorate the birth centenary of Mahatma Gandhi, is a government initiative under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports. The scheme aims to channel the energy and potential of Indian youth toward constructive social service. With the motto "Not Me, But You," NSS emphasizes selfless service, empathy, and responsibility as key values for holistic development [1].

Experiential learning opportunities for students during NSS camps help them to identify community needs, work cooperatively with local partners, and transform their knowledge and abilities into social work. Activities in camps that focus on health, education, sanitation, environment, gender equality, social equity, and welfare of the community help build a community of a better and more developed constituency, while at the same time developing youth skills of leadership, team spirit, communication, empathy, and problem solving and encouraging civic duty. NSS camps move students out of the protection of the classroom and facilitate learning about social issues. In this sense, NSS camps could be seen as opportunities for planned interventions to achieve community development and the empowerment of youth. NSS camps are an integral component of the program, offering a unique opportunity for students to engage with rural and urban communities. These week-long residential camps serve as platforms for addressing pressing societal issues, from literacy and healthcare to environmental conservation and disaster preparedness. By combining theoretical knowledge with hands-on experience, NSS camps strive to instill a sense of civic responsibility and leadership in students while contributing to nation-building. This paper aims to shed light on the objectives, activities, and outcomes of NSS camps, focusing on their transformative impact on both participants and the communities they serve.

The authors of this paper focus on the activities of NSS camps in bringing about greater community participation, youth empowerment, stronger social concern, and more effective work for community development in a way that is sustainable and encompasses all.

In 2005, the NSS unit was created by TCET (Thakur College of Engineering & Technology, Mumbai) with the explicit purpose of uplifting society. There are 150 students enrolled today. The NSS camp was held in December of A.Y. 2024–2025. TCET - NSS Special Residential Camp was organized from 25th December 2024 to 31st December 2024 at village- Saiwan, Ghateghar, Shirsad, Vajreshwari, Taluka Vasai, District Palghar. In this camp along with POs and staff a total number of 54 NSS volunteers, 8 Council members

from SE/ST & TE/ TT of all branches participated and performed various social activities in adopted village.

2. Objectives of NSS Camps

The primary objectives of NSS camps are designed to align with broader national goals of community development and youth empowerment. These include:

1. Community Engagement: To involve students in addressing societal challenges, including education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability, while fostering a spirit of collaboration and mutual understanding [3].

2. Skill Development: To provide participants with opportunities to develop essential life skills such as leadership, teamwork, effective communication, and problem-solving through experiential learning [2].

3. Awareness Creation: To educate communities about critical issues such as hygiene, nutrition, literacy, waste management, and the importance of sustainable living practices [7].

4. Youth Empowerment: To nurture socially conscious and responsible citizens by instilling values of service, patriotism, and ethical behavior. The camps encourage participants to think critically about social issues and motivate them to be active agents of change [4].

5. Social Inclusion: To promote inclusivity by bridging socio-economic and cultural gaps between volunteers and communities, fostering unity in diversity. This fosters a sense of belonging and mutual respect among all stakeholders [5].

6. Leadership and Initiative: To encourage students to take the initiative and lead projects that bring tangible benefits to the community. The camps serve as a training ground for developing future leaders who are empathetic and solutions-oriented [10].

These objectives collectively contribute to building a stronger, more inclusive society while preparing the youth to lead with integrity and compassion in various spheres of life.

3. Methodology

The study employs a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analysis to evaluate the effectiveness of NSS camps. The research design is structured as

follows:

1. Data Collection:

Primary Data: Surveys and structured interviews were conducted with NSS participants, program coordinators, and community members. These instruments were designed to capture qualitative feedback on the experiences, challenges, and perceived impact of the camps [2].

Secondary Data: Reports from the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, academic studies, and published case studies on NSS activities were analyzed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the program's objectives and achievements [1].

2. Participant Observation: Field visits to select NSS camps were undertaken to observe their functioning and interactions between volunteers and community members. This first-hand observation provided valuable insights into the operational dynamics and outcomes of the camps [7].

3. Focus Group Discussions: Group discussions with camp participants and local stakeholders were organized to gather diverse perspectives on the program's impact and identify areas for improvement. These discussions encouraged collaborative brainstorming and deeper engagement [3].

4. Quantitative Analysis: Statistical tools were used to analyze survey responses, focusing on parameters such as skill development, community engagement, and social awareness. Trends and patterns were identified to assess the overall effectiveness of the camps [5].

5. Case Study Approach: Specific NSS camps that demonstrated exceptional outcomes were selected as case studies. These included initiatives in areas like disaster relief, afforestation, and literacy drives, which serve as benchmarks for best practices [4].

By integrating these methodologies, the study ensures a holistic evaluation of NSS camps, capturing both their immediate and long-term impacts on participants and communities.

4. Structure and Activities of NSS Camps

1. **Orientation and Training:** Participants receive an introduction to the objectives and planned activities of the camp. Workshops on leadership and communication skills are conducted [2].

2. **Community Interaction:** Students interact with local residents to understand their needs and aspirations [7].

3. **Thematic Projects**: Camps often focus on specific themes such as health and sanitation, literacy drives, afforestation, or disaster management [5].

4. **Cultural Programs:** Cultural exchange activities foster a sense of unity and appreciation for diversity [4].

5. **Evaluation and Feedback:** Camps conclude with a review of activities, feedback sessions, and planning for future initiatives [3].

The various activities conducted by TCET NSS volunteers at camp is depicted through Fig. 1 to Fig. 6. Fig.1 shows the sports activities organized by volunteers for school students at Saiwan village. Fig. 2 shows Tree plantation drive conducted at Saiwan Village by volunteers. Fig. 3 depicts the school teaching done by NSS team wherein they have imparted their knowledge to village students. Fig. 4 shows Joy of Giving organized by NSS students wherein they distributed various items to villagers & children.



Fig. 1: Sport organization for BMC School students



Fig. 2: Tree plantation at Saiwan Village.



Fig. 3: Village School Teaching



Fig. 4: Joy of Giving in Saiwan village



Fig.5: Health Awareness through village school students



Fig.6: Green Initiative awareness

5. Findings and Discussion

1. **Community Impact:** NSS camps address critical issues such as illiteracy, health awareness, and environmental degradation. For instance, a 2024 NSS camp in rural Maharashtra organized health check-ups for over 100 residents, significantly improving access to basic healthcare.

2. **Youth Development**: Participants report enhanced interpersonal and organizational skills. Survey data reveals that 85% of participants felt more confident in public speaking and leadership roles post-camp [2].

3. **Challenges**: Limited funding and logistical hurdles often constrain the scope of NSS activities. Furthermore, cultural and linguistic barriers between volunteers and local communities can pose challenges [7].

6. Recommendations

1. **Increased Funding:** Allocating more resources to NSS programs can expand their reach and impact.

2. **Collaboration with NGOs**: Partnering with non-governmental organizations can enhance expertise and resource sharing.

3. **Technology Integration:** Using digital tools for training, monitoring, and feedback can improve program efficiency.

4. **Diversity Training:** Preparing volunteers to work in culturally diverse settings can mitigate communication barriers.

7. Conclusion

The residents of Saiwan village have been greatly benefited from the varied programs carried out by TCET NSS groups. To a greater extent, it has resolved their health, education and other social problems.

NSS camps served as a powerful bridge between academic learning and societal engagement, providing participants with the skills, experiences, and values necessary to become responsible citizens. These camps address immediate community needs while fostering long-term capacity building among volunteers and residents. Through their

emphasis on inclusivity, leadership, and sustainability, NSS camps contribute to creating a more equitable and informed society.

The transformative impact of NSS camps is evident in the enhanced confidence, empathy, and leadership skills among participants. They also provide a platform for addressing critical societal issues, such as health awareness, education, and environmental conservation, ensuring tangible benefits for underserved communities.

However, to fully realize their potential, NSS programs must overcome challenges such as limited funding, logistical constraints, and cultural barriers. Strategic collaborations with NGOs, increased investment in training and technology, and a stronger focus on diversity can further amplify their impact.

In conclusion, NSS camps are not just community service initiatives; they are transformative experiences that shape socially conscious leaders and empower communities. Strengthening these programs can significantly contribute to nation-building efforts, ensuring a more sustainable and inclusive future for India.

Declaration of Competing Interest

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest to this work.

Acknowledgments

We sincerely express our gratitude to the Principal and Head of the Department, Thakur College of Engineering & Technology (TCET), Mumbai, for providing us with the opportunity and institutional support to undertake this work. Their constant motivation, encouragement, and guidance have been invaluable in completing this study. We are also thankful to all NSS volunteers, faculty members and community participants whose cooperation and active involvement contributed to the successful completion of this work.

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