



*Building trust across the world's divides*

*Initiatives of Change*

*AP Newsletter - April 2015*



*Greetings*

*from*

*Asia Plateau !*

## Editorial

The beginning of April was marked by a beautiful lunar eclipse. Ancient traditions believed these lunar events embodied a shedding of the old and the embracing of the new. That is what is indeed experienced for many as people pass through Asia Plateau during the blossoming spring.

Over 600 came to a plethora of programs, starting with the annual program for the tribal youth from the rural region around Jamshedpur, sponsored by TSRDS (Tata Steel Rural Development Society), Heart of Effective Leadership and Effective Living and Leadership programs for various industries, program for officers of Indian Army and for officers of Mumbai Rail Vikas Corporation.

One of the Heart touching events of the month was a day visit for over 200 Blind children these children were from various parts of the country and from different schools. Anaam Prem NGO who is conducting workshops for these children wanted to bring them to IofC for a day visit. They planted some trees and conducted their Annual Cultural Event.

At the same time, Grampari was working closely with young rural girls; teaching them skills and providing a space for learning, inner connection, growth, and dialogue.

The interns also experienced a blossoming, an embrace of the new. The interns began to “reach out”. It was a very busy month; conducting sessions at Symbiosis Research Institute and supporting a variety of initiatives through song, skit, and story. The interns have grown in a way that has ignited their capacity to change the societies; sharing the tools and skills they have learned during the months prior here.

The friends of Initiatives of Change for Life, have remained close to the hearts of the AP family; bringing great inspiration as their work extends to working with police in the North East. In this way they are bringing forth new life.

In a world that often seems dark; burdened with corruption, environmental devastation, greed and hunger, Asia Plateau embodies a shedding of our own darkness and stepping into the new. In that way, we are able to be the change and contribute to the flame of positive change.



## Programs

April had a variety of powerful programs, the five events which contributed to initiating change for people and society.

The month began with program sponsored by TSRDS. This program was for tribal youth from rural villages near Jamshedpur. These youth had previous exposure to Initiatives of Change in Jamshedpur. Thanks to our vibrant team in Jamshedpur for regular programs.

Coming here rekindled the IofC flame and going a bit deeper into their self-reflection. At the same time, they inspired the AP family; their existing contributions to their communities were truly inspirational. AP just provided a space to share ideas, facilitate dialogue and provide continued inspiration for positive change.

Then we conducted one of our flagship programs, Heart of Effective Leadership program for the senior officers of various industries, led by Kiran Gandhi. Overall an impactful program helped the participants to not only enjoy the morning sessions but along with nature go deeper in thoughts and find something meaningful for themselves. Further, to take decisions and make it into action by inner governance.



One of the participants said:

*“Asia Plateau helped me to further realize the purpose of life”*

The third program was Effective Living and Leadership for various industries. This was one of the biggest gatherings of the year, drawing in 83 participants.

Led by H.P Singh and an very good facilitating team helped participants to reflect and understand the importance of change, which was seen from few decisions that participants took:

*“I have understood myself and will change”*

*“I will be active participant in India I Care movement”*

The fourth program was for the second batch of officers of Mumbai Railway Vikas Corporation led by Dilip Patel. It is a challenge to give input in a short span of 2 days, however nothing seemed challenging for the facilitating team and they created the same impact which we expected. Here are few comments by participants:

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*“It has changed my thinking about my behaviour”*

*“It made me think and improve my attitude”*

*“After this program i understood what i am and what i can do”*

## Asia Plateau Volunteer Intern Program (APVIP)



Metaphorically, this month can be described as a rubber band for us interns. Emotionally we experienced being pulled and released. The third month into the internship marked a moment where a lot has come up. We have looked very closely at our lives, maybe not completely, but more so than ever before. Old memories have come up, new ones have been made. Experiences have unfolded and tears and laughter shared.

The month was filled with a lot of excitement as the TSRDS group was here on the last day of March, and the interns were immersed in the different sessions, from skits to facilitation. The interns tried their skills (in more than singing this month). The children were a pleasure to be around and there was so much to learn from them. During the rest of the month, we had sessions about challenges in the world and day to day life by Biplab and Han ting, we did a trust building workshop and Facilitation workshop by Kirsty and Thuguri, we also enjoyed the life stories of Peter Heyes,

Anand joined us for a day and conducted a Non-Violent communication workshop which we thoroughly loved and could relate too. Siddharth led us into a workshop on Context in Life which got us thinking about so many things. We also had the mid-internship evaluation where we were asked to reflect on what has changed in our reasons of being in AP. And a week of intensive sessions about the challenges in the world and the power of youth discussions that got all of us thinking and made us feel that we have to get out there more and give all we have to become leaders of change.

This month tested our physical limits as well, when we experienced what it was to be out of our comfort zones to go to SIMC, Pune. Two days of teamwork and ownership, yet excitement and fun. We got a chance to mingle and understand what challenges students and most likely other people face after they leave AP.

We also celebrated Easter during the first week, where we enjoyed a hearty treasure hunt in which the Girls of the residential program at Grampari also joined in .

During the end of the month, the interns were invited for a Village visit, giving us a chance to first-hand witness the way the Grampari team communicates with the people at Sayghar village. The next day, some of the interns went on an exhilarating hike to visit the springs at Sayghar. Geology has never been more fascinating than it was on that particular day.

This journey at AP has brought us this far into our lives, our outlook on the present, our determination for the future. There are still many miles to go, but it isn't just an internship anymore, it is slowly starting to feel like it should; the way of life.



## Grampari

Grampari said good bye to the lovely young girls in the livelihoods program. The transformation of the young women was nothing but profound. Having been exposed to new skill sets: sewing, organic farming, mobile repair coupled with the essence of lofC through quiet time and inner voice, the girls have left empowered; able to contribute to change back in their homes.

The spring box developments have been quite fruitful. Work was initiated in Kavadi. A presentation was given at a community governance meeting of 63 villagers present: including men, women, and children. The following day work begun through an analysis of the three springs connected to the community. The spring box project anticipates to be quite fruitful with greater participation at the grassroots regarding a joint aquifer committee ( Bhoojaldharak Samiti ): a collaborative governance structure uniting six villages connected to the aquifer and to understand the concept of ground water being a common resource. The village is eager start work so that the community has better access to clean drinking water before the dry months.

The WASH programme has completed their work for the last year. The meeting with the village school heads was a fruitful event with teachers sharing their inputs on how this programme has impacted their schools.

There was sharing's like:

The absenteeism has reduced, we saw how the Grampari team was making the children enjoy their sessions, the way the children shared their short comings and put things right by returning money stolen or saying sorry and resolving a conflict has astounded them. The teachers were also given a statistical analysis of how well the school fared and were motivated to continue their efforts for clean hands washed with soap.



## Initiatives of Change for Life (IFL)



Three states covering 2487 kms in one month!

In the 1st week of April, we were in Dharamsala in Himachal Pradesh and the highlights were our interactions with the Prime minister (Sikyong) and the members of Parliament of the Tibetan Government in exile amongst many other.

We then came down to Amritsar in Punjab and our visit to the Golden Temple was memorable, equally memorable were the 7 interactions we had in one day including an unexpected entry into a room full of 70 top officials of the Municipal Corporation led by the Commissioner himself.

We then moved to the Far East, into the state of Meghalaya to do programs for four weeks. It was a 1st time for IFL to do a program for any Police force. 60 policemen of all ranks participated in an IofC program for 5 days and it has paved the way for a lot more to happen with the Meghalaya police force.

The Sun brings light and hope to everyone. The land of the abode of clouds is giving us all hope to shine. We, being in the North East where day light comes first, at 04:30am, will continue to try giving our best.



## Kirsty's fairwell and new beginnings: An Experience of India



Good-bye India....

react in ways we didn't know we had within us; anger, selfishness, fear, mistrust, frustration, rudeness, impatience, discrimination. But that's why you learn and grow so much in India..... because it's good once in a while to get to know your dark side, to know what comes out when you're squeezed from all angles, because only then can you bring that darkness into the light. Only then can you move from ignorance to acceptance, from hate to compassion, from blame to forgiveness and from fear to love. This is the beauty of India and all the beings within it. The only place I've been that acknowledges and accepts the light and the darkness within us all, as individuals and as collective humanity. I am forever grateful to this truly magnificent country and to all the people who have crossed my path in the last 8 months and taught me so much, thank-you.



India is pushy, unrelenting, always attacking your senses, everything comes without permission; the smells, the noise, the rubbish, the heat. It attacks your conscience too; the poverty, the corruption, the waste, the class differences, being ripped off constantly, having to decide how much to give to a beggar or if you even should? and when do you stop?, being ogled and grabbed by men, waiting endlessly and of course the guilt of being a white, coloniser that caused most of this.

A day can pose many challenges to your conscience and to your physical being. India can bring out the worst in us, the worst thoughts, the worst beliefs about humanity. In situations we come to



In some ways I forget that leading a life through my inner voice should be light and fun. There should be a faith that releases the burden of loss and confusion. Loss and confusion are there but we can smile knowing some guidance within us will lead us from it one day. There is freedom in surrendering to the Inner Voice. It is not a burden to follow it, it is a blessing to be able to live in authenticity. It is not always a stable life, yet it is better than pegging ourselves to outside systems and structures to find meaning. In doing that we may feel steady but really we become trapped. Following the inner voice means faith in knowing, in time. It means an adventure led by intuition and surrender. It means liberation.

