



Building trust across the world's divides

Initiatives of Change

AP Newsletter - Dec 2015



Photo by: Parag Shah

Asia Plateau Newsletter

Editorial

A man saw a human figure at a distance on the beach, who seemed to be dancing with the waves. As he approached, he realised it was a young boy picking up starfish from the shores of the beach and throwing them into the breaking waves in a graceful pattern.

“What are you doing?” he asked in amusement.

The boy stopped what he was doing and replied, “The sun is up and the waves are receding. I am sending these starfish back to where they came from!”

“But the shore stretches for miles and miles together and there are thousands of starfish all over! Do you think you will ever make a difference?” The boy smiled, bent down, picked up a starfish, threw it into the breaking waves with the same graceful movement and said, “I made a difference to that one!”

Holding on to the same ideology, AP completed one more year adding value to the world by making a difference in the lives of those who came to AP as Interns, Volunteers, and Participants to find the higher purpose of their life and left from here believing that their personal transformation will lead to the social transformation.

The last month of the year 2015 at AP remained busy, witnessing two Symbiosis IT conferences, TSRDS conference, ISTM conference, 21st LMAD Gathering, Caux Scholars Programme, Industries, Administrative Officers and Stamps and Registrations conference with the same never ending enthusiasm.

The interns have been evolving as more accomplished individuals after every passing day here during their internship programme, sharing their stories and always being ready to learn. With the advent of the new year, starts their final month of internship paving ways for their bright future.

-Parag Shah

How often do we realise that every small deed of ours can make a difference to someone?

Asia Plateau Programmes

Symbiosis Centre of Information Technology (Batch I & II)

Students from SCIT attended a four-day ELL programme in two different batches. Batch I consisted of 85 students along with 2 faculty members, of which Rhea D'Souza was the Course Director. Batch II consisted of 97 students along with 2 faculty members, of which Siddharth Singh was the Course Director. Both the programmes focused on the vital link between personal change and global change, and aimed to inspire, support and equip the students to play their part in building a better society. To read the complete report please click here: [Batch I](#) [Batch II](#)

TSRDS Report

The four-day-conference, sponsored by TSRDS, brought together 92 participants from Jamshedpur, Orissa and Jharkhand, to experience and to explore change based effective living, leading to joy, satisfying relationships, teamwork and improved performances.

Rhea D'Souza, the Course Director, led the participants ably in discussions, enabling them to find their purpose of life and to play their part in building a better society.

The call given at the inauguration by Biren Bhuta, was, "Seek in this journey, discover yourself and be the Change Agents."

He further expressed that the traits of Seekers as mentioned in Quran, has impacted him personally, he shared about those three traits in this way:



Khushu (humility): a dual interaction, the essence of which is in the heart, and the reflection of which is on the body.

Kareemi (graciousness): joy of giving, like a flower has nothing but to give fragrance.

Sidq (truthfulness): freedom of heart and soul.

The participants started their journey of Change, unleashing the potential they have, to add meaning to their own lives and to the world at large.

ISTM REPORT

AP welcomed 47 participants from ISTM, New Delhi along with their faculty member, Mr. Nafe Singh, for effective living and leadership programme, of which Mayur Shah was the course director.

The call given at the inauguration by Dr. Ravindra Rao was, "To light a candle than to curse the darkness, and stop not at that only, but let its flame grow into a forest fire to enlighten the world at large."



Mr. Nafe Singh thanked AP team for the program and said that he had been to many places across the country but this place was like heaven for him. He said it was the best place he ever visited and he would like to come back and also send students regularly in future. They left with good memories and decisions from their time at Asia Plateau.

HEL for Industries Report

16 participants from four companies participated in the four-day HEL conference. Seenu Iyengar,

the Course Director, welcomed them and briefed them about the whole programme.

Dr. Rao, in his keynote address, introduced iofc ideology to them and the call given by him was, “We should care to listen and dare to obey, to Change the World.”

Grampari visit and Go Green session also rekindled their spirits for Environment.

“The image we are carrying from here is of a frame, behind that frame are you all, who live this cause”, said some of the participants.

LMAD Retreat

LMAD 21 Gathering was one of the highlights of the month, in which almost 120 coordinators and volunteers, who had been a part of the LMAD from the very beginning, gathered together to celebrate 21 years of this youth Camp. Followed by this was a three-day Youth Coordinator’s Workshop, headed by Viral and Neha Mazumdar.

Caux Scholar’s Programme

Caux scholars programme, one of the major highlights of the month brought together 14 participants from various countries like, India, US, Burundi, Egypt, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Nepal, Zimbabwe, Germany and Ukraine. Mr. Ashok and Mrs. Florina being the Academic Directors, Pravin Nikam from India and Hadi from USA the co-ordinators, ably facilitated the Scholars in meaningful discussions and group activities. The scholars cherished the unity in diversity which they experienced within their group and also outside the group. Various activities and workshops around the topics of Conflict Transformation and Peace building were



conducted to equip them with the tools which are prerequisites for peace building at large, enabling them to play their part in building a better world.

Governance programme for Odisha Administrative Officers.

15 officers from Odisha Administrative Services, participated in a five-day Conference, focused on Ethical leadership, Trust-building and delivery of good Governance, of which Ajay Patel was the course director. They reflected on the choices one can make to become more effective at work and happier in life. Many of them shared their experiences. The participants found Quiet Time as an effective tool to solve life problems and suggested that such Trainings on moral-ethics should be given to each and every Government sector.

Governance programme for Officers of Stamps and Registration Deptt.

Asia Plateau welcomed 39 participants for five-day governance programme from the department of Stamps and Registration, Govt. of Maharashtra. Dilip Patel, the course director of the programme, welcomed the participants and started the programme with the traditional practice of lighting the lamp. Kiran Gandhi, in his keynote address, briefed the participants about the ideology of iofc and left them with a thought-provocative question, “What can be our contribution to better India?”

The participants in this five-day journey experienced and explored some personal transformations and left with a conviction, to be a part of the Solution than being a part of the problem.

Interns Outreach Journey

In December, the interns went for a four-day outreach programme to PDKV (Akola Agricultural University) along with Mr. and Mrs. Gandhi, to study organic farming and the latest agricultural investigation in India. The friendship among PDKV and IofC has a long history and many of the times, the university send the faculty as well as the students for IofC trainings. This time they went to learn as well as to conduct IofC sessions at the Akola Agriculture University, for the students studying there. They also met the students from the University who were in Asia Plateau for one month internship in the month of October.

What we learnt from Akola

“Indian folk medicine Ayurveda’s conservation project and market expanding strategy”

Ayurveda is an Indian folk medicine with more than 3500 years of its history. It makes use of wild plants for preventing and curing internal and external diseases, and also known as alternative medicine in oriental medicine. Dr Sanjay G.’s research is about full organic cultivation, supporting farmers and conserving the plants that are in danger of becoming extinct. The best part was that he is trying to educate the farmers about the effect of each plant and importance of organic farming which is beneficial for both humans and environment. The market condition of Ayurveda is expanding each year specially in the developed countries. Furthermore, India is the second largest exporting country after China, having the strength of diverse eco-systems, technical/ farming capacity and huge exporting opportunities.

However, the flow of supplying system in India is complex. The issue of time and profitability arise which is contributing to slow down in the growth of the market. The Professor remarked that the reform of the supply system that skips the middleman is important. And also added that to preserve the plants, making awareness of non-traditional cropping technology in dry land is crucial instead of cutting the plants from the deep forest. At the end he has shown us a good example of Bio-village in Lucknow, where farmers, pharmacist, and marketers are collaborating to cultivate and to promote the Ayurveda. In conclusion, I could comprehend the importance and the benefits of each plant, the plan to conserve the wisdom and the plant, and the market strategy to promote the plan. However, I doubt the efficacy of this medicine compared to the western artificial medicine. It triggered me a lot to think about agricultural medicine.

“Organic Farming research in India and demonstration of Indian compost making”

70% of Indians are involved in farming. But how many people care about the soil?”

The journey started with discussing about the soil; How soil is important to cultivate vegetables of fine quality, How difficult it is to decontaminate the soil polluted by agricultural chemicals, and how important it is to be sensitive about the soil as a farmer, to develop a sustainable farmland.





Then, we moved to the demonstration of organic compmaking; the only ingredients are cow dung, pulp (specially of soy bean because of it's softness (easy to be decomposed)), soil, water, and micro-organisms. In the hole, dug in the ground, piled up were the ingredients dividing into 10 times until it filled the hole. The chimney built in the middle is to release the heat (keep between 60-70 degrees) and to send oxygen through the compost. After, 120 days the compost will be dark brown, without smell which is then in the best condition to use as organic compost.



I've experienced the similar compost making at a biodynamic farm in Japan, though the way of it was different; Instead of digging the ground we pile up on the ground for about 2meters. I can surmise that the difference might be related to the climate; In order to make a high quality compost, keeping the temperature and moisture stable is important. Therefore, In Akola (India) where the weather is hot, it's favourable to make it underground, while in Japan(Kyushu) it can be created on the ground since the compost making is during winter when the temperatures and moisture are quite low and stable.



I could recognise the necessity of expanding the wisdom of organic farming/composing for sustainable Indian agriculture and that the method should be adjusted depending on the climate.

lofC session for 50 post graduate students in Akola
"How can I be the change maker?"

On the last day, our lofC Akola group got the

chance to conduct a 1.5hour session for post-graduate students. Our plan was simple; think about "what do I have to change for the world and for my bright future" sticking to the quote "Be the change you want to see in the world" by Mahatma Gandhi. After explaining the lofC idea (Quiet time and 4Standards) and sharing change stories from our side, we divided the students into small groups to make it easier to share and started the interaction which was very interesting and inspiring.

We first imagined the best life in the future including the dream, second, thought about daily life today, and at the end about the change I need for a better future. It is always nice to hear of their dreams which is very unique for the people of different backgrounds because it illustrates their childhood and life stories that they've experienced. Also their decision of change was inspiring.

However, the biggest learning was not from the interaction, but from the construction of the session. Discussing how to involve the participants, how to convey the core lofC message, and how to build a comfortable space that participants feel like sharing was quite important for me to understand. One thing I can use from today is to ask several questions to the audience before starting the presentation in order to make the story more relevant for them.

Two Stories from Grampari



VIVAR

GRAMPARI GRAMVIKAS YUVA MANCH was launched in Vivar. 15 of the boys from this village attended our 15 day residential programme. Following the programme the boys were inspired to repair leaking taps in their village, clean up their entire village, organize dust bins for every household (inspired by what they saw at AP/Grampari, they painted old oil cans) and are currently working on an effective waste disposal system for the village.

At a recent college programme, these Vivar boys performed a play about their habits, how they've changed and how they are now working on village development. Here is a picture of them performing the skit. This village has been deeply impacted by the Grampari's Spring Protection and they are now getting clean drinking water with a marked change in their health levels. The village also won the first prize for an 'ECO FRIENDLY Ganapati festival' competition that Grampari had conducted.

The youth themselves say: 'this forum has no office bearers' each one have given 8 aims of this forum and have declared a list of deliverables in the first 6 months.



GOVIDIGHAR

Grampari's SHP (School Hand Washing with Soap Programme) has been working with a school in Govighar for the last year. As a result some teachers from this school were invited for a day to Grampari for a teachers' training programme. The principal of this same school visited the Centre a little later on as part of the 25 Zilla Parishad teachers that Transasia sponsored for the 4 day ETST programme.

On our recent visit to this school we found some extraordinary things were taking place. Every class had a tippy tap in front of it. All the children looked happy, and they worked in groups as opposed to the traditional school structure. The principal, who had attended the teachers' training programme with his wife spoke of a very long personal problem that had been resolved. He also took a decision to work on his anger. The transformation was inspiring. His teachers said earlier, 'whilst he was

kept to do things in the school he would shout at us and we would not do any work. But now that he talks to them with no anger, so much more work has got done.' The principal said that he had tried to replicate what he had seen in Grampari and at the centre and decided to order, with trepidation, 40 benches. The government sent him 80!

This village school has an over head projector, with neatly arranged desks and big screen. The hall is called E learning. Everything worked!

There are 11 girls in this school who have quiet time every day and share their thoughts. Something they learnt during the SHP programme.

The school has an overhead projector with neatly arranged desks and a big screen the hall is called E learning and what was amazing was that everything was in working condition.

IFL Journey Continues



The month began with the team being based at Asia Plateau, supporting the various programs happening here. One of the unique programs we had was the Tata Steel Rural Development Scheme Program (TSRDS). A bunch of 88 passionate young people from Jharkhand and Odisha came for a 4day long conference. Every time someone from a city comes to Panchgani, they appreciate how it is so green. However, one of the participants from TSRDS, who hails from a remote village in Jharkhand, remarked that his heart cried out when he saw the Table Land, he felt it was 'bald'! Amazing how these people think and see things so differently than us city dwellers. A reminder for all of us to start thinking differently, if we still haven't.

In the third week of December, five from the team went down to Tamil Nadu, the native state of Mr. Parthiban, a senior IofC member. We visited 3 places – Salem, Dharmapuri and Tiruppattur and were able to reach approximately 2000 people. During our programs we also challenged people to be part of a revolution to bring change in their communities by serving humbly and were delighted when people volunteered themselves for the cause of the country.

In a conversation with a religious group of Tamil Muslims, stories were shared about how people selflessly helped others during the Chennai floods, without once thinking about any divides that are created by human beings on the basis of caste and religion. It was all humanity at work.

Wangyal and Mr. Suresh Khatri also went to the beautiful French Colony of India – Puducherry to anchor a session with around 40 Tibetans in the Global Tibetan youth Conference. Rufus and Sreemitha, two ex-interns of Asia Plateau also joined them. The Participants were challenged when they were asked to imagine the future without HH The Dalai Lama and also being asked the question “Am I the kind of Tibetan that future Tibet needs?”

Towards the end of the month, Shashika and Gaurav took off to meet old friends and participants in the North Eastern states of Assam and Meghalaya.

Stay tuned to hear more about their inspiring journey in the next Newsletter!



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small deed of ours can
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*Lets be the
difference!*



Photo by: Parag Shah

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