



Building trust across the world's divides

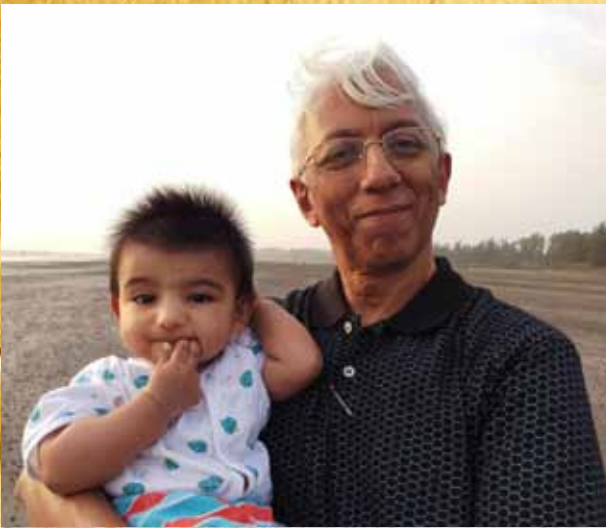
Initiatives of Change

AP Newsletter - March 2015

Greetings from Asia Plateau !



Editorial



Kiran Gandhi

Officers from the tourism & culture department of the eastern state of Odisha, senior administrators of an atomic energy research establishment, senior management officers of the national government's power distribution corporation, business managers of companies like Siemens, labour union leaders, religious teachers from the Indian army and youth leaders from eastern India's villages came in a steady stream to Asia Plateau for programmes during the month of March. The underlying theme of all these programmes is ethical leadership. Recalling his experience after one of these programmes, a Vice President from Siemens wrote: *"I would like to thank all of you for showing us a way towards ethical behaviour and sensitizing us on the necessity of treating our fellow human beings with respect and care....to move from a regime of indifference to inspiration to initiative to positive action."*

A developing country like India needs ethical leaders in all its key institutions at different levels for delivery of good governance and social justice. Absence of good governance brings in its wake corruption, social imbalances, injustices and frustrations, which then become fuel for violence. Exploring the cause of the rise of several terror groups, like ISIS and the Taliban, a recent issue of TIME magazine (March 9) writes: *"Civil society is collapsing in large parts of North Africa and the Middle East. The absence of competent government creates mass unemployment – there's the jobs issue – but it also creates resentment, suspicion, desperation and a sense of victimhood. And this is the nest in which terrorists are hatched."*

While good governance requires good policies and systems, it finally comes down to the character and values of people, which determine how well policies and systems are implemented. That critical aspect of leadership in today's as well as tomorrow's leaders is what programmes at Asia Plateau address. Participants are encouraged to examine the quality of their **'inner governance'** by spending times of silence to listen to **'the voice within'**. When inner governance is healthy not only does one experience greater inner peace but one also experiences greater creativity and effectiveness as a leader. Sharing of real life stories by facilitators, illustrating how this process works and how one can address global needs through personal change, are a special feature of Asia Plateau's programmes.

- Kiran Gandhi

Programs

March has been a busy month here at Asia Plateau with various programs happening all throughout the month. It began with an International Workshop on Ethics in Public Governance. Many participants had stayed back from the Dialogue on Just Governance to be part of this Workshop, it was energy packed and very insightful. We then had the Heart of Effective Leadership program at various times of the month, attended by participants from Chemetall India, KPTCL and Siemens Ltd. A new HEL program also started this month for the officers of Baba Atomic Research Centre. Participants were very enthusiastic and had a lot of positives to take back from it. The Effective Living and Leadership program was conducted for the Officers of Institute of National Integrity and participants from different sectors of the Industry. Ethics in Public Governance for Officers of Power Grid Corporation and a new group - Officers of the Tourism and Cultural Dept. of Odisha.



The general feedback from the Officers from Odisha was that the planning and the sessions were very insightful for their personal and professional life. One officer responded that after 37 years of dedication to his job, he has realised his neglect towards his wife and sons.

The teachers' workshop for 24 teachers in Pune, by the Education Today Society Tomorrow team was also held in this month. The Schools that participated were BTIS School, Blueridge School and Bharatiya Vidya Bhavan School. The teachers were very involved and sessions like Being an A+ teacher, Inner Governance, Relationships and India I Care were conducted.

The Annual Batch of TSRDS kicked-off on the 31st of March, stay tuned for details in next month's newsletter.



Asia Plateau Volunteer Intern Program (APVIP)

Interesting workshops, deep reflections, and purpose exploration were some of the fruitful experiences during the month of March. One of the milestones of the month was when the interns wrote letters of appreciation to one another after having honest dialogue about tensions in the group. Through this sharing, deeper bonds were built.

A workshop on relationships with Mike and Jean Brown challenged the interns to nurture their relationships. A workshop on human nature mapping with Rob Lancaster, from Australia, conducted an eye opening workshop on human nature mapping and inspired the interns to believe in their capacity to be change agents in society. The research project on the history of lofC including Frank Buchman, the Oxford Group and Asia Plateau was shared; the stories of lofC (then MRA) were also discussed.

Tim and Azusa, two of the intern volunteers who departed during the month, guided one of the week's activities. Osho philosophy, bioenergetics exercises, empathetic refugee learning and origami were shared. Gaurav coordinated one of the weeks; highly inspired by history and books; with support from Travis and Supriya and a wealth of literature.



The interns enjoyed an evening at Archana's home and dined on cheese fondue gifted by Marianne Spreng as an expression of gratitude for all their hard work for Just Governance. They also shared stories about their fondest books.

During Jitesh's week of guidance, the interns began to better explore their purposes of life; trying to identify their skill sets and needs in the world in which they could contribute. Guided by Dr. Ravindra Rao, points of action were shared amongst the group including alternative currencies, addressing farmer suicides, working with youth, and gender empowerment. The interns also shared presentations of their respective countries which united them despite the differences in culture.

On a lighter note, the interns celebrated the colourful festival of India: Holi. The morning was joyous and fun to welcome the spring and crop season. The interns also celebrated Gudi Padwa, the Hindu New Year. During the time off, the interns had an adventure down to Krishna River where they survived an encounter with a territorial bull. The interns also spent a busy day in Pune filled with running errands, exploring, and good food.



Grampari

We had an interesting meeting with some of the leaders of the youth groups in Panchgani and also with a few villagers we are working with. This meeting happened as a response to a tragic incident of a 2 year old being raped in Panchgani by a young man. Vishal Baggade and the Grampari team took initiative in getting 30 young men to discuss this and several other issues. To emphasise the need to respect women, all the youth leaders were asked to introduce themselves as well as tell the group the name of their mother.

Widely held (as well as common) view was that it was the women who were responsible of these types of incidents because of the way they dressed. During honest sharing, Grampari team member revealed that that while living in a small house he often sees his mother or sister not properly dressed; though he does not get wrong ideas in his head. Despite this, on the road if he sees a woman not dressed decently it immediately corrupts his mind so it is not the dress but it is our mind set that needs to change made the others think differently.

Decided unanimous decision was made to have a meeting every month with the youth and look at what we need to do to harness their energy to bring authentic change in Panchgani and in the villages.

On a lighter note, a two day programme for village ladies filled Grampari with a lot of fun and laughter. Many shared their concerns and decided to bring change in their own lives. One said that when she went back she would stop shouting at her sisters in law and her daughters in law. Many said this 2 day programme was such a relief from their routine life of hard work and it was like coming to “your mothers’ home.”

Grampari, as usual, hosted all the guests that visited the centre however special effort was made for the TSRDS young students who came. They were all welcomed with organic mulberries and the team conducted an interactive session on village living and rural development. The students then attended workshops on Tippy Tap Building, Paper Bag Making and card making with

banana bark.

Finally, we had a group of villagers who came from Viver. Gramapri has recently completed building a 55foot Spring box in this village the villagers are now enjoying clean drinking water. The Gram Sevak who also attended the meeting had an inspired thought after we had a Quiet Time together, protection. Influenced by the talk of the need for the protection of our Aquifer he talked of forming a committee with several villages whose springs are in the same mountain range. These villages have a group already, but enabling them to make Aquifer protection an agenda item was his very important thought. This led to the birth of forming a Bhujald dharak Samitee. Grampari will aim to raise awareness of the importance of Aquifer Protection and the simple concept that all the villages that are part of this committee draw their water from the same source. The protection of this water needed to be done with the cooperation of all the villages.

Initiatives of Change for Life (IFL)

While AP welcomed government officers from Odisha, Odisha welcomed The IFL team. IFL spent 10 days in Odisha, having been joined by Aunty Neeru and Uncle Chandreeshwar, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Padhee (Indian Administrative Services Officers). "We started with an interaction with around 50 participants from the education and tourism department who had been to AP," said Zooni. One of the participants shared how he was reintroduced to his inner voice. He said, he is going to listen to his heart from now.

The next stop in Odisha was the Youth Conference – *Prayas*. The purpose of spreading IofC was realized, despite being a smaller group. After the conference, the IFL team spent 2 more days with the coordinators to build deeper friendships and stronger networks. "Something new seems to be happening there now with the energy changed and a bigger purpose visible" added Zooni. The IFL team also visited the Konark Temple and Dhauligiri, two heritage sites in Odisha.



After Odisha, the IFL team spent a short time in Delhi where Jigme had organized an interaction with the Ladaki students from Delhi University. This was an opportunity for building new friendships and supporting Jigme's initiative, to expose his mates with an idea of IofC.

The IFL team is now in a small town called Bir, 2 hours from Dharamsala. Joined by interns from the last batch, Karma P and Wangyal along with former intern Tashi, the team is staying in Himachal until the 11th of April. They had 3 interactions in 2 schools so far. A reunion gathering with 7 of the former Tibetan interns was rejuvenating. After some time, they met amongst themselves have come up with an action plan. "We ended with singing songs and performing skits :) It was indeed an inspiring time for them and us" said Zooni. "Being in Deer park here in Bir has been a blessing. It is very much like AP, beautiful and serene. It is a learning center for Indian Classical traditions. Being here has provided us to have an hour long time of inner listening everyday."

Towards the end of the month, the IFL team was privileged to have a meeting his Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Stories of Change

I am Usha Ravindra Kharat, the typical Indian housewife, my greatest achievement was when I bought a cellphone for my husband from the money I earned through the work I do at Grampari, by the sale of the bags and blankets I stitch. Back home I also stitch dresses and sari blouses. Being here, has given me a sense of satisfaction, the bonding that is created as you meet people, talk in groups and share our stories, the empathy from my family here at AP makes me light-hearted. I used to be a shy person, preferred being alone and spent my free time sleeping, but working here, my self-confidence has improved, I am independent, I can now express my thoughts and share ideas.

Remember This, by Gaurav Sah, APVIP

“What is your dream?” Asked the old man.

“Dream! What dream?” Said the boy. “I’m quite awake Oh! Old man.”

“Look within and ask yourself, search for an honest answer.”

The boy thought for some time and said, “a dancer”.

Amused by this, the old man said, “you are up on the gate staring at the world, ask yourself again”

Irritated a bit, the boy said “privacy” then turned his head away from the man.

The old man laughed! “Privacy?”

“Yes. Privacy, do you mind!?”

The old man started walking but then he said, “make the most of this privacy, as you already have a vantage point”.

“Show that to the world. Share with them your privacy.”



Upcoming Events

Registrations are open for the following programs:

Education Today, Society Tomorrow:
May 2nd - 5th, 2015 [Click to register](#)

Annual Family Program:
May 6th - 9th, 2015 [Click to register](#)

Let's Make a Difference, Annual Youth Program:
June 1st - 8th, 2015 [Click to register](#)

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