



United States
Initiatives of Change
Caux Scholars Program



Asia Plateau 2017-2018

Since its inception in 1991 in Caux, Switzerland, the Caux Scholars Program (CSP) has graduated 550 students from more than 109 countries. The program has an engaged alumni network active in all fields - academics, politics, international organizations, grassroots initiatives, media and the arts. Initiatives of Change USA, which administers CSP, added a second location in India in 2013. The Caux Scholars Program - Asia Plateau is a three-week residential program offering a multi-disciplinary approach to conflict transformation, transitional justice, and principled leadership. This year a global network took part in the program December 20 - January 10. This is part of their story.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

After their bus slowly curved up the mountains of Maharashtra in Panchgani's hill station, the scholars stepped into the quiet and chilly fresh air. They had arrived at Asia Plateau—a picturesque 68 acre campus known as a melting point of cultural diversity, nationalities and religions. Eighteen scholars came from Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Philippines, Tibet, Nepal, India, Armenia, Kenya, Burundi, Uganda, Mexico and the United States and were partnered with roommates from different continents. Everyone came ready to learn and contribute drawing on their equally diverse experiences of advocating for indigenous peoples, the environment and underprivileged youth to working in major corporations, corporate social responsibility programs, faith-based institutions, higher education, research, writing, political journalism, and completing their undergraduate and graduate education.

CONNECTING THE HEART, THE HEAD & ON THE GROUND EXPERIENCES

The academic program blended classroom-based learning, delivered through various multimedia and interactive discussions as well as group work. CSP-AP's dynamic faculty, along with a number of guest facilitators covered a wide range of topics and specializations, including identity theory, conflict analysis,

"Managers manage things. Leaders bring changes."

- Dr. Amit Mukherjee, Guest Speaker

“There are always options, changes and possibilities in conflict. Never take no for an answer. If you cannot find options, create options.”

- Ashok Xavier, Academic Director



intercultural communications theory, sustainable development, traditional versus innovative development paradigms, the “do no harm” approach, cycles of aggression and victimhood, trauma and healing, restorative justice, change management, human rights, peacebuilding and self-care.

The scholars also became the teachers in what has become one of the seminal activities of the course, Conflict Where I Come From (CWICF). It allows each participant to research and offer analysis on a conflict from their respective contexts and local community, delivering a 10 minute, TEDx style presentation to their peers and course facilitators. From intimate personal struggles of identity to brutal civil wars and even disputes that transcended international borders, each scholar told of the conflict that had shaped their reality and thereby shared a piece of themselves.



True to the values of Initiatives of Change, the curriculum was grounded throughout in the four guiding principles of purity of purpose, honesty of character, unselfish behavior, and love for all. Incorporating theatrical role play was a crucial part of the experience as the scholars enacted a conflict between villagers, politicians, a private corporation and the media over resource allocation. Another two-day simulation was based on real-life experiences of war that included threats of violence, torture, poisoning, loss of jobs, drought, honor killings and a final peace process. The scholars took up arms, turning into presidents, militants, fishermen and farmers.

BUILDING ON A SPIRIT OF COMMUNITY

Jakhangaon is a village situated in Khatav Taluka (sub district) of Satara district of the Indian state of Maharashtra. This village is known for the way it mobilized the community to implement successful water conservation techniques. Jakhangaon Pattern, an innovative design of dams, originated from this very village and has been influential in water conservation practices.

As the scholars entered the school, where the first meeting with residents was arranged, the entire village came together to welcome them with applause, smiles, drum beats and traditional Indian namastes and tika, an anointing a red and yellow powder on the forehead. The scholars were humbled and delighted to receive



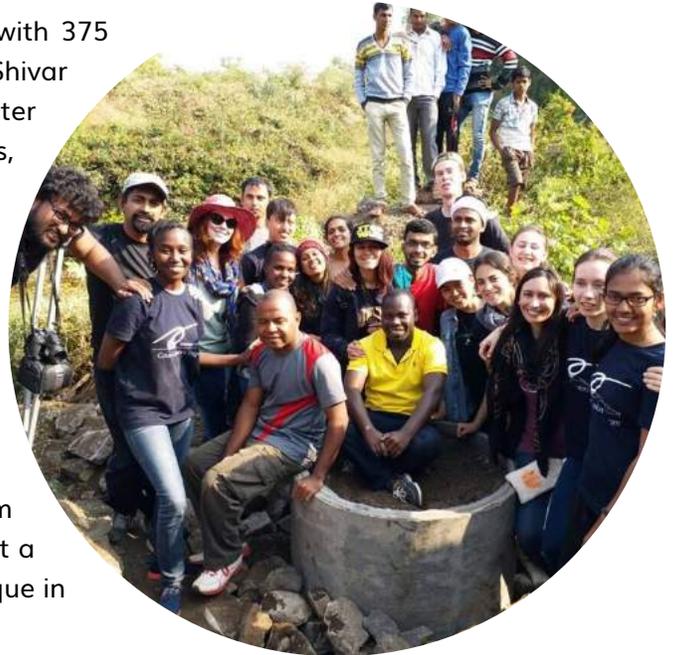
“The CSP-AP Program introduced me to a greater sense of my individual responsibility towards society and the world.”

- Keshab Dahal, Nepal



**"Jakhangaon Village proved that a problem is an opportunity for unity. The way the scholars were able to actively participate had a huge impact on us."
- Norbu Lhagyal, Tibet**

such extraordinary hospitality and were able to interact with 375 students from two schools. They were taken on a 'Shivar Feri' (trip around the village) where they toured various water conservation projects utilizing continuous contour trenches, earthen dams, soak pits, dams built with stones and nets. Only a few years ago there was a severe scarcity of water forcing the villagers to fetch water from a long distance which made it difficult for the farmers to irrigate their crops. With time and ingenuity, water has come to play an important role in bringing and maintaining peace and harmony in Jakhangaon. This field visit made a deep impression on the hearts and the minds of the scholars and served as a valuable balance to their time in classroom as they undertook 'shramdaan' (voluntary service) and built a soak pit to support the existing water management technique in the village.



PRACTICING THE DISCIPLINE OF A QUIET TIME

Taking time in morning reflection always meant an early start to the day for the scholars. Some described it as a "rude awakening" while others shared "it could be surprisingly difficult to sit there in silence." Ultimately, the daily practice, a cornerstone of Initiatives of Change, began to shape the CSP experience as a whole for scholars.

Deliberate quiet time practice had an immediate impact for Vijayendra Kadalabal who took part in the 2016-2017 program and served as the program coordinator this last session. When he returned to work with Tata Steel Rural Development Society, his colleagues challenged him by asking what he could offer to their office from his engagement with CSP-AP and IofC. They have subsequently started spending the first 15 minutes in the morning as a time to engage with each other in silence, reflect and try to transform from a group to a team to a family, in order to get the most out of themselves in the workplace. When he reflects back, he shares that the program has given his life a new purpose, his career a new rigor and his skills a deeper foundation through which he is able to contribute much more in the development sector.

"I learned that quiet time is about a journey, one that requires time, space and silence. The more deeply we enter into this journey, we gain greater vitality with which we can reach out to others and the world around us. The challenge now is to continue this exercise and through it deepen our awareness and appreciation of ourselves, our community and our world."

- Angela Miller McGraw, United States

"I loved the program, because it gave us the opportunity to interact and get to know incredible people from different cultures, religions and experiences, and to learn from them and share the tears and laughter of our complicated lives. I am so thankful to all the people that made this possible. I now see that the beginning of change has to start with me."
- Lorena Mier y Terán, Mexico

IN BETWEEN MOMENTS BUILD A GLOBAL FAMILY

Cultural sharing through extra-curricular activities forms an integral part of the CSP-AP program and this year it played a central role in both the learning experience and the creation of deep bonds within the CSP-AP family. Scholars and staff enjoyed everything from Hip Hop and Bollywood dance classes to documentary screenings to yoga, Tai Chi, and an entertaining culture night full of dance, song in native languages and traditional clothing. There was no shortage of enriching activities, many run by the scholars themselves. Christmas celebrations, complete with gifts and a visit from Santa gave scholars the opportunity to get to know the AP interns, and a two-day break in the middle of the program provided the scholars with a chance to venture beyond the walls of the Initiatives of Change Conference Center with sightseeing day trips to nearby Pune and Mahabaleshwar. A bonfire on December 31st, enjoyed with a global community of new friends, helped ring in the New Year, followed by an early-morning trek to the tabletop high above Panchgani where scholars shared the first sunrise and moments of 2018 together.



Thank you to the entire team of Initiatives of Change India for hosting our program and providing a place for personal restoration and transformation. We look forward to returning for the next session December 20, 2018 – January 10, 2019.
To request an application, please write: csp@in.iofc.org

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