



Building trust across the world's divides

Initiatives of Change

AP Newsletter - June 2015



*Greetings from
Asia Plateau !*

Editorial

The rains came pouring down in June promising a bountiful Monsoon. But alas! The clouds scattered away a week later leaving the farmers praying for rains which show no sign of a comeback. We feel guilty when we enjoy the beautiful weather and as I write, clear skies and bright sun have persisted. The meteorologists predict rains only from 25 July!

Our season at AP ended with a programme led by Sudhir Gogate for 70 energetic Class one trainee officers of the Maharashtra Civil Service –brilliant, noisy, responsive and very participative. At the valedictory, the Deputy Director of YASHADA Dr. N. Zurmure heard participants relate what the training had meant to them. A fine orator, he kept everyone glued to their seats with stories from the Mahabharata.

This newsletter carries two significant items –a remarkable book launch at Jamshedpur where some thirty tribal youth spoke, sang, put up skits to an overflowing audience. The Managing Director and his wife stayed for the entire three hours to everyone's surprise.

The second news is about the untiring work of training by IfL members in the North-East. They are leaving profound impact on participants. Inspired by what the sessions have done, several more Government departments and agencies are asking IfL for similar training for their people.

IfL's work with the Bodo students association is worthy of particular mention. The effect is that more and more are accepting non-violence as the only way forward for their agitation. IfL is still on the job; we will hear much more from them.

Shockwaves

Something that shook us to the core –at least it did me! Soon after the National Youth Conference, the Human Rights Lawyers Network (HRLN) had a huge convention at the centre. Over three hundred lawyers, mostly young, everyone bursting with passion and energy came from all over the country. Stirring speakers brought some of us down to earth with a thud. Often we settle down comfortably resting on the laurels of 'successful' programmes we have here week after week. The growing demand flatters us to thinking we are tackling the problems of the country. But are we in touch with reality? True, we are aware of them, we know the statistics of poverty, of farmer suicides, plight of the scavengers, human rights violations and Naxal terror. The convention speakers presented shocking facts so graphically and with passionate concern for the deprived that brought reality nearer home and close to heart. The lawyers thundered with anger but to be sure, had nothing more than agitation against the indulgent the powerful for an answer.

While the realisation of the magnitude and depth of reality shook us as it needed to, the power-packed 'Inner Governance' session was a refreshing new light to them. We were surrounded by activists keen to know more of how they could apply the ideas and participate in lofC. Lesson for us is to be actively involved *with real life situations in the field and on the ground* enlisting the passionate to join in.

- Dr.Ravindra Rao

Programs going strong

Month began with one of the most vibrant conferences of the year, the 21st Annual Youth Conference - Let's make a difference, about 170 attended the conference and were inspired to build better relationships based on the 4 standards.

The 10th grade boys of St. Peters School attended a day's programme led by Asha Varma, interactive sessions about virtual life (Facebook, Twitter etc) and respecting women were part of their IofC interaction.

290 Human Rights Lawyers were here for 5 days for a National Convention. The programme was conducted by an NGO called Human Rights Law Network(HRLN) for young lawyers and law students from different states. Well known speakers like Mr. P. Sainath, Teestha Setalwad and Anant Patwardhan delivered speech to participants.

The Heart of Effective Leadership programme was held in the middle of the month for Siemens India, PDKV, Perfect Relations Pvt. Ltd., Nirmitti Precision, Pragati Udyog and Neeraj Engineering. The course director, Hemendra Varma, when asked said, "Was Lucky to have an enthusiastic and energetic lot of participants who participated vigorously".

Participants from Skoda, Mercedes Benz, SKF India, Jusco, Husco Hydraulics, Pragati Udyog and Transasia Biomedicals attended the Effective Living and Leadership Programme.



During the last week, 67 Maharashtra State Civil Services probationary officers were here for a 7 day programme on Ethics in Public Governance as part of the Government's training programme for the new recruits into the state civil service. The participants were enthusiastic and involved in all the activities and sessions. Officers like, Smita Kulkarni, Deputy Collector of Sangli, who has been part of various programmes at Asia Plateau spoke about "Walk the Talk". Dr. Vinayak Nipun, Ex. Municipal Commissioner, Nanded, Maharashtra, currently Deputy Secretary to the Government of India, who has also been one of the participants and guest speakers at Asia Plateau spoke on "Participatory Governance". Anil Chopra, Vice President-CFO of a Business Unit at Siemens, spoke about Ethical Challenges and what are the response options.



- Parag and Stephania

Remarkable Jamshedpur!

TV Narendran releases a collection of 'transformation tales' of 35 rural youths



Jamshedpur, June 16: Tata Steel has been inculcating leadership values among rural youth in its areas of operation. The Steel giant has been supporting youth leadership training under Moral Re-armament (MRA), now known as 'Initiatives Of Change' and has reached out to over 3,500 youths in the last four years. The training is provided by resource persons from Jamshedpur as well as from Asia Plateau Conference Centre, Panchgani. As a fillip to this initiative, Tata Steel today organized a function to unveil 'ON THE ROAD to Initiatives Of Change' a book profiling humble youths playing agents of change in hinterlands of Jharkhand and Odisha. The programme was organised at Shavak Nanavati Technical Institute (SNTI), Jamshedpur. The book was unveiled by T V Narendran, Managing Director, Tata Steel India & South East Asia on Tuesday present as the Chief Guest on the occasion. The book,

authored by Ms Deepa Adhikari, features 35 youths who recognised their inner potential after being part of Initiatives of Change (IoC)-a Tata Steel-supported programme that intends to bring about positive changes in human behavior.

Referring to the youths featured in the book, Mr. Narendran, MD, Tata Steel, India & SEA said, "We need to learn a lesson on leadership from these young achievers. They are the leaders of tomorrow. If they continue to reach out to more people, the entire movement can change the country."

He emphasized that a cohesive culture to serve the community is also building up among the employees, who are voluntarily contributing towards community development. During the programme, some of the youth featured in the book shared their transformational journeys that were marked with trials and tribulations.

The function was also

attended by Tata Steel's Senior Management, including Sunil Bhaskaran, Vice President, Corporate Services, Tata Steel and Biren Bhuta, Chief, CSR Tata Steel. Elected representatives of the Government, Lakshman Tudu, MLA Ghatshila and Kunal Sadangi, MLA Bahragoda encouraged the youth to continue their efforts aimed at community development. Members of Jamshedpur and Panchgani teams of IoC, also popular as Moral Re-armament (MRA), including Kiran Gandhi and Chandraweshar Khan, addressed the gathering during the event.

Talking about IoC Mr. Kiran Gandhi said that the focal areas of IoC are trust building, ethical leadership and sustainable living. Moral Re-armament (MRA) is a worldwide network of women and men who have taken the onus on themselves to bring the changes they want to see around them. In 2001, the movement was renamed Initiatives of Change (IoC).

Invited to a special occasion by Tata Steel, June 16 this year, a senior national team of IoC was witness to a significant book launch event at Jamshedpur. The beautifully produced 'coffee table book' records the remarkable stories of tribal youth of Jharkhand and Odisha whose change is sweeping through the area. Tata Steel Rural Development Society (TSRDS) has been working with IoC to bring about a social change in the area through personal and community change. For the local IoC team this was a quantum jump and extension of their work in the villages around Jamshedpur for the last thirty years.

Two years ago TSRDS asked IoC to train and help rural youth become a positive force in their areas. Through this ongoing initiative the local IoC has so far conducted 90 workshops. These are 3-4 day residential programs for 50-60 persons in each batch, being trained in how to stop blaming others, take responsibility themselves, and then try to bring about a change in their villages. There are many inspiring stories of change leading to amazing transformation of the villages.

Tata Steel engaged a professional agency to visit the villages to research on the developments and record them in book form. Of the hundred stories they collected the most outstanding 30 were selected and published in a well-produced coffee table book with attractive location pictures. The book was released on June 16 by Mr. T.V. Narendran, Managing Director of Tata Steel who said how enjoyable and hope giving was to watch the presentations made by the tribal youth on the occasion. It made him feel that change would come to the whole country from the East. Sunil Bhaskaran, Sr. Vice President, thanking Mr. Biren Buta the chief of TSRDS for inviting him for the occasion, wrote how rare such an occasion was when one was so inspired. The audience included prominent political leaders of the state, bureaucrats, teachers, Mukhiyas, etc. One of them remarked how he was impacted by the 'inner inspiration' which the youth had emphasised as the power that changed their life.

Asia Plateau Volunteer Intern Program (APVIP)

The last month IFL team was back and we were really excited to hear about their experiences and challenges. 2 of us joined the IFL team for 19 days on their outreach to the North East of India. Anticipation and Excitement as 5 of us went to Akola, to visit PDKV University for a 5-day study and outreach program. It was an overwhelming experience, the warm-hearted welcome and the enriching training received was meaningful. After returning, it felt like time should come to a stand-still, with hardly 2 weeks left, we spent the days sharing ideas and co-creating activities, planned for the closing ceremony which was on the 29th of the month, the day was filled with tears and laughter, as we shared what this interns program and being in Asia Plateau meant to us. It was goodbye from Asia Plateau but promise of meeting again someday somewhere.

-Stephanie



Sabreena - Journey at AP gave me courage to travel the unexplored path, to discover the impossible and to conquer the problems and succeed. I learnt that joy is found not in finishing an activity, but in doing it.



Melanie - The internship was transformative, to say the least. Digging into deep wounds; being present and allowing them to resurface to heal and be released. But the work is never done. It is the beginning of a life long journey, for me. At the same time, I've made deep bonds with dear friends who I will cherish forever. Being in such a nurturing and supportive environment where I learn more about the balancing in giving and receiving; sharing and listening. I am grateful for this healing, support, and more importantly, finding further direction for moving forward in the world.



Anup - Coming to AP I have learned to be curious instead of judging anybody, "Everyone has a story", "Where God guides, he provides", I understand that people will come together when needed. I have learned to have faith in life. Before I had a body which I operated through to perform daily chores, but IofC has touched me deep within awakened strong source that has made me stronger to go ahead out of myself.

Noah: Meeting IofC is a blessing in blessings, being at AP is a blessing over blessings, is to open a door which leads to a fulfilling life where Quiet Time and four absolute values are incomparable tools that helped me to understand and connect to myself and I found where to correct and direction of life.

Thank you AP family much love.



Jitesh - before coming to AP I was working as a software engineer for more than two years in Pune. Have completed my engineering from electronics and communication engineering. and my time here in AP is very fruitful and a good experience. I have got many things to reflect about and AP has brought me closer to my real self. The learning is huge and now the challenge is how to implement all the things I have learnt.

Gaurav - Every man and woman is an island and I was happily living in my individual island. But after spending 5 months at AP, I learnt that it is important to come out of the island and to reach out to people, to be part of the main.



Jisun - The internship taught me a lot. I could have time to think again what I thought I knew, I could learn what I never known before. It has broadened me a lot so that I can explore the world with more passion and willpower. Furthermore so many people taught me how people around me can be a great source of power that make me do something. I want to become a better person and I believe I can.

Stephanie - The day I walked into AP, I felt as though I had been part of this forever. I have uncovered so much about myself, I have become more patient and less judgemental. I was able to be vulnerable, to share my story and to break knowing every person here would hold me both physically and morally. I now realise that "Our present is not a Result of our Past but a Vision of our Future".



Grampari goes to Tamilnadu



CASA, an organisation that supports a wide range of rural development and peace building activities across India invited two of our team members, Ganesh Pujari and Deepak Jadhav to run two training programmes in rural Schools around Erode, a small place near Chennai, to raise awareness about hand washing with Soap as well as the Tippy Tap. The eloquent feedback received from Florina Benoit (Director of CASA and Academic Director of Caux Scholars Programme Asia Plateau) and Jamie Green the project coordinator was very moving. Ganesh learnt the Hand Wash Song in Tamil!



Work has begun on drains in one of the Grampari Adopted Villages (GAV). It took many discussions, home visits and a powerful point presentation that displayed pictures of an ideal village alongside their own village which motivated the villagers to come together and begin this work. They were shocked to see a drinking water pipe



right inside a sewage drain. The villagers collected Rs. 25,000 which was matched by Grampari thanks to a donation from a well-wisher. All the work was done through shramadan under the supervision of Mr. Burkule our voluntary civil Engineer and Deepak and Vishal Bagade of Grampari. Whilst everyone talked about high quality work, when it came to putting it in practice everyone wanted to cut corners. We insisted on the best quality and kept redoing things. At the end of it the villagers were thrilled; not only had their drain been covered but this had resulted in a wider road. They now want to complete the rest of the work. We have done 150ft and there is 600ft of drains still to be covered.

- Jayashree Rao

Incredible IfL team



The month of June for IfL has been one with hectic travel, intense experiences, and enriching interactions.

The team readied itself on the 9th and set out by the Lokmanya Tilak Guwahati Express on a 46-hour journey to New Bongaingaon. Here we had the privilege of basing at ANT, a courageous NGO serving the people of Bodoland in Assam in various areas including healthcare, livelihood training and cultural and community leadership.

lofC has been associated with ANT and has done several training programmes for ANT staff in the recent past. This time ANT hosted our team to run a programme for leaders of the All Bodo Students Union (ABSU) from 13th to 17th June. ABSU initially was a group of violent separatists, fighting for Bodoland as a separate state. After much loss of life, sometime in the mid-90s the leaders came to the realization that violence would not bring a solution, and they adopted non-violence as their policy.

The program with the young group of about 40 people was phenomenal, with each person admitting to their faults and corrections needed in the very first session! There was immense sincerity in each who attended, and towards the end they worked in small groups to create an lofC module which they would deliver to rural groups.

Their young & inspiring leader, Pramod Bodo, has asked lofC to train 250 of his volunteer leaders in July-August in Kokrajhar, Assam, via five 3-day programmes with 50 participants in each programme.

From New Bongaingaon we travelled to Guwahati, to facilitate a 3-day lofC programme from 18th June with trainers and staff of State Institute of Rural Development, Assam. Although it was a difficult audience to interact with, as they would respond better to the senior person in our group and less to the younger IfLers, by the end of the programme there were some in the audience giving



their names to work with us. A. M. M. Zakir, Director of all of Assam's SIRDs, was touched by some of the sharing on the last day, including one young man who wrote a letter of apology to his brother for resenting him.

Resulting from this and earlier interactions, there is a request from the Assam government to train all the 219 BDOs of Assam, and Zakir himself is very keen to organize programmes for other groups, such as other departments under him, and schools in the Guwahati area.

On the 21st, it was time to move on to Tura in the Garo Hills in Meghalaya, where we were to base at SMELC till the 28th of June. This was a foray into uncharted territory – with our first programme being one with surrendered militants from the 22nd to the 24th. These interactions brought understanding about the pain suffered by many North-Easterners, and some reasons for militancy. Several of the young men shared thoughts of corrections needed in their own lives by the end of



the first day, and even came to speak at the next programme with up to 102 Meghalaya Government Officials from the 25th to the 27th.

The most inspiring outcome of this programme was a group of 30 deciding to meet on the 11th of July to form a group to work towards positive change in the Garo Hills, possibly with a theme of 'Garo Hills, I Care!' A group of young men and women working with the comprehensive Meghalaya Basin Development Programme helped us run both programmes, including interpreting English to Garo, and they became good team-mates by the end.

An added bonus was meeting with an old friend of lofC from the 1980s, Dr. Sujoy Hazarika, and sharing stories over a lovely meal with his family in his home in Tura one evening.

The final 3-day programme at the end of June was again in Guwahati, for senior government officials of Assam – a programme which turned out to be inspiring for both parties – lfl, as well as the officials.

All in all, June was an amazing month; we made a lot of new friends and people who would like to work with lofC to bring change in their region. It was abundantly clear that more and more groups want lofC programmes in the North-East, and somehow we need to find more people in the lofC network who are willing to give time to answer that call. The possibilities are endless, but at the moment it looks as if our resources are limited. Are they really? Should anyone who reads this feel that they would like to answer that call, and contribute to the building of a better North-East, and through that a better world, get in touch immediately!

-Aparna Khatri



