

PLUSTRUST. 004 Skyline Apartment, 548/3 Langford Road, Bangalore 25. www.plustrust.org. plustrust21 @gmail.com

Dear Friends and Well-wishers,

Warm greetings from Plustrust!

We are happy to reach out to you again through this Annual Newsletter, offering an overview of our work during the last year (August 2017-July 2018).

We are closer to realizing our dream of supporting those who wish to make a difference - starting at an embryonic stage and nudging them towards an entrepreneurial mode of work. Over this year, we witnessed *the graduation* of our second batch of Rural Women Edupreneurs (RWEs) and the commencement of the third batch. The RWE approach seems to work because of a few core elements which go together to nurture three strengths-- **Personal, Project and Professional strengths (3PS)**. We have been able to offer one individual fellowship to Dr.S.Ramya Devi of Tiruppur,Tamilnadu.

Smriti Kedia and Hardeep Kaur handled the first two batches of RWEs in Udaipur independently and have now been able to venture further afield. Girish Mahale, our alumnus from Pandhurna helped us with the RWE 2 batch and came forward to anchor a third batch in MP. Our RWEs Astha and Kirti in Bhopal stepped up to take care of the many details that went into organizing the workshop in Bhopal. Institutionally we see this as a very significant development in testing our strategy for spreading the RWE approach more widely. Many former fellows and RWEs have continued to help, spreading the word about our fellowships at the grassroots level and mentoring RWEs

Another new initiative is a workshop on improved care for goats and small ruminants in Narsipura Village near H D Kote, in collaboration with The Goat Trust and Jeevika Free. Building on this experience, we are collaborating with The Goat trust to develop a curriculum for children on caring for domestic animals.

We begin with the stories of our RWEs and fellows, which are indeed heartwarming



The RWE2 Highlights (2017 Batch)

We had introduced the RWE 2 batch in the previous newsletter and are happy to share that all except one of them have completed their fellowships. Many are moving forward with their ideas.

Madhya Pradesh

We were able to reach four RWEs in MP each with a very different idea.

An interest in creative ways of teaching and learning is the common element.

ASTHA AND KIRTI, Bhopal

They began their work for out-of-school children aged 4-15 years from migrant families in a Bhopal slum through their learning center "Aakar" with community support.

They identified a temporary habitation with no NGO presence, which is home to many children who missed out on schooling both in the city and in the village. Initially, children would run away and refuse to talk to them.

They persevered, using activities and games rather than directly talking about academics. Gradually the children themselves showed interest in learning to read and write. This gave the girls confidence they would gather the children under a tree or in the open and work with them.

The community was not supportive of their work initially. Kirti had to undergo greater stress and anxiety because her family was critical of her going to the slum during her pregnancy. Despite these challenges, they were able to make a difference to the children within a short while.

At the moment there is a lull because Kirti is blessed with a baby and Aastha is just married and settling into her new family. They plan open their own center and offer good quality education.

POONAM PARATE, Pandhurna

She enjoyed playing cricket as a child, but she had never heard of women's cricket. When she read some news about a girl from Bhopal playing cricket for the country, she felt inspired. She began playing in college and her talent was soon recognized. She played for her district, state, and university teams and went on to win best player awards and was given captaincy for the national open tournament. During this period she missed access to training facilities in her home town, Pandhurna.

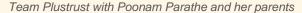
As a volunteer in Pratyaya, she began coaching girls in cricket. She has managed to get permission to practice in the police training grounds in the morning and evening. She now coaches girls in cricket and trains boys too and charges a small fee to cover her expenses.

For Poonam, the biggest turning point, came when she registered a mixed gender (girls and boys) team to compete in the cricket tournament organized in Chindwara Dt. The opening match of the tournament was between Poonam's team and all boys team. Subsequently, District sports officials are now organizing women's cricket matches regularly!

She applied for a Plustrust fellowship to set up Pahal Women's Sports Learning Academy. She has gained greatly in self-confidence and is in discussion with the local administration for space.









Lakshmi Evne with her Mentor Sandeep Mehto, her mother and enthusiastic little scholars

VARSHA MALVIYA, Itarsi

She is a teacher in a private school in Itarsi. She found that children in private schools face many challenges. She felt that it is important to work with the family and caregivers. She began with some activities for a group of 11 women who sent children to her school.

Varsha soon realized that the Mohalla she was working in was split into two camps and that women from one side would not go to the other. Undeterred, she came up with the idea of a sewing centre for the women. She thought this would provide a breakthrough because of their financial situation.

This worked and women began to come to learn sewing, bravely crossing invisible lines. Soon they began to visit each other and the hostility has decreased. Varsha gradually introduced themes related to education. The women began to realize their responsibilities tow

Varsha found the responses very discouraging at first. She also had to face some criticism for going out beyond regular school hours,

The importance of her work became evident, when parents began turn up enthusiastically for school meetings! She now plans to conduct workshops and activities for parents and children beyond school hours.

LAKSHMI EVNE, Hoshangabad

She was a keen student and succeeded in convincing her family to support her to study up to MA. Unfortunately, her father passed away and she has returned to live in the village and take up family responsibilities. She observed with concern that families continued the practice of stopping girls from school beyond Class 8.

She found that there were 65 out-of- school children. They were also lagging behind in academics, having to grapple with Hindi in school while they spoke Koruku at home.

She started teaching them, using creative methods and making learning enjoyable and emphasized the importance of education. Sharing her own story, she urged them to take responsibility for their education. Soon, children began to take an active interest. The families noticed improvements and approached Lakshmi with offers to pay for her efforts, being aware of her financial situation.

Lakshmi admits that she felt nervous, talking to children initially. She had to build her own self-confidence and move beyond these apprehensions. She has been working with 25 children for a year. She is keen to improve her center and motivate every child in the village to learn.







Varsha Malvia with her husband, Girish & Smriti

The RWEs from Kherwada

Rajasthan

Schooling Related Initiatives in Kherwada Distrct:

Southern Rajasthan has continued to be the strongest base for RWEs. We had four young women in Kherwada stepping in to work on School education this year.

MANJU PATEL

Manju Patel is a B.A student who runs a tuition Centre for school going children and a learning center for the out-of school children.

During her fellowship she established a good rapport with the primary school and community of Mokarwara village, where children from class 1 to 5 are managed by one teacher, who is unable to attend to the diverse age groups and give them quality education. She decided to work with these children through activities games and poems, focused specially on Hindi, English and Math. She also helped children to learn values and life skills such as mutual respect and tolerance, honesty / not cheating people and cleanliness.

Thought very shy initially, she gained confidence and became motivated when she saw children responding to her efforts. She applied many new techniques of learning, which children found very exciting. Both the parents and community appreciated her efforts and school staff supported her providing material for activities.



MANISHA PATEL

She is a qualified teacher with a B.A. and B.Ed. and runs a Centre "Kaliyon ki kilkari" in her village.

Manisha was an eager student and completed her formal education encouraged by her father. When she began teaching in a local private school, she noticed that some children seemed to fall behind because they could not attend school regularly due to family situations. She soon became more interested in teaching such children who needed it most. She gave up her school job to work with an NGO on menstrual health and hygiene for adolescent girls. These girls were not sent to school and were expected to manage household chores because the parents were away.

She took up a survey to understand the situation, but could not do much, given her own financial constraints. At the Plustrust workshop she gathered more ideas on how to engage with such children.

Starting with 10 children she now has 27 regulars at her centre. She understands children's expectations and offers craft, art and activities. Children who had hesitated to speak have now opened up. They have developed an interest in academics as well. Parents notice the change and make the effort to bring children to her center. She discusses the challenges faced by each child to come up with unique ways to help. She has enrolled the children in school and helps them by explaining lessons in the local dialect.

MONIKA PATEL and JAYNA PATEL

Monika and Jayna work as a team with government schools, to improve enrollment and retention of children in the 6-14yrs age group. They talk to parents, liaise with the school and meet teachers. They have formed a children's council and teach using fun-learning methods. Jayna recalls that she found it difficult to study in her school due to lack of teachers. Unfortunately she observes that children continue to face similar issues today.

Jayna and Monika want to provide a good learning environment for children in such schools and make learning fun, using different learning techniques. They have introduced games, craft work, art, theater and music to fit in with the school curriculum. They also give special attention to children having difficulty in understanding the lessons due to language barriers since most children speak a local dialect at home.

They have established a good rapport in Upla Thuriya village school with 85 children from classes 1 to 8. Thanks to their efforts, children who were frequently absent are now regular and take an interest in studies.

Community mobilization played a crucial role. To improve quality of education they started tuition classes in the evening especially for those children needing more attention. Parents are now more supportive of their children..



Rajasthan

Women's Empowerment and School Improvement

Dungarpur & Rajsamand Districts

SUNITA RAO

She is a B.A. student of Aspur in, Dungarpur district. Her maim battle is with the mindset of parents who are not ready or willing to send their children to school, Her village has a very high dropout ratio.

She runs an education center for the children and their mothers. She encourages mothers to relate to their children and enjoy learning together. She operates from a rented a space where 20 children and 15 women have registered. She uses different activities and methods to kindle their interest.

Her father supports her work and her family motivates her, as a result of which she has been able to challenge the strong caste divide and open her center to all. She has thus set a great example of non-discrimination for her community.

During her fellowship she was very flexible and eager to learn new things and gained in confidence. She established a good rapport with the community and gained the trust of women. They are all now interested to learn to read and write to support their children at home.

BHARTI JINGER

AND RATAN KUMARI SALVI

They worked together to develop and run resource centers for women offering basic literacy, awareness on government schemes, mobile phone usage skills and financial literacy. Topics were chosen based on the interest expressed. The centers became safe spaces for women to meet and talk about the challenges they face.

When the fellowship began, Bharti was a very shy person, acutely aware of her own lack of formal education. She decided to work for women with no formal education, with interest in learning... She taught women how to handle mobile phones and arranged for sessions on health, government schemes inviting other recourse persons. She gained a lot of confidence and showed remarkable willingness to learning during her fellowship.

Similarly Ratan Kumari, an experienced social worker, mobilized a group of 20 women from her village. She supported them to access benefits from different government schemes. With her support and encouragement 4 girls who had dropped out appeared in 10th exams and passed.



Science and Maths for Adolescent Girls, Roorkee, Uttrakhand

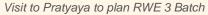
SHAMA PARVEEN

She has set up a tuition center in Mathematics and Science for girls in high school and secondary school. Starting with 10 girls, she now had 45 girls enrolled for her classes. She helps adolescent girls understand these subjects and motivates parents and the community to support education for girls. She also provides these girls exposure and aspiration for further education arranging visits to college campuses. She belongs to a Muslim community where education for girls is not encouraged. She was interested in education and her family supported her. When her father died she had to assert herself and continue with education, though her mother was worried. Her own experience prompted her to reach out to other girls of her community, helping them especially to understand maths and science. Her coordination, networking and communication skills were evident during the fellowship. She is now works full time and continues her science classes.

We seem to have lost contact with Tanmay Nair from Araria District, Bihar as she did not start on her project and has not responded to our messages. We hope we will hear from her again.

All Mentors for the batch were former Plustrust fellows, Girish Mahale and Sandeep Mehto for fellows in MP and Dipika from the first batch of RWEs for the fellows from Kherwada. Trustees visited the fellows in their place of work and to better understand the challenges and the strengths. Smriti Kedia and Hardeep Kaur worked closely with the entire batch. We realized that the mentoring arrangements have to be more effective and we are working on it.







An activity in the RWE 3 retreat



The RWE3 (July 2018)

We announced the third batch in January 2018 and received 135 applications. 22 were invited for the workshop. Applicants came mainly from Bihar, MP, UP, Maharashtra and Rajasthan we offered the initial workshop at Bhopal. The selection was supported by our scoring system and tracking framework developed with inputs from our fellows and we received 20 proposals. We could finalize 12 fellowships.







RWE 3 Workshop with multiple activities and an Educational tour of Bhopal Tribal Museum



The Plustrust retreat was organized in Bhopal from 14th to 17th March 2018. We are very thankful for the enthusiastic support from the Plustrust Alumni in MP. Girish Mahale stepped up to take on the role of batch anchor. Astha and Kirti based in Bhopal managed the details of coordination. Tousif and Gauray, were volunteers and supporters, brought in by Girish.

The Sophia Akash Foundation (SAF) continued its advisory support to Plustrust. Mr. Shailendra Patel and Ms. Harriett Ingall observed the Plustrust Workshop for from 14th- 17th March 2018 at Bhopal to understand the fellowship model. They observed and understood the workshop deliberations despite language constraints. They also had the opportunity to talk to the participants and many of our former fellows and RWEs. Based on the observations they offered us an institutional review of Plustrust which has been very useful for us.

Several RWEs and fellows from the earlier batches joined the workshop sharing their stories and participating enthusiastically in the learning sessions. We were able to invite inspirational guest speakers like Dr. Ramnarayan Syaq and Mr. Dulheshwar Raot of Samavesh Society for development. The visit to the tribal museum was a highlight. Of the 20 applications received after the workshop, 12 were selected using the scoring process we have developed during the year. Team Plustrust visited each of the shortlisted applicants to understand their work and linking them with relevant mentoring and skill building opportunities.

The RWE 3 Batch Profiles

1	SHAILA YADAV Aundh Satara, Maharashtra	Works with the Kolhati tribe (nomadic entertainers and acrobats) on education. Hailing from the same community she did not get any support for education. She is keen to help her community now, and would like to work with children who are out of school to enroll them in regular schools.
2	VARSHA ASHOK MALI Kolhapur, Maharashtra	Completed her education from TISS with financial help from the community and is now reaching back to children in her village, who have dropped out of school. She will run a resource center, covering science, reading, writing, life skills. She hopes to reach every child in the village.
3	MEHRUN SIDDIQUI Chatrapur Madhya Pradesh	Works on child protection, especially for vulnerable children exposed to risks associated with tourism. She identifies drop outs and runs a center to educate re-enroll them in school to stabilize there. She was shunned by society when she began, but has held steady despite challenge
4	DR. MINAL KADWE Pandhurna Madhya Pradesh	Practices homeopathy and is concerned that the topic of reproductive health is not properly taught in schools. She plans to develop teaching and learning materials and build a core group of resource persons. This team will conduct sessions on reproductive health for students



<i>5</i> , 6	SADHNA AND ARUNA DHRUVE Khalwa Madhya Pradesh	They work as a team with the Koruku community on education in schools and skill building for children . Sadhna is keen to spread awareness about the importance of education by setting up a library for both women and children at Riched kheda village. Aruna, has faced extreme poverty in her childhood and completed her education thanks to her brother. She now wants to work for children in similar straits.				
7	DWARKA KATARE Khalwa Madhya Pradesh	She works on education, with Koruku tribal communities with focus on women and children. She wishes to work on reading materials in the Koruku language. Dwarka sees Koruku women suffer with no employment or livelihood. She dreams of a center for mothers and the children.				
8	VIBHA DEVI Muzzafarpur,Bihar	Runs a learning centre for children not in school to provide quality education and life skills. Vibha discovered her love for teaching when she was identified to be a teacher when she worked in an NGO. Now well into her fifties, her passion encouraged us to support senior womenr, overcoming our ageism!				
9	ASHA RANI Patna, Bihar	Runs Priyadharsini, to build awareness on education and life skills in an urban slum and offers teacher training. Asha set up her organization in memory of her daughter and runs it with great dedication with personal resources. With Plustrust support, she will be able to stabilize and sustain the initiative.				
10	INDIRA DEVI Muzaffarpur, Bihar	Works with children in her community to improve their learning levels and offer them a space to engage beyond books. She has mobilized community and local government support her work, and brought women together for mushroom cultivation. Indira has rich experience of working on women's issues.				
11	REEMU KUMARI Jaunpur , Uttar Pradesh	Runs a coaching centre called "Nayi Taleem" with a focus on children from Muslim and Dalit communities. The children neglected and get no support or encouragement from the adults to do well in school. Reemu wants to address this situation at her center.				
12	KUMARI KOMAL Udaipur Rajasthan	Hails from Bihar and works with women and youth. Her main emphasis is on establishing micro enterprises and working with youth groups, especially aged 13 to 16 years on design thinking for non-cognitive skill development. She hopes that this will lead to a decrease in child labor and migration.				



Wild flowers-Reconnecting with Nature

S Ramya Devi from Tiruppur, Tamil Nadu has recently completed her Ph. D from JNU on the theme of Alternative Education, specializing in curriculum development and testing. Inspired by her research, she has conceptualized a series of workshops for children, parents and teachers and approached Plustrust for support initially. She wants to bring education closer to nature and teach academic subjects creatively, making it activity based and life oriented. She wishes to reach out to teachers and parents introducing them to these approaches. She is also keen on conducting various workshops on arts, craft and games for the overall development of children. Her fellowship began in July 2018 and Prof Avijith Pathak from JNU will be her project mentor.





Ramya conducting her first workshop as part of wildflowers

The Meka Mitra Goat Care Project

We have been exploring possibilities of taking the lessons from RWE to work on animal welfare. A promising opportunity presented itself when were introduced to the work of Goat Trust, Lucknow. We found that Jeevika Free, an organization working on rescue and resettlement of bonded labor in Karnataka, is looking for inputs on goat farming for their SHG members. We could organize a four day workshop in the Narsipura village near Sargur and 26 women participated enthusiastically. Beginning with the importance and benefits of improved care practices, the team from Goat Trust, Dr.Sanjeev Kumar and Dr Ashish took the group through a series of activities to demonstrate preparation of feed, herbal medicine and the use of basic medicines and vaccination. The whole effort was coordinated by Ms. Ramya Srinivasan (a B Com student), an Intern at Plustrust. She approached us to volunteer on animal welfare and



was interested to explore animal welfare issues in rural areas. Ms. Padma, former Plustrust fellow, stepped in as translator and facilitator, visiting Wardha to understand the work and join us for the workshop as facilitator and translator. It was a happy coincidence that the workshop started on May 8th 2018, Plustrust Day and we hope this augurs well for the future.





Goat trust workshop - making of nutritious goat feed.

Ms. Padma & Dr. Ashish conducting the session

The Emerging Fellowship Model

We have been able to conceptualize our fellowship selection process with greater clarity, involving a three step decision making process with critical parameters as summarized below.

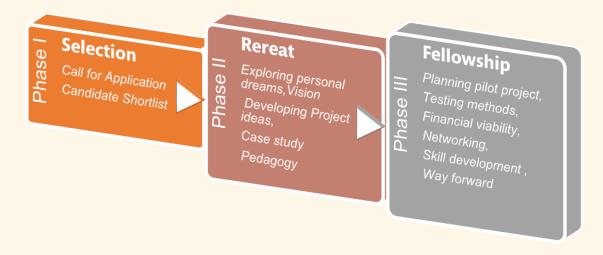


Figure 1: RWE: Three Phases



We now have a sorting system for applications and an assessment framework for capturing and understanding the progress of each fellow. Phase IV (Post Fellowship Support) is slowly emerging - this includes aspects like guidance and mentoring after the fellowship, support for finding other fellowships / funding agencies as well as developing alumni as anchors / mentors.

POST FELLOWSHIP SUPPORT

We share two examples of Phase IV support during the year

New Voice Foundation Hyderabad was set up by Ms. Padma and her husband D Balaji to promote skills and employability for urban poor. They have been successful in establishing skill building centers in urban slums to teach women tailoring. Plustrust helped them with introductions to Caring Friends and Sophia Akash Foundation. The inputs on their business model from Sophia Akash proved helpful and the New Voice is now able to provide income generation opportunities to women who have been trained by them.

Freedesign Bangalore was set up by Abhinav Dey to apply rapid prototype development methods to rural livelihoods and agriculture. Initially Abhinav and his partners came to discuss their plans and their dilemmas around presenting and positioning their work. They identified the types of organizations they could reach and the messaging on their value proposition to clients. Our support to them has been mainly in the form of discussions, guidance and networking support.

The RWE "Story So Far"

The opportunity to walk with 22 RWEs from the batches of 2016 and 2017 has been an eye opener, inspiring us to strengthen our program. We have ample evidence to substantiate our belief that a little bit of support at the right time motivates young women to develop their selfconfidence and skills. They are able to develop innovative approaches and solutions to local issues, especially in education, accessing their innate grit. We learnt about the importance of trusting their intentions, understanding local context through field visits team and offering appropriate mentoring support. The short span of engagement (6 months) seems to keep up the pressure and push fellows to achieve their objective and spur innovations.

To gauge the effectiveness of the fellowship process, we have developed the 3 PS framework (Person- Project- Professional Strengths).



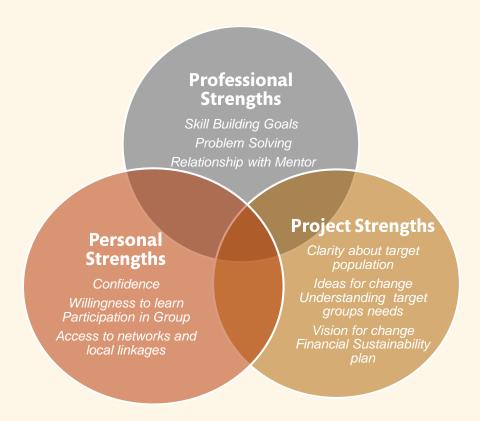
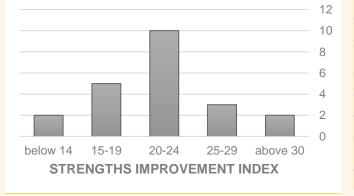


Figure 2: 3 Ps framework

To assess the progress, two trustees independently used the P3 scoring sheet to measure the change we noticed in our fellows over the fellowship period.

		No of	No of	Strengths Improvement Index (% to maximum score in the category)			
	Year	Fellowships	RWEs	Personal	Project	Professional	Overall
2016		8	9	17.3	21.5	22.2	20.3
2017		12	13	18.2	20.4	24.3	20.6



Range	No of RV	<i>NE</i> s		
	2016	2017	Total	
above				
30	1	1		2
25-29	3			3
20-24	3	7		10
15-19		5		5
below				
14	2			2
	9	13		22

Figure 3: Strengths Improvement Index – Frequency Distribution



We found a clear link between the gap in mentoring arrangement in situations where the fellows did not fare well (Index below 15). The analysis will be used for process improvements and certainly not to rank or judge the performance of a fellow. We offer stories of two of the fellows from the first batch, RWE1, as examples of how the fellowship has shaped their work.

DIPIKA KUNWAR, RWE I 2016

When she attended the Plustrust workshop in 2016, she enjoyed the many new elements and understood the progress made by others.

She identified the need to work with the government schools. She persevered despite initial resistance, and gained in confidence and understanding. To gain entry into a government school, she approached the BEO. Quizzing her on what she planned to do, he grudgingly allowed access, declaring that class V students cannot be spared. She found herself in class 1, with 70 children. She clearly saw the problems children face, but could not explain these to the authorities. She taught them mainly through activities.

She reactivated the SMC explaining the role of SMC members to get them to participate fully. Visiting the families, she asked them to share their problems and concerns. When a meeting was organized, 120 people participated! The teachers too began to appreciate Dipika's initiative. She continues her work with schools and is mentoring some of the Plustrust RWEs from the next batch, asking the right questions without pushing her mentees to do things her way.

Dipika was able to complete her MA, enroll for her B Ed and learn the basics of computers, besides qualifying as an LIC agent. She now dreams of opening a child friendly school, drawing inspiration and support from her husband.

SIMMI, RWE I 2016

Simmi worked with the children in the primary section of the school run by her husband Afaq Ullah. At the Plustrust workshop she was very excited by the learning activities, discussions and field trips.

She began using these activities, though nervous at first. Children greatly enjoyed it all and learnt quickly with enthusiasm. However they lost interest when the same activities were repeated.

She therefore registered for a teacher training course on preparation of teaching and learning materials (TLM). She overcame her hesitation to speak English even though she understood the language quite well. She began using what she learnt and sharing it with other teachers too. She now works with children of laborers and migrants taking volunteer support from MSW students.

Simmi's example has inspired young women, and families have begum permitting daughters and daughters-in-law, to join her to work with children.

Taking up a topic, she teaches maths, science, art, history, English through a holistic approach. The children learn on their own, using wood blocks, creating new games with leaves, toys with mud and using material presented in their own ways.

Simmi and Afaq Ullah, her spouse, applied for the WIPRO Seeding Programme for Educational CSOs. The Plustrust team worked closely with them to sharpen focus, develop overall vision and improve their presentation. They have been selected for this fellowship and will be supported by WIPRO foundation for three years



Supporters and Collaborators

The generous support from Caring Friends, Mumbai and M Ramaswami, Singapore has continued. Other kind donors include, Arvind Gupta, Nirmala Krishnamurhty, Dharmamabal, Lakshmi Radhakrishnan and Sharanya. We have made little headway in accessing funding more support despite many interesting conversations.

We were able to develop cordial relationships with Jeevika Free and The Goat Trust. The Wipro foundation team has shown keen interest in our work and we are exploring opportunities for skill development for our fellows with them. Sophia Akash Foundation has been in an advisory role and helped us strengthen our processes.

Our former fellows have taken up the role of mentoring the RWE fellows and offering skill building and nurturing support. Pratyaya EduResearch Lab has been instrumental in supporting and building the RWE model. Girish Mahale, Dipika Kunwar, Sandeep Mehto, Lewitt Somrajan, Navendu, Abhijit Sinha have all offered us support.

We gratefully acknowledge our interns and volunteers Sayli, Ramya, Padma, Pradnya, Tousif, Yogesh, Roshan, Pramila. We also thank Dr. Ramnarayan Syag and Mr. Dulheshwar Raot of Samavesh Society for Development and Governance.

Future plans

To increase and diversify our RWE outreach, we intend to develop anchors who can spread the model. We will be exploring partnership with The Goat Trust to develop a curriculum on animal welfare for our RWEs. We also wish to strengthen our skill building support and mentoring support we offer to our fellows, hence we are exploring networking with local organizations to support RWEs. We seek your continued support, guidance encouragement in the coming year as we try to build the next phase of our work.

With best Wishes.

Team Plustrust

16th October 2018

