



Plustrust News 2016



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

Dear Friends,

Greetings from Plustrust!

We are happy to share the highlights of the year August 2015-July 2016. This year we were able to work closely with our batch of 10 fellows starting July 2015 and continue our support to Rela Platforms. Shri Nimesh Sumati and Caring Friends have made this possible and we are deeply grateful. Now for some details...

FELLOWSHIPS

It was energizing to work with a larger group and we discovered more about the grit and enthusiasm required for starting off social enterprises. It was gratifying to see the earnest efforts put in by our fellows to implement their ideas. We are now sure that we can comfortably handle a batch of 10 to 15.

Mentoring and field visits were very exciting for us. The Plustrust Retreat (held in Bangalore in May 2015) has proved impactful and the networking and friendships initiated there have continued.

We are proud of our fellows who have since gained accolades. We congratulate Lewitt Somarajan (Plustrust fellow, Pune) on his being awarded a fellowship from Ashoka foundation.

We are very proud of Kushal (participant in 2015 workshop and associate of Abhijit Sinha, Plustrust fellow, Banjarpalya) who has made it to the Ashoka youth venture programme.

We are happy to note that there is a fellowship ladder supporting social entrepreneurs as they grow in scale and impact. We still find very few projects on animal welfare. We would like to stay close to the ground and spread out to reach remote locations.

Karnataka

The fellowships we were able to offer in Karnataka emerged from the introductions we received from Baduku College and Samvada and we are grateful for their timely support.

Sajid Ali (Kalburgi, Karnataka) wished to offer vocational education for young people struggling to find their feet. He has started his enterprise Rotte, to serve youth from disadvantaged backgrounds during the fellowship period. He had to resolve the conflict he faced in charging fees from his students. He now enrolls a few students needing financial support in each batch and generates income from other activities and in this process he has become self-sufficient.



Sajid says *"It (Plustrust) helped me to stand firmly on the ground. Because of its support and inspiration I can now earn Rs.200 to 300/ per day...My fellowship ended this month. But my life's journey to success has just begun"*

Siddiah (Mulbagal, Kolar Dt) is passionate about reaching out to school children and shaping their perspectives and aspirations. He launched a computer learning center from his home for poor children drawn from local schools, training them in basics of computing and English.

He has worked with them on life skills and created practical experience in day to day activities. He now looks forward to move to a larger space and combine other services to sustain his business model. He plans to introduce video editing, interior design, DTP Photoshop and other training programs, besides tuitions for SSLC and PUC students.

He and his friend Nagaraj now visit government schools and train students in basic computer education, charging a small fee. The fellowship allowed him to incubate his dream.



PIC : Siddiah & his team at Mulbagal

Rosemary and Daligappa (Ramnagara) worked with ten rural schools in their district, propagating the idea of kitchen gardens to improve the nutritional value of midday meals in schools.

They formed a good team visiting schools each week and involving the children in the gardening activities. In addition they were able to gather details about the supply of grain and other materials under the mid-day meal scheme. They have been able to mobilize contributions such as seed and saplings for different government agencies and involve the cooks and helpers in the schools in maintaining the gardens particularly during vacations.

Rosemary and Daligappa concluded their work in March 2016. Rosemary has decided to return to activism and street theatre. Daligappa is now working for another NGO, continuing his community development work.



PIC: A flourishing Government school garden

MADHYA PRADESH

Itarsi has continued as a hub for us thanks to the enthusiasm of Sandeep Mehto and Ayesha Pathan, our alumni.

Girish Mahale (Pandhurna, Chindwara Dt) is eager to transform the ecosystem for education and improve the quality of the teaching learning process in government schools especially in science.

During the fellowship period, Girish could identify and work with college students, inspiring them to develop activities and projects in science and civics. The approach is being introduced in the state run welfare hostels to start with.

In the meanwhile Girish is able to take up other advocacy work and projects in Government schools in the state. Girish was well set on this path with his earlier experience of changelooms fellowship and our fellowship helped him sustain the momentum while looking for larger quantum of support.



PIC: Girish at work with a group of students

Navendu Mishra (Seoni) is convinced about the need to create awareness about political systems, democracy and governance among high school children.

These aspects are often ignored as the focus narrows down to marks and admissions. As part of his fellowship, Navendu organized workshops in high schools and junior colleges in his district. Over 6000 students participated enthusiastically, engaging in dialogue and debate about the political system in our country and the role of youth.

Awareness about environment was also an important sub-theme. Above all the workshops were opportunities for open sharing and discussion. Navendu continues this work along with his interest in ecotourism and school development. He has been able to inspire a team of dedicated young grassroots activists.



PIC: Navendu at one of his sessions

Brajesh Patel (Itarsi) worked in Itarsi with children in urban slums, encouraging them to continue with school and education. He persisted despite issues like competition from other NGOs and lukewarm response in the first location he entered.

He could quickly identify another area where the community was supportive and built up his resource center. Starting with basic issues like personal hygiene, regular school attendance and health, he was able to offer many interesting activities to attract children and kindle their curiosity.

He could generate local contributions to support the work. However, he decided to close down the center because of viability and longer term funding issues and return home to Hoshangabad where has launched a similar work in his spare time.

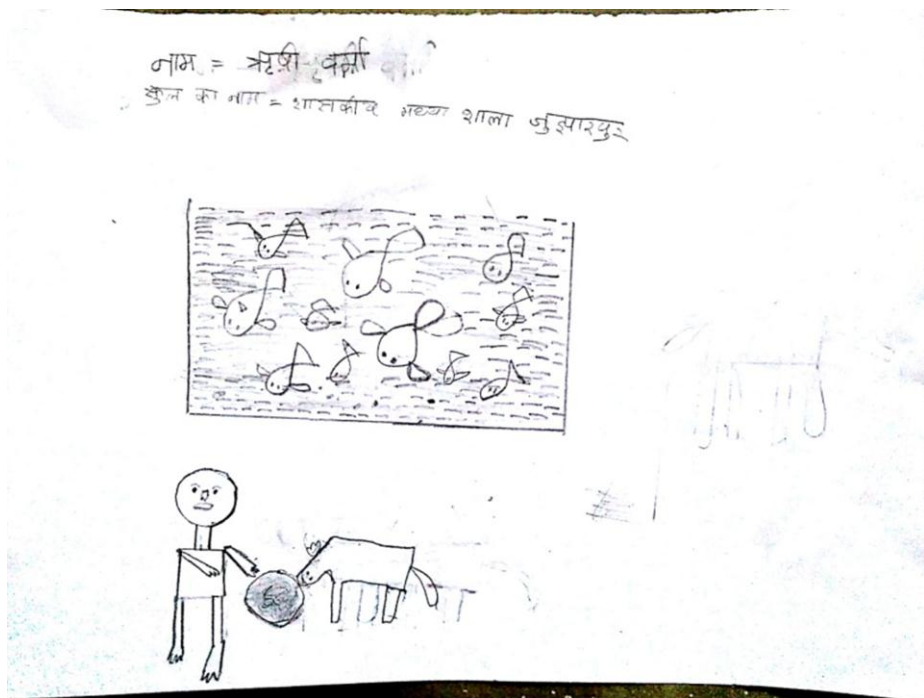
Satya Prakash Chouhan, (Itarsi) took up the challenge of sensitizing farming communities and building a more compassionate attitude to farm animals.

Initially it was hard going. He came up with the strategy of first reaching out to children and through them reaching the elders in their families.

He has organized local events and roped in veterinarians to address the challenge of changing mind sets. He has been trying to demonstrate that kindness and compassion leads to increase in dairy productivity. He also plans a video filming project to generate visual material to create better impact. He is not yet ready to form an organization or dedicate himself fully to this issue, given the low level of local interest and financial support.



PIC: Brajesh Patel celebrating Diwali at Ojha basti



PIC: A child's drawing on animal welfare inspired by Satya Chauhan

THE METROS

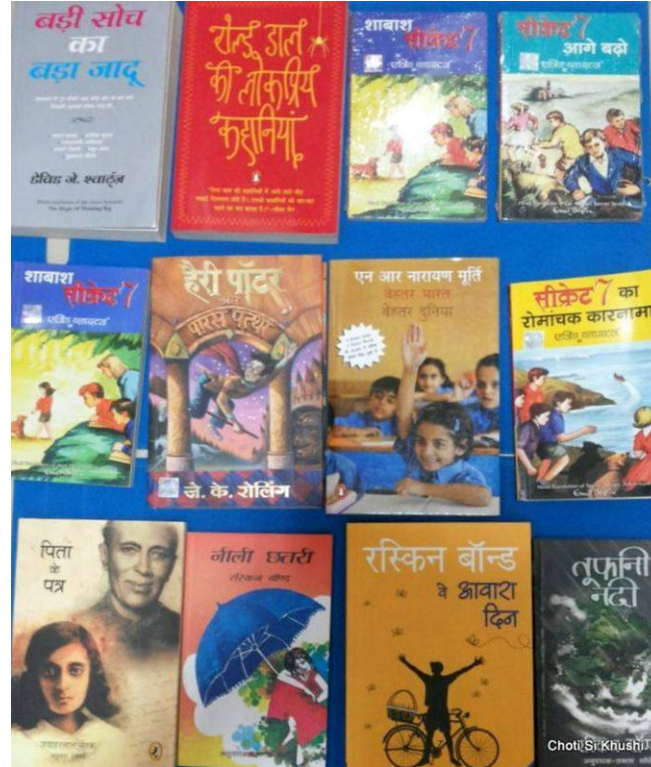
Our online presence continues to reach the net savvy who are interested and we had two projects from metros.

Seema Joshi (Dwarka, New Delhi) is committed to the wellbeing of girls in her neighborhood. She uses public spaces like parks and community centers. Her band of women volunteers work regularly with women and girls in schools encouraging them to come together and support each other.

The women are supported in learning new crafts and the little girls explore interests like craft, theatre music and sports. In the course of her fellowship Seema set up her organization Choti si Kushi and generated local funding and sponsorships for her activities. With the team and activities in place, she resumed her full time job for personal reasons. For her, the Plustrust fellowship was the first formal acknowledgment of her inclination to work on social issues.



PIC: Choti Si Khushi Activities in the park



PIC: Choti Si Khushi collection of Books

Dr Chetan Deepak Nerkar (Mumbai) recognized the need for special education in the course of his practice as a counsellor and doctor. He has gained the confidence of the teaching team in a government aided school catering to poor children in his neighborhood. Working with nearly 30 children in the primary school he has been able to develop teaching and learning material in Marathi.

He hopes to spread the use of this material in more schools and create interest among teachers. He plans to develop material in other local languages like Urdu. Chetan says the fellowship has broadened his vision and thoughts and expanded his network. He is working to achieve financial stability with CSR support and is working to adapt technology for special education.

QUALITATIVE ASSESSMENT

We found that the entire batch worked with deep empathy for children and the community. They stayed committed to their chosen endeavor and showed flexibility when faced with obstacles. Regular conversations were a lifeline, and often we needed to remind fellows about their monthly report. Over the six months we found improvements in the details and timeliness of reporting in most cases. Over the six months they could enhance clarity about goals and enlarge their networks.

Most of them have work to do to strengthen financial systems and viability/ sustainability. Networking has been an area which took its own shape. For example we find that some of our fellows are working closely together. Many of the fellows are moving out of their locality and connecting up with likeminded people across the country. While this was exciting and energizing, building networks locally especially with those not exactly aligned in thinking continued to prove a challenge. We hold this to be a key factor in expansion or scaling up. We were able to visit the work of all the fellows between November and December 2015. In three instances we requested a fellow located nearby to visit the work. These proved very useful for us and the fellows as they were on the threshold of planning their way forward.

As we write the newsletter we are happy to learn that Girish and Navendu are working actively together in improving science education in schools. Siddiah is planning to expand his work into Kolar and Sajid has taken on e-seva related activities. Chetan continues his work and is looking for expansion avenues. Seema seems poised to return full time to her calling and Brajesh and Daligappa are working with other NGOs. Rosemary had revived her theatre group.

BEYOND FELLOWSHIPS –THE RELA EXPERIENCE

With encouragement from Caring Friends we supported Rela in expanding their scope of work. For Rela the period following the workshop was useful in exploring options to reach children in government schools. The plan to work with the Ashram school hostels was finalized. The Rela team had to struggle with health issues, finding team members and maintaining regular schedules with the children and trying to track their progress systematically. Based on the experience of the academic year the team has decided to change their approach significantly. Given the experimental nature of the work at this stage we have concluded the earlier phase of support to Rela. We are happy we could be with their work for nearly two years and look forward to their progress.

We are however not sure that we wish to get into programme implementation, especially because it involves resource mobilizing on a larger scale and closer follow-up and monitoring. Our current preference is to stop with concept incubation support.

PLANS FOR THE WAY AHEAD

Smriti began exploring the possibility of batch of women edupreneurs in Udaipur and we are looking forward to our programme in Udaipur be end August. We hope to attract around 25 to 30 women based in rural areas for our retreat. From this batch we anticipate that we may have a cohort of 10 to 15 women working on support services for education in their locations.

Charu Bhati has joined Smriti to work with the planned new batch. We welcome her and look forward to her long association with Plustrust.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Lalitha and Padma were involved in the assessment of the Nanhi Kali programme for Naandi and KCMET in November –December 2015. This opened our eyes to the possibility of improving the ecosystem for education in remote rural locations, by encouraging the emergence of rural edupreneurs.

Shanti continues to informally support cancer patients and families. In May 2016 Lalitha and Shanti worked on the induction process for young professional in AP Government. Lalitha was also invited to facilitate a vision building workshop for R &D in Sri Venkateshwara University Thirupati.

Smriti's work on life skills and health education for adolescent girls is taking root in Rajasthan and spreading to other states like Bihar. She has resumed her involvement in organizing the Jagriti Yatra as well.

Tito Chandy of Third Umpire has been a staunch ally, getting our website going and encouraging us to test crowd funding for our school garden project. We look forward to trying more of this with his guidance.

We continue to enjoy unstinted support from M Ramaswami, Singapore, M Prasanna Venkatesh, Dubai, Sharanya and Vanaja Muthukrishnan, Bangalore, all family members. For the next batch we are considering online fund raising as well.

We seek all support and encouragement for our plans.

Team Plustrust