

September 2017





# PLUSTRUST NEWS

## Greetings from Plustrust!

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The highlight this year (August 2016-July 2017) is the launch of our Rural Women Edupreneurs Fellowships spearheaded by Plustrust Udaipur.

We have just completed a batch of 9 fellowships (December to May 2017) and have initiated the next batch of 14 fellowships starting July 2017.

With this experience, team Plustrust is confident that the design we have for the retreat and fellowship batch is effective and replicable. We are delighted to share stories from the pilot batch.

## Plustrust Retreats (August 2016 and March 2017)

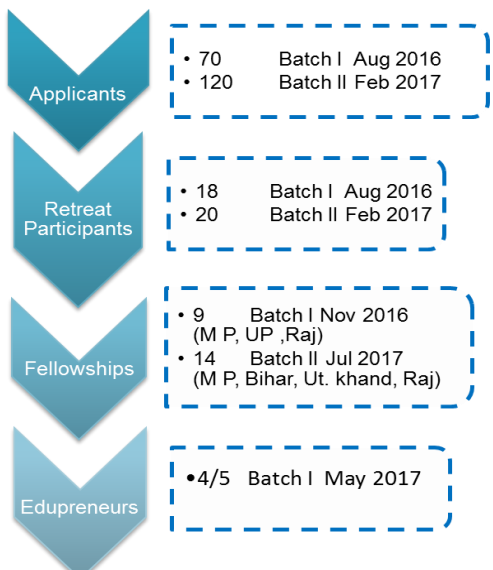
SMRITI KEDIA and CHARU BHATI worked with tremendous enthusiasm and an innovative approach to find potential women candidates for not just one but two retreats! They leveraged their association with local NGOs and met grassroots teams to explain the Plustrust fellowship model, differentiating it carefully from a job or a volunteering opportunity.



Smriti Kedia & Charu Bhati spearheading the Plustrust Udaipur Chapter

We were thrilled when we received 75 applications from across the country within 15 days of the announcement of our fellowships in July 2016.

Most candidates came to know of us through NGO staff or volunteers or former Plustrust Fellows. Online sharing through networks like Jagriti Yatra proved useful too. For the first batch, 19 women (10 outside Rajasthan) were selected and 18 of them actually attended the workshop.



Rural Women Entrepreneurs (2016-2017)

We felt deeply honored when two women made the journey from Bhopal, M.P and Faizabad, U.P with toddlers in tow! The next batch was announced in February 2016 and drew a response of 120 applications. We selected 20 candidates from 6 states (Madhya Pradesh, Manipur, Rajasthan, Uttarakhand, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh) including a transgender activist.





Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch I - Retreat Participants

## Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch I (December 2016-May 2017)

We are proud to present the young women change-makers of our first RWE batch. All of them hail from rural communities and draw motivation from their personal experiences of challenges and barriers. They are optimistic, eager to establish their individual identity and tackle local issues effectively. Team Plustrust has worked closely with them, helping them develop a six monthly action plan, reviewing progress every month and visiting them once a month, besides phone conversations and introductions .

Fellowship amounts ranged from Rs 3500 to Rs 11000 per month and were based on the estimates furnished by the fellows. In most cases the duration of 6 months was deemed adequate. We present below a brief outline of the progress achieved in each case.



Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch I - Activities at the Retreat



Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch I - Field visit to Animal Aid NGO as part of the Retreat



## Learning and Guidance Women's Resource Centers

**ABHILASHA (22)** of Nichala Phala village in Kherwada ,Rajasthan works part time with a local organization. She has set up a guidance center for women in her village with her fellowship and offers inputs on life-skills, health and hygiene, tailoring and basic literacy. One challenge was to find a common meeting time convenient for all women and we are thrilled to see her smart solution. She roped in all her family members and they are now adept at sharing the material. Women drop in at their convenience and a family member available at that moment steps in to share information and guidance! Abhilasha has created display boards to present information on all these aspects.



Abhilasha, Nichala Phala, Rajasthan

The activity does not yet generate income and Abhilasha is exploring options. She has closed the center at the moment as she has enrolled for a computer skills programme with plans to resume her work with woman as well as adolescents shortly.

**SHYAMA VAISHNAV (30)**, Railmagra, Rajsamand District, Rajasthan, works in an NGO on women's empowerment. She has identified the importance of education for women who wish to contest in local elections. This is all the more critical after the recent rules that all contestants should have passed 10<sup>th</sup> class.



Shyama Vaishnav Railmarga, Rajasthan

She therefore is working towards a learning cum vocational center for women. She wants to specifically help them pass the 8<sup>th</sup> exam and then 10<sup>th</sup> class to qualify. Despite initial challenges, women have come forward to identify a venue for the center and agreed on timings which will work for most of them.

Panchayat members in the community have been helpful too. Her work is gaining momentum now and thanks to her efforts and encouragement, 3 women are preparing for the 8<sup>th</sup> class exam. She has not yet found any financial support and is exploring different possibilities.

## Good Practices: Examples from Women's Resource Centers

### FLEXIBILITY

- Timings to suit users
- Village meetings

### DEDICATION ,COMMITMENT

- Perseveres in spite of apathy / resistance

### ACCOUNTABILITY & SUSTAINABILITY

- Involves volunteers
- Sets clear learning goal eg pass 8<sup>th</sup> class

### EMPATHY FOR CLIENT

- Respects women's time constraints

### SMARTER APPROACH

- Develops charts and display materials

### NETWORKING

- Builds rapport Sarpanch / village elders
- Involves both women and men

## Academic Support Centers for children

**SONAL PATEL (19)** of Modiwasa B, Kherwara, Rajasthan is an undergraduate student and enjoys going to college. She wants to improve attendance and retention of children in her village primary school so that all of them can eventually go to college.

She approached the school authorities and gathered details of children who need additional academic support. She then approached the families of these children and talked to them about her ideas. She opened her center in the verandah of her home and was delighted to see 85 children on the first day!

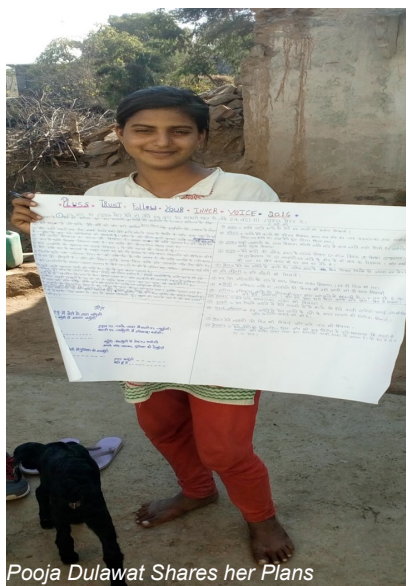
She formed two groups of school children based on age. The families could observe the benefits within a month. They began making small payments to Sonal and her fee collections have stabilized. Sonal is happy that she can support her own education from this eduprise. For the Plustrust team her center is indeed a proof of concept.



Sonal Patel , Offers Academic Support

**POOJA DULAWAT (18)** from Shiv Singh Ka Guda, Nedach, Nathadwara, Rajasthan fondly recalls her carefree childhood. Her aspirations were rudely shattered when her father died in an accident. Despite her own situation she was concerned about the children in her village. With her fellowship she has been able to set up a center for academic support.

She approached the Sarpanch who organized space for her center and gradually children started coming in. Through a variety of activities she has mobilized both tribal and upper caste girls to come together and created an effective learning environment.



Pooja Dulawat Shares her Plans

The tide turned when parents found that their children did very well in the 8<sup>th</sup> class exam. She hopes she will be able to eventually charge a small fee and is also exploring how she can begin teaching in the school. She is delighted that the fellowship has helped her resume her own college education. Her determination and persistence are indeed inspiring.



**DEEPIKA KUNWAR (23)**, Mothili Chauraha, Kherwara, Rajasthan, is a graduate and values education very much, though from the conservative Rajput community. Now married to a young social activist, she is eager to follow his example. Her approach has been to blend in with the local school. She goes there every day and has become an external resource person in the school, with due permissions. She is able to access and replicate and innovate learning materials from Jatan Sansthan and this has inspired children and teachers to do more. She has activated the SMC and brought in a child friendly atmosphere in the school. She has also registered herself as an LIC agent to generate some income and the school has indicated to her that she can be a part time teacher there to start with. Her story is an inspiration to other Rajput girls. Plustrust has requested her to mentor fellows from the next batch.



*Deepika Kunwar with Children*

**ASHWINI (18) and DEEPIKA SAMBARE (18)** of Pandhurna, Madhya Pradesh are inspired and influenced by the work of Pratyaya. Deepika's education suffered because of her father's alcoholism and she is determined to prevent similar difficulties for children. Both of them have missed the opportunity to pursue higher learning despite their interest and ability. Undeterred, they would like to reach out to children in such circumstances in their neighborhood. They have set up a small center and they work under the close guidance of Girish Mahale, founder Pratyaya and a former Plustrust fellow.



*Learning Centre by Ashwini & Deepika*

They focus on activity based learning, especially for science and mathematics and draw on the resources developed by Pratyaya. The fellowship has helped them buy models, sports kits and lab equipment to make learning more fun. They have been charging a nominal fee from those who can afford it; they hope to gradually build up the revenue and decrease dependence on Pratyaya.

**SIMMI (25)** from Faizabad, Uttar Pradesh hails from a conservative community where women are kept within the home and their access to education is restricted. She and her husband are already engaged in running centers for adolescent girls and a primary school. She joined the Plustrust workshop to identify her goals in the next few years and plan for sustainability of the many activities she and her team have initiated. She was also keen to deepen her understanding of child-centric and joyful learning. Her focus is on teacher development and increased use of activity based learning in schools. She has identified a teacher training programme and enrolled herself in it with Plustrust support. She shares what she learns with teachers in her own center and neighborhood schools. In future, we hope to anchor a batch of Edupreneurs in Faizabad with Simmi as the local mentor and coordinator.



*Activity in progress at Simmi's School*

## Support for Adolescent Girls

**HANSKALA BAGADE (31)** from Darsikala, MP was introduced to Plustrust by Navendu Misra, another former Plustrust fellow. She draws from her experience as an ASHA worker in her community. She finds that the adolescent girls in the villages she visits are unaware of the opportunities available to them. She wants to address the issue by developing a group of life skills educators to regularly meet and guide over 400 girls in her neighborhood. She is using the fellowship to develop material and curriculum and test it with the target audience. Eventually she hopes to have a module which can be used by educators.



Session for Girls in Progress

## Reflections on RWE Batch I

In our assessment, 4 or 5 of these fellowships will evolve into stable local initiatives, with some handholding. Of course it is too early to judge. We are amazed to see how the women and girls have been able to grasp at the small support for a short duration and make progress towards their dream.

What has been helpful is the availability of Charu and Smriti for the Rajasthan group (5 fellows) and the mentorship from Plustrust fellows in the other cases. Monthly visits by Charu helped us to stay in touch and the process of monthly reporting helped in building skills of planning and report writing. Meetings and brainstorming with the fellows at Kherwada have helped a great deal too.

A major challenge we faced is the 'charity' mind set. For example, fellows who clearly indicated a fee or contribution from users have found it easier to stabilize. This is the advice that the batch offered to the next group when they met each other recently. They also shared how difficult it was for them to muster the courage to talk to the Sarpanch and other men in the village about their idea. All of them found that they received the sarpanchs help.

After some initial doubts the men in the village began to appreciate the efforts. Similarly school authorities seemed very welcoming of all the extra support they received, but could not offer any financial support to the fellows. In our view our fellows will greatly benefit from exposure and orientation to activity based and experiential learning and other opportunities for skill development. We also found it is easier to work closely with a cluster.

Simmi in Faizabad and Hanskala in Seoni were working very much on their own, with phone conversations for mentoring. They have managed their work very well too. Smriti visited Simmi in June and joyfully discovered the range of activities she is engaged in. No team member has been able to visit Hanskala yet.

We hope to use these insights in working with the upcoming batch.

## Good Practices: Examples from Academic Support Centers

<p><b>FLEXIBILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Adapts to local situation e.g. space</li> <li>•Uses suggestions and ideas</li> <li>•Approaches mentors for inputs</li> </ul>	<p><b>DEDICATION ,COMMITMENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Volunteers in local school and wins trust</li> <li>•Improves own knowledge, skills</li> <li>•Enrolls for relevant courses and qualifications</li> <li>•Applies new methods and activities</li> </ul>
<p><b>ACCOUNTABILITY &amp; SUSTAINABILITY</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Prompt reporting</li> <li>•Conducts Regular Classes</li> <li>•Works for improvement in academics</li> <li>•Discusses fee/payment from the beginning</li> </ul>	<p><b>EMPATHY FOR CLIENT</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Engages patiently with parents, teachers</li> <li>•Understands children's need for play</li> <li>•Respects dignity of all children equally</li> </ul>
<p><b>SMARTER APPROACH</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Adapts available material from NGOs/mentors</li> <li>•Sets clear goals and plans</li> <li>•involves volunteers , family members</li> </ul>	<p><b>NETWORKING</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Reaches out to larger NGO for their materials</li> <li>•Involves teachers, SMC members, Sarpanch</li> </ul>

## Innovations for Animal Welfare

Besides the RWE batch we have offered a fellowship to ABHINAV DEY as he is developing a model and prototype for fodder stands based on aquaponics. He and his team at Terra Neeru are motivated by the fact that much of dry land agriculture is dependent on draught animals and the scarcity of both land and water have adverse consequences for the wellbeing of these animals.

Their experimentation has been with the prototype as well as field testing with farmers, and networking for experience and expertise. Abhinav was introduced by DEFY, a project of Abhijit Sinha a former Plustrust fellow. He has been able to develop a product which can be taken to market. We hope he will be able to take this to the next level by getting associated with an innovation hub. We observe that Abhinav's real strength is his expertise in rapid prototype design using an iterative approach and sensitivity to user preferences. We are encouraging him to see this as his area for future work. For a quick look please click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MhcJqZUZIGM>.



Mini Fodder Stand



Nutrient rich Azola, a fodder substitute



Aquaphonic trays for fodder cultivation





*Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch II - Retreat Participants*

## Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch II (July 2017- December 2017)

We look forward to working with the new batch of 14 Women Edupreneurs and take this opportunity to introduce them. We will be able to work in some new locations like Araria, Roorkee and Bhopal besides southern Rajasthan, Itarsi and Pandhurna and also with some new themes.

**TANMAY NAIR (27)** from Araria District, Bihar holds an M A in Development Studies. She works on sensitivity to gender, diversity and LGBT rights through workshops with 15-24 years olds using movies, theatre and games. She recently attended a gender studies course in Brazil to build her own capacity.

**SHAMA PARVEEN (24)** from Roorkee, Uttrakhand holds a Diploma in Computer Sciences. She now provides mathematics and science tuitions and computer classes for 23 girls in the village. She would like to develop a sustainability plan for her work, with support from the Plustrust fellowship.

**ASTHA (24) and KIRTI (24)** from Bhopal are working for out of school children aged 4-15 years from migrant families in urban slums through their learning centre “Aakar” with community support. They are both conducting activities with the children and tutoring them. They plan to ensure that the children eventually go to school. The fellowship will help them stabilise their work.

In Pandhurna, **POONAM PARATE (26)** a post graduate in Science, is working on a sports center for children, especially girls. She has obtained permission to use the police grounds for training and fitness camps and 10 girls and 8 boys already enrolled with her. Her dream is to see them compete in national tournaments and the fellowship will help her build up sponsorships for equipment and other resources.



*Rural Women Edupreneurs Batch II - Workshop activities as part of the Retreat*

**LAXMI EVENA (26) and VARSHA MALVIYA (36)** both hail from Itarsi, in Hoshangabad District M.P. They are each already running educational centres for children. They propose to work on literacy and awareness for parents as well, so that parents can in turn help children with studies. They will be guided and mentored by Sandeep Mehto , a former Plustrust fellow and founder of Bharat Calling, Itarsi.

Similarly, **SUNITA RAO (19)** a student of B.A from Aspur, Dungarpur district, Rajasthan, runs an education centre for the children and their mothers. 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.

In Railmagra of Rajsamand the popular idea seems to be that of working for women’s empowerment. **RATAN KUMARI SALVI (24) and BHARTI JINGER (30)** from different villages in the block propose to develop and run resource centers for women offering basic literacy, awareness on government schemes, mobile phone usage skills and financial literacy.

We have four young women from Kherwara block working in Udaipur District, eager to work with the schools and children in their villages. **MONIKA PATEL (19) and JAYNA PATEL (20)** are both B.A students and they work as a team to improve enrolment and learning outcomes in their village school. **MANJU PATEL (20)** is a B.A student who runs a tuition Centre for the school kids and a non-formal learning centre for dropouts. **MANISHA PATEL (25)** is a qualified teacher with a B.A. and B.Ed. and runs a similar Centre “ Kaliyo ki kilkari” in her village.

The common elements in their work are the emphasis on activity based and creative learning methods, music, games, theatre, drawing and specific attention to children with learning difficulties. Further, they propose to build good rapport with parents, especially mothers, teachers and local leaders.





## The Way Forward

We see Kherwara block emerging as a cluster with 8 to 10 active centres over the next year. Similarly we see a cluster emerging in southern Madhya Pradesh. This will give us an opportunity to build skills, improve quality and viability. The four girls in Kherwada in the current batch will be mentored by Deepika from the earlier batch. Similarly, Girish Mahale and Sandeep Mehto will mentor the fellows in Madhya Pradesh. Based on the experience, we can take this forward in locations like Mahabubnagar and Faizabad by running a retreat and working with RWE batches with local support and mentoring from former Plustrust fellows.

A quick review of the status of Plustrust fellows (2009-2015) gave us reason to celebrate. We had worked with 31 individuals and in 18 instances the project has taken shape and evolved into an NGO or an enterprise with a socially relevant agenda. In 7 instances, the individual continues work in the development sector on a related issue. In 6 cases we were dissatisfied with the process and there has been no further engagement from our end.

We have shared our excitement about our RWEs and details of our earlier work with well-wishers and friends. The discussions which followed have proved thought provoking and we are in the process of refining our model further. We are now more confident about the parts of our model which work well...our retreat design and facilitation, selection process, fellowship management process and our 'light touch' and low overheads.

We realize that our focus has been on the change-maker as a person. As we move along we would like to broaden the scope and support the shaping of the enterprise itself and pay more attention to the quality and innovation in the educational services offered. We would like to spread our work through local anchors who will be trained to facilitate the retreat and coordinate a batch. Informally we have discussed this with former fellows and they are eager to support the idea. We would also like to document and standardize this so that we can carry it further afield.

We realize that we can no longer ignore fund raising- an issue we have not really worked on yet! We would like to offer more fellowships and we must therefore work on generating the required financial resources.

The spontaneous and generous support from Caring Friends, Mumbai and M Ramaswami, Singapore has continued. Other kind donors include, Arvind Gupta, Malcolm Harper, Cauvery Kumar, Nirmala Krishnamurthy, C S Ramaswamy, Vanaja Muthukrishnan and Sharanya.

Themes from Previous Fellowships (2009 to 2015)	Stable Social Enterprise	Continues in Dev. Sector	No Update	Total
Access and Social Inclusion	6	2	2	10
Education for citizenship	3	1	1	5
Employability and skills	3	1		4
Science Education	3			3
Arts Education	1		1	2
Inclusion, special needs	1			1
Animal Welfare	1	3	2	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>31</b>

## Team Updates

Smriti has now been able to establish the Udaipur chapter of Plustrust and works closely with the Edupreneurs, especially in Rajasthan. Besides Plustrust, Smriti is currently experimenting with a model for working with rural communities on menstrual health issues. She is also pursuing her research work with migrant workers in brick kilns of Rajasthan.

Shanti has been coordinating updates in the website and social media for Plustrust. She has just taken up a full time assignment with APEDB.

Lalitha has focused more on developing the RWE model and charting out the future trajectory for Plustrust.

We are proud to share that Padma and Damu Balaji have now registered a Society called 'New Voice Foundation' and initiated skill development activities, especially for underprivileged women. Padma received one of our first fellowships in 2009 for her film Platform 8, and has since built on her capabilities especially in education and management. She was on our team till December 2016, initiating work with Rural Edupreneurs and handling our research studies. We wish 'New Voice Foundation' all the very best and look forward to fruitful collaborations.

Charu Bhati worked enthusiastically with the first batch of RWEs and completed the selection of the second batch. She has moved on to take up a full time assignment with a CSR activity in Pune and continues to offer voluntary time for us as needed.

Hardeep has joined us recently as coordinator for RWE Batch II has a 15 year career in the development sector, with keen interest in health issues and expertise in community mobilization, training and facilitation.

We are all set to work hard to take our fellowship programme to the next level and seek all your support and good wishes.

Thanks and good wishes

Team Plustrust



September 2017

plus  trust  
*follow your inner voice*

