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Plustrust News '13

Dear Friends

Happy to greet you again with our annual updates! We look forward to your ideas, contributions and continued support.

This year has been really exciting and eventful. Plustrust now has a full time program manager! Ravi Ramaswamy joined us last October, taking forward our RTE related School Development and Monitoring Committees (SDMCs) project and organizing the first Jeevan Utsav, an awareness camp on animal rights for social work students in Udaipur.

In the meantime, our fellowships have continued with new fellows from Itarsi M.P and Muzzafarpur, Bihar and extension of our fellowship in Kokrajhar, Assam until March'13.

Fellowships

In 2012-13, Plustrust worked closely on three fellowships.

Ayesha Pathan '*Vasundhara*'

Abhishek Neel & '*Bhagini Nivedita Education Society*'

John Daimalu Basumatary & '*Thulunga*'

Ayesha Pathan 'Vasundhara'

Ayesha Pathan, a postgraduate in Sociology has been working with SAHMET in Itarsi, M.P on education for adolescent girls for over 12 years.

She approached us with a plan to work on the stray dog issue in her town. Starting with a baseline census she identified three important locations with a large stray dog population and involved the residents as well in organising anti-rabies and sterilisation camps. She also set up a shelter for dogs in need. The initial fellowship from October to March 2013 was extended up to September 2013 by which time she hopes to have a more formal local group working on the issue.



Ayesha Pathan 'Vasundhara'

"I am relieved to see the space Plustrust is providing me to work with such flexibility. I really appreciate this" - Ayesha

Ayesha Pathan 'Vasundhara'



Abhishek Neel ‘Bhagini Nivedita Education Society’

Abhishek Neel is a Law Graduate from Symbiosis, Pune who after working in Pangea3 a law firm in Mumbai for three years, decided to move back to Bihar to work with children from marginalized communities . (Abhishek’s blog: washermansdog.blogspot.in/)

He has begun his work by tutoring 8 children from the rag picker and Mushars communities for enrolment into schools. Being concerned about their health, he also proposes to give them nutritive snacks when they come in for tuitions. In the process, he has built a rapport with the community and estimates that there are 40 more children who could enter schools with his help. He has been actively trying to expand, taking in a committed associate from the Ramakrishna Mission to cater to a larger group.

John Daimalu Basumatary ‘Thulunga’

Our fellowship to John Daimalu Basumatary, was extended up to March 2013 in view of the post conflict situation in Kokrajhar. John was one of the early relief workers at the camps post the rampant violence in July/Aug 2012. His focus has been on livelihood generation and skill building beside providing relief and support to the victims of the Assam riots. He set up coach-apprentice networks, identifying senior masonry workers under whose training, young workers gain professional skills. He has in the process founded an NGO – Thulunga that primarily deals with skill building, conducting a 2 day orientation program followed by apprentice opportunity, creating a young skilled mason group in Kokrajhar.

John Daimalu Basumatary 'Thulunga'



"Thank you Plustrust for supporting us to follow our inner voice"- John

Our Alumni

We continue to keep in close touch with former Plustrust fellows as they spread their wings. Sandeep Mehto and his team in Itarsi are making waves working with nearly 200 children in the summer camp this year. Please feel free to check out “Why am I a fan of Sandeep Mehto? You probably haven’t heard of him!” fellowsblog.ted.com/2011/03/why-am-i-a-fan-of-sandeep-mehto-you-probably by Nitin Rao. We are very grateful to Sandeep for generously acknowledging the initial Plustrust support and his continued efforts in introducing other young idealists to Plustrust.

“Keep blessing and supporting aspirations, hopes and dreams” -Sandeep

Bhuvaneshare B G has set up "Let's talk" a Psychological counselling services program that focuses on Psycho-social and emotional health in Children and teens at Chrompet Chennai. She also works as a counsellor in a well known Chennai school and we are glad she has found a like-minded life partner and wish them great joy in their life together. Please check out

www.letstalkchennai.org

www.facebook.com/pages/Lets-talk/264039073700630

Tejaswini Madabhushi continues to work on peace building. Her public campaign for women’s freedom from sexual violence has gathered much momentum. The Midnight March she organised in Hyderabad brought together people from all walks of life to claim women’s right to public places.

For more on her please visit -www.facebook.com/MidnightMarchHyderabad

Sandesh Raju continues the work of Samabhava and has now recruited a Manager to oversee their programmes. www.facebook.com/Samabhava.

New Initiatives

Ravi's arrival in October 2012 gave us the capacity to engage directly with our chosen themes.

We joined hands with Makkala Jagriti, www.makkalajagriti.org a like minded organisation that stimulated our work with government schools.

We came in contact with RTE activists and their RTE task-force through the Child Rights Trust www.childrightstrust.org (CRT).

www.facebook.com/groups/364414586964749/

We also met Center for Child & Law (CCL) www.nls.ac.in/ccl/ a pioneer in developing the SDMC model and enshrining it in the RTE Act. Our study of model SDMCs through a video film made by children impacted by these bodies was also devised based on the CCL database and school network.

<http://www.nls.ac.in/ccl/cclmedia/ER/sdmc.pdf>



SMDC film project

When we heard about the excellent SDMCs at the Koodlu Government Primary School, just outside Bangalore we went over to meet them. They welcomed our idea of recording their experiences. Through the process, we learnt of their efforts in improving the school and making it the preferred option in the locality without much external support. We further initiated the children to interview the SDMC members and film the conversations. This experience gave us the confidence to take forward the filming idea to more SDMCs across Karnataka to know more and document their learning.

The workshop ‘My School My Film’

We took up the SDMC filming as an opportunity to arrange a five day workshop on appreciating and making video films for children across government schools in the outskirts of Bangalore in late April 2013. The response was overwhelming, 24 children from 17 SDMCs in Kanakpura, Ramanagara and Chennapatna taluks participated and learnt the finer aspects of thinking through the narratives, aesthetics and technicalities of making short movies. We are grateful for the support and encouragement from Dr.Niranjana Aradhya and Mr. Kumaraswamy of CCL, without whom this wouldn't have been possible.

The workshop began with icebreakers and a little dabbling in art and drama with Ms Chitra Sridhar, Ms. Sarita Phadke and Ms. Sharanya Rebba. Mr. Gangadhar then took us through the basics of RTE, engaging the children in the details and getting them to question the provisions.



Art Activities at the workshop

This was followed by Ms. Deepika Singh who helped the children clarify their objectives in taking up this project followed by the sessions on film making with Ms.Vandana and Mr. Sairam. The film makers worked with enthusiasm and energy to train children on camera handling, script writing, framing shots and basic editing. Not to mention, Dr Vani Kantli shared ideas on child rights which the children enjoyed as well as our volunteer Amartya from Hyderabad, an eager learner who ably helped with the logistics. Christy Raj our camera anchor was an instant hit with the children, and worked with effortless ease to visually capture the whole experience. For us the workshop was a celebration of Plustrust Day! We thank all the resource persons who collaborated to make this such a memorable experience . We are particularly grateful to the community volunteers Suma, Shiv Rudrappa and Shivalingamma who took pains to accompany the children and actively participated in the workshop.

SMDC film project



As a follow up to the workshop, we began location shooting of the films as envisaged by the participants . We completed films in four schools in Kanakpura in early May . It was immensely rewarding to see the children take complete responsibility for scripting and realizing their own films without any prompting or prodding from our side. We hope to complete shooting the remaining films in Chennapatna and Ramanagara and prepare a dossier and case studies on all these SDMCs.



Issue based plays at the workshop

Jeevan Utsav

Learning from our work with Ayesha we decided to reach out to animal lovers from smaller towns . This led to Jeevan Utsav in Udaipur in January 2013—anchored by our Trustee Smriti and orchestrated by Ravi. We organised a half day event where 52 social work students were encouraged to reflect on animal welfare . They created role plays on themes like shelters, pet cards, community education and ambulances for injured animals. We are now ready to host such events elsewhere and try converting good intentions to sustained activity.

Other Activities

We continued our scholarships to Kinthu, Swapna, Sai and Vana and offered some assistance to PUSS Orissa and Samabhava, Bangalore. In November 2012, Nirantara Livelihoods launched “Dhanyam” the retail store to link small farmers to retail markets and we organized theatre games for children in 7 schools in the neighbourhood for them.

Plustrust is on Facebook!!!! Follow us on

www.facebook.com/pages/Plustrust/463696883703734?ref=hl

We facilitated sensitivity training sessions for coordinators in Centre for Development and Research(CDR), an NGO working with tribal communities in Andhra Pradesh www.ceedeer.org. G Rajanna and Jyotsna Cheruvu were resource persons and the programme was anchored by Shanti and Lalitha.

Moving ahead eagerly!!!

Through our fellowships we met others interested in nurturing new social initiatives. Sandeep Mehto introduced us to Caring Friends,(www.caringfriends.in) an informal group bridging NGOs and individual donors. At their annual partners meet we learnt about the needs of organisations at the incubation and pilot stage. We also began dreaming of Plustrust with its own unique fellowship programme. Sandeep Mehto also introduced us to Central Square Foundation which works on education and we hope to collaborate with them and expand our work on the SDMCs. We thank you for your interest and support for our work.

Best Wishes,
Shanti Yeachuri, Smriti Kedia Maroo & Lalitha Iyer
Trustees of Plustrust