I continue to be very excited to be part of the AIF Fellowship program. This year has been tremendous in terms of both the new initiatives that the American India Foundation has pursued in increased engagement of alumni of the Fellowship program, and in terms of expansion of the program. With the growth in the AIF Fellowship team, we have expanded our commitment to the program.

I hope that as you move forward to the next chapter of your careers, that your time you have spent working in the field in India contributes to your understanding of the needs and aspirations of the common person in India. I also hope that you are able to continue your involvement in initiatives to improve their lives and also to bridge our two great societies. Finally, I hope you will maintain your association with AIF in one or more ways to help us continue to grow all of our programs in India.

In this time of uncertainty in global politics and an increased call for isolationism like “America First,” I hope that you will use your experience in India to help Americans see the value in human and economic terms of being a responsible citizen of the world.

With all the best wishes for your continued progress.

Ajay Shah
AIF Clinton Fellowship Co-Chair

The bonds between India and the United States continue to mature and develop as important assets for the two countries and for the global community. The William J. Clinton Fellowship program of the American India Foundation continues to expand and strengthen its role as an important creative force in nurturing those bonds. More candidates than ever before apply to serve as AIF Fellows; the variety of programs and partners with which the Fellowship works in India has steadily expanded and diversified.

So it’s even more rewarding and important to hear, first hand, the stories of those who have participated in this learning experience, broadening both their own perspectives and those of their colleagues and friends in India – and, once the U.S. Fellows return home, here in the United States.

At the same time, honesty compels us to recognize that the very idea of global interconnectedness and understanding have been under ongoing assault from forces that many of us, naively, thought had spent their vitriol long ago. This assault has become a dominant political force which leaders in all societies must confront – so the learnings and experiences that you, the AIF Fellows, are going to serve you particularly well in the new and challenging environment to which you return. Good luck, and thank you very much.

Carl Pope
AIF Clinton Fellowship Co-Chair
We are delighted to present this year’s AIF Clinton Fellowship Yearbook. Its pages are highlights and stories from the class of 2016-17, documenting their journey, learning, and professional achievements from their 10 months spent working towards social change at NGOs and social enterprises across 13 states of India. Not just a snapshot of the incredible projects this year’s Fellows took on, it is also a tribute to the transformative year that the Fellowship is for each and every participant.

We hope that this yearbook will demonstrate the core values of the Fellowship teamwork, perseverance, humility- that motivated them through the successes and challenges during their service. As we strive for a more equitable society in our globalizing world, the importance of strong and respectful cross-cultural collaboration grows everyday. We hope that this book will act as a guide and inspiration on how to continue and sustain building cross-cultural relationships.

To the graduating class of 2016-17: We are incredibly proud of you and your achievements. With your class, AIF will have sent more than 422 Fellows to serve at around 189 NGOs and social enterprises in India, working on social issues ranging from education, public health, gender equality, livelihoods, and sanitation, amongst others. Your contributions will continue to make positive impacts through your host organizations in India, and we hope that the lessons you have learned from your experiences, organizations, mentors, and friends will continue to influence how you contribute to addressing the world’s many pressing humanitarian issues. We hope that you will remain active and effective ambassadors for AIF, continue to “Serve, Learn, and Lead,” and help advance our mission to disrupt poverty and catalyze social and economic change in India.

With best wishes for an exciting next chapter,

Alex Counts
President and CEO
New York

Nishant Pandey
Country Director
New Delhi
A NOTE FROM THE FELLOWSHIP TEAM

At the beginning of the Fellowship, we had asked you to plan out the milestones of your Fellowship project. At the closure of the Fellowship, this yearbook captures how those imagined milestones have become tangible memories, lessons, and experiences.

When we as a team began the Fellowship year, we were also plotting our milestones—site visits, Midpoint, Thematic Conferences, recruiting the new Fellowship class, and Endpoint. Like each of you, we also have accumulated tangible experiences from those imagined plans. Every one of us will have had different milestones due to our diverse roles, projects, dreams, and achievements. However, there is one point we can all agree on. The plans we make, however detailed, structured, and beautiful, change. And we change with them.

With unwavering dedication and compassion, each of you demonstrated immense resilience, creativity, and persistence to throw yourself into unknown territory—a new language, environment, project—everyday. This year will have stretched you beyond your own conception of your limits, boundaries, skills, capacities, and ideas. The AIF Clinton Fellowship team has been honored to watch each of you dig deep inside of your own selves to expand your own potentiality.

Along with your own growth, the Fellowship itself is growing, changing, and developing. Your class has left an enduring mark on that growth and the individual stories, projects, contributions, and experiences will shape the development of the program for years to come.

Since you began the Fellowship, the world has changed significantly, and our approach to build a more equitable world for all needs to adapt swiftly. From observing you all this year, we can say with full confidence that you have mastered adaptability, even in the most ambiguous and chaotic situations. In the world you will walk into there is an urgent need to learn from challenges, and work through obstructions with resilience, compassion and fortitude. Your inward growth has manifested in your contribution outward—to each other, to your organization, and to your community. This is the core of the Fellowship, and we look to individuals like you to take this process forward into every community, every organization, and every individual you meet.

As you move beyond the Fellowship, we invite you to continue being an active part of our AIF community, and to contribute to building a strong Alumni community that encompasses the prior and upcoming Fellowship classes. We are honored to have been your Fellowship team throughout this year, and are looking forward to seeing how you continue to expand your own potentiality in your onward journey.

With service, gratitude, and deep admiration

Arpita, Garima, Katja, and Katrina
The 2016-17 AIF Clinton Fellowship Team
HISTORY OF THE FELLOWSHIP

Born from a high level interest expressed by young Americans to assist the post-earthquake rehabilitation of Gujarat in 2001, the William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India began with a pilot class of twenty-one Fellows. Since inception, the Fellowship program has sent 422 Fellows in 189 partner organizations throughout India. This class, we have worked with 28 partners and have 30 Fellows graduating.

The Fellowship offers the opportunity to candidates from India and the US to serve in tangible and sustainable projects in the social and development sectors in India, and the opportunity to learn from civil society experts and India’s diverse cultures, people, and geographies. The program also offers Indian organizations an input of technical skills and intellectual resources for an extended period of time.

The 2016-17 Fellowship class is composed of 30 Fellows, 8 of who are Indian citizens, placed at 28 host organizations. The majority of Fellows spent their Fellowship working in the areas of livelihoods, public health, education, technology & innovation, or law & advocacy.

About the Program

Meeting India’s need for sustainable development requires not only hard work and dedication but also leaders with the firsthand experience and real world skills to deliver practical, local solutions. The William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India is helping to shape the next generation of leaders committed to impactful change, and to strengthening the efficiency and efficacy of civil society.

The Fellowship pairs a select number of skilled, young professionals with leading NGOs and social enterprises in India in order to accelerate impact and create effective projects that are replicable, scalable, and sustainable. Through ten months of service and fieldwork, Fellows gain knowledge of development on the ground in the fields of education, livelihoods, public health, gender, human rights, environment, and social enterprise. Throughout this experience, they hone and harness their growing skills as change agents capable of effective lasting impact.

In its vision to build a long – lasting bridge between the United States and India, the Fellowship brings together future leaders from both countries, providing them with an exciting platform for collaborative learning and innovation. Together, AIF Clinton Fellows and development sector leaders from dynamic partnerships, exchanging knowledge and skills while sharing their passion and commitment to improve development efforts in India- ultimately transforming both the individual and the organization.
Host Organization Placements

Timothy Hefflinger, Leh, Jammu & Kashmir - Livelihoods
Md Adil Hussain, Kukrela, Rajasthan - Livelihoods
Annika Gage, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan - Public Health
Avital Datskovsky, Sawai Madhopur, Rajasthan - Education
Denise Fernandes, Village Kotri, Rajasthan - Technology/Innovation

Maura Deignan, Bhavnagar, Gujarat - Education
Noel Benno Joseph, Bhavnagar, Gujarat - Education
Caleb Christian, Ahmedabad, Gujarat - Education
Dylan Igoe, Ahmedabad, Gujarat - Education
Nadeem Alam, Dang, Gujarat - Education
Nisha Sambamurty, Mumbai, Maharashtra - Education
Sumedha Goswami, Mumbai, Maharashtra - Public Health
Olivia Waring, Mumbai, Maharashtra - Technology/Innovation

Abby TerHaar, Bangalore, Karnataka - Livelihoods
Deepa Patil, Bangalore, Karnataka - Public Health
Erin Tatz, Bangalore, Karnataka - Technology/Innovation
Janan Dave, Bangalore, Karnataka - Technology/Innovation

Lakshme Sharma, Uttarakhand - Livelihoods
Nolberto Zubia, Delhi - Livelihoods
Pious Ahuja, Delhi - Law and Advocacy
Trip Eggert, Delhi - Technology/Innovation

Palak Dudani, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh - Technology/Innovation

Md Adil Hussain, Kukrela, Rajasthan - Livelihoods
Yasin Khan, Darjeeling - Public Health

Tamil Nadu

Cal Brackin, Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu - Education
Audra Bass, Kotagiri, Tamil Nadu - Livelihoods
Avan Antia, Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu - Technology/Innovation

Benjamin Brennan, Hyderabad, Telangana - Technology/Innovation

Dharamjeet Kumar, Jorhat, Assam - Livelihoods

Keith Scott, Bhubaneswar, Odisha - Technology/Innovation
EDUCATION
AVITAL DATSKOVSKY

Host Organization
GRAMIN SHIKSHA KENDRA

Location
SAWAY MADHOPUR, RAJASTHAN

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION
Research, Youth Engagement and Mentoring

This was a transformative year of my life because I learned to listen, to be patient, to work in unstructured environments.

PROJECT Summary

As the culture and history of Sawai Madhopur has not been documented, the project’s aim was to document local culture in Sawai Madhopur and develop curriculum modules to teach the children about local culture.

I began this project by walking into the villages, building up relationships, and spending time with the communities where Gramin Shiksha Kendra students lived. As I conducted my research, I tried to figure out what themes there were that connected my research. What was a single topic that we could zero in on and really focus on as our research theme for the year? I realized that a single topic came up over and over again in the conversations and interactions I was having with people—the forest.
After a discussion with my mentors, we decided to conduct our own exhibit with the children—one that focused on people’s lives in relation to the forest. I began conducting workshops with children at two of our five schools—I worked with my co-workers to teach the kids how to conduct their own interviews and how to channel what they had learned into cartoons, stories, art, photography, and film.

Gramin Shiksha Kendra’s plan is to conduct this kind of exhibit every year—an exhibit that reflects the local culture and history of the area.

**Professional Achievement**

**I’m Proud of**

I’m proud of the ways in which I’ve pushed myself out of my comfort zone. I would describe myself as an introvert and this project required a lot of socialization. I had to figure out how to build relationships with people in the communities—to introduce myself on my own and to nurture those relationships. Navigating those relationships has easily been one of the most rewarding components of the fellowship.

**My Journey**

In a lot of ways this year has felt like the peeling back of layers. When I first started the project, I felt overwhelmed. I started my research by spending time with the children studying at Gramin Shiksha Kendra schools, walking them home, introducing myself to their families. Several families welcomed me warmly and I began my fellowship by spending time with them, learning how they lived, spending the occasional night in the village, attending a wedding or festival. As I conducted my research, I realized that over and over again, the people spoke of their relationship to the forest—their reliance on it for art, livelihood, medicine, and more. I realized I wanted to channel my research into this relationship.

Researching people’s relationships to the forest was a bit like opening a Pandora’s Box. Sawai Madhopur contains the Ranthambore National Park, a tiger sanctuary that was created in the 1970’s in the forest surrounding many of the villages Gramin Shiksha Kendra students come from. I chose to focus on two of the schools that Gramin Shiksha Kendra runs. The first, Jaganpura, is connected to communities living on the fringe of the forest that is the Ranthambore National Park. The second, Girirajpura, is connected to several villages that lived in the forest but were relocated from the forest due to the Ranthambore National Park. As I spoke with people, it became clear that the cultural changes that were happening were often very political in nature. People’s livelihoods and cultural practices were changing—and changing rapidly—because they were being pushed away from the forest.

As I began my research into the forest, I became aware that a lot of the dominant dialogue surrounding the forest only focused on the plight of the tigers. Very little conversation discussed the lives of the people living around and inside the forest, and the people living in the communities were often dismissed as unimportant. I discussed this with my mentors, and we decided to do an exhibit with the children that reflected the communities’ relationship to the forest.

I did a series of workshops in conjunction with my colleagues that were aimed at training the children to...
conduct their own research on local culture and history and think about how they could create their own narratives through art, prose, and poetry. The works the children produced were poignant—displaying a nostalgia for the forest, a fondness for the animals, the trees, the nature. Unconsciously, the kids often displayed culture through their works—incorporating local art forms into the drawings they created. It’s through the children that local history and culture can be documented and the stories told.

A lot has changed for me this year. I’ve had to grow up a lot. The importance of listening has really been driven home for me. I’ve learned to be patient, to work as a team, I’ve learned the importance of kindness. Honestly, I think kindness has been one of the resonating themes of the fellowship this year. I’ve experienced so much kindness—from the people I’ve become close with in the communities, my co-workers, and, of course, the other AIF Clinton fellows, the AIF Clinton staff. This point became particularly prominent for me when I got pneumonia and found a support network from a whole range of people.

On perhaps a slightly more practical level, the fellowship answered a lot of the questions the compelled me to apply for the fellowship. Did I want to work in India? Did I want to focus on development? The answers to these questions, due to the fellowship, have become an emphatic yes. This experience has made me realize that I want to conduct research on conservation and human-wildlife conflict, as well as relocation. I’ll be going to graduate school next year and I plan to write my masters thesis on relocation and conservation in Sawai Madhopur—my relationship to Sawai Madhopur is something that I want to keep going.
CAL BRACKIN

Host Organization
KATTAIKKUTTU SANGAM

Location
KANCHIPURAM, TAMIL NADU

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION

Young Engagement and Mentoring, Communications and Development

The AIF Clinton Fellowship provided me the space and experience to develop my personal and professional interests.

PROJECT Summary

The Kattaikkuttu Sangam (KKG) is an NGO engaged in a holistic blend of youth development where children engage in academics and theater art training in a boarding school environment. Students live on-site at the KKG school, which provides a lively environment! As with starting on any new endeavor, I arrived at the KKG eager to learn, but woefully uncertain on where I’ll be fitting in with the organization. Through discussions with my mentor and understanding the needs of the organization and my interests, we decided that I would be supporting projects involved in grant assessment, working with alumni staff, and contributing to multitude of projects that the organization juggles daily. As with
most NGOs, they put out 110% effort with a tiny staff so people fill in where needed. As my tasks evolved, I was able to use some of my illustration and design interests to help out the organization in the annual report as well as other volunteers who were seeking brand support in their acrobatics and storytelling endeavors. I was involved with the students through a computer class, illustration, and simply trying to be present when the opportunities were available. It was a great learning opportunity!

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

Simply being involved in the NGO administration process has been the greatest professional achievement of my time at the Kattaikkuttu Sangam. Leading up to this Fellowship, I was involved in field work, being engaged in the hands-on implementation of projects, but in this experience I took time to sit in the office to get a glimpse of the behind-the-scenes activities. It is by no means the most electric or invigorating work, but its importance is unquestionable, now I have a practical foundation for my future endeavors in the field of NGO administration. The most tangible projects that I am most proud of were being involved in the development and reporting of key performance indicators through three quarterly reports and developing the annual report. In the annual report, I was encouraged by my mentor to use my illustration and graphic design skills to make a creative and engaging report to send to our donors.

**My Journey**

My interest in service and international development has connections to the Kennedy era that provides context for my journey with the AIF Clinton Fellowship. I joined AIF after serving in the Peace Corps (Mongolia, ‘13-’15), an organization established through the vision of John F. Kennedy. His vision for service and building social relationships between people of different nations to promote peace aligned with what I wanted to do with my life. The words of Ted Kennedy speaking at the eulogy for his brother Robert F. Kennedy have been a guiding reminder for why I continue to be invested in development, “Through no virtues and accomplishments of our own, we have been fortunate enough to be born in the United States under the most comfortable conditions. We, therefore, have a responsibility to others who are less well off.” I occasionally listen to the speech and am reminded of the higher purpose we all have to building a better world. In the AIF Fellowship, I was able to work to building that better world while being involved in a development practice. In all the ways of being involved in “development”, it oftentimes requires abilities to do many different tasks and work across professions. Working in India, to witness the hardships of others and serving in grassroots levels, I continued to feel to do more. That I can work toward the systemic changes that make the lives of many people, American and foreign, better. As much as I’ve grown, I cannot miss complimenting the group of ambitious individuals, from the United States and India, whom I am proud to have served with in the cohort. The AIF Fellowship provided an experience where
individuals can grow into the type of people who lead communities and organizations to do courageous and morally informed things. Simply looking at the challenges overcome, I can say that the mettle of each individual was honed through this experience. We were all faced with being uncomfortable, failing, but constantly working toward the often intangible and difficult to measure “common good”. AIF Fellows are put in spaces where we cannot afford to sit passively or be motivated by a paycheck. AIF Fellows were brought to this experience because of their skills and core values of wanting to make a difference at the expense of living comfortably. I am proud to have served with them and proud that the AIF continues to be committed to the development of community leaders. I want to make a point that working in a foreign country entails sacrifices and the occasional low moments. At moments throughout this experience I waded through a sort of anxiety that was accompanied by depression. This is not to suggest my overall experience was negative, quite the contrary, because the biggest challenges are the ones that I value the most. It is difficult, but the challenges are the memories that I’ll fondly look back upon and reflect how they were the catalyst for my personal growth. True to who I am, I cannot miss commenting on how my passion in illustration has evolved due to this program. Illustrating is a way I experience, share, and capture moments of my life. I carry the tools of my trade (ink brushpen, watercolor brush-pen, small watercolor set, an inkpen, and a small notebook) in my left-pocket on most days. In this experience, I tended to draw scenes drawn in the moment, with the scents of food, honking of horns, crowds of curious onlookers, and expressions of people imbued into each drawing. My drawing practice dramatically improved as well as took shape as a tool that I can use in community development practices. My next dream, is to start using graphic facilitation in development meetings between professional strategists and community members. This is a perspective that I discovered due to the experiences provided by the AIF and for which I am grateful.
Caleb Christian

Host Organization
AIF LEARNING AND MIGRATION PROGRAM (LAMP)

Location
AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION
Research, Communications and Development

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was to make me a more independent worker.

Project Summary

The purpose of my Fellowship was clear before I ever left the United States: creating legal training modules. Based in Ahmedabad, I worked with the larger Learning and Migration Program (LAMP) community in Gujarat to create workshops that would allow workers to engage with the legal topics and issues that surround them daily. Throughout my Fellowship, I interacted mostly with local workers and communities in the field, observed trainings and programming at LAMP-affiliated Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) and Learning Enrichment Programs (LEPs), and used these primary observations to construct relevant workshop modules that LAMP could use across India to create a baseline legal understanding amongst its affiliated organizations’ facilitators. I spent
the majority of my time researching and creating legal modules, drafting handbooks, and writing blog posts about my experiences with LAMP-affiliated organizations. I had the opportunity to see my ideas in action through small-scale piloting in Gujarat and Odisha in the spring. The final version of my legal workshop modules will be taught in LAMP-affiliated organizations across India over the coming year.

PROFESSIONAL Achievement I’m Proud of

I had been working on my project for months before testing my modules in front of a group of facilitators for the first time. With the help of my co-worker Vivek as interpreter, I put my ideas and activities forward to the facilitators at Cohesion Foundation Trust (CFT). With some hiccups and a lot of support from Vivek and the CFT team over a two-day period, I was able to get through all modules and activities. Some went as planned, some would never see the light of day again, and I had a running list of things that needed to be added to really make my legal learning workshop valuable for my intended audience of LAMP-affiliated field workers. But those two days in the CFT meeting room are my proudest achievement during my Fellowship.

MY Journey

Before the Fellowship, all my work experiences had been in offices. My co-workers had been one door or cubicle over and my supervisor had been one knock away. During my time in Ahmedabad, I was effectively alone: my co-workers were at a different office and perennially in the field, and my supervisor was based in a different state and rarely in one place for more than five days. I am the type of person who can lose themselves in a good book over a weekend and not realize until Monday morning that I haven’t spoken to anyone in days. But it wasn’t until my time in Ahmedabad that I realized how much I depended on human interactions during my working hours to fill my social meter.

With the lack of an office and any regular contact with the work of LAMP, I went through several months of growing pains as I settled into my new life. In the beginning, I was constantly unexcited about my work and made wild excuses for my underperformance. One day, sipping chai on my rooftop, it struck me that my consternation with my placement was not the work itself, but an issue in framing. I had wanted an office environment and was moping over its absence. But all the sighs in the world wouldn’t make that desire my reality. My situation was one where I was less a LAMP worker and more a legal consultant, brought in to complete a very specific project that required my particular skill set in legal knowledge and writing. Upon that realization, I smiled and immediately went downstairs to start continue my journey with fresh eyes.

With this new understanding, I began making positive changes in my work habits. I began setting personal deadlines and holding myself accountable for meeting them. I started taking responsibility for my output instead of looking to a supervisor to give me objectives and deliverables. I made to-do lists and even started scheduling time for cooking and working out – things that I found helped me remain on task and happy with my working life.
Suddenly, my project began to take form, and I became much more excited for its completion and eventual rollout. I look back now and can’t believe how powerfully the changing of my internal dialogue on the issue completely changed my Fellowship experience. By giving me independence, the Fellowship offered me something that I had never had before: the opportunity to, in many ways, control my own professional development. I believe this to be a rare opportunity, and will forever be thankful to the Fellowship for allowing this to happen.
DYLAN IGOE

Host Organization
ST. XAVIER’S NON-FORMAL EDUCATION SOCIETY AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT RESEARCH CENTRE

Location
AHMEDABAD, GUJARAT

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION
Research, Community Initiatives

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was humble me.

PROJECT Summary

I have spent my Fellowship collecting the personal narratives of three groups of Valmiki women sweepers in Ahmedabad City. I designed an interview format that would help my organisation better understand community understandings of caste, class and gender. More importantly, my project sought to provide a space for a traditionally marginalised group the space to tell their own stories unfiltered.

Over my ten months I have learned a great deal about the importance and power of personal relationships. These relationships forged through cultural and linguistic barriers have helped me learn to navigate complex situations while also demonstrating the
transformational power of investing in others lives in genuine ways.

I hope that my presence as an engaged and thoughtful part of my organisation will impart the idea that people from beyond the local community are deeply interested in investing themselves in their lives and the challenges they face.

**Professional Achievement I’m Most Proud Of**

The connections I formed with the local Valmiki community. My first months were incredibly difficult, I felt isolated and did not know how to interact with the community I wanted to invest myself in. Over time through my continued presence, I was able to become somewhat common place and in turn was able to genuinely learn from this community.

**My Journey**

“My story?” Nilum responded, looking at me with the same mixture of confusion, curiosity and apprehension that first appeared on her face when I wandered into her home six months earlier. “Yes, yes, your own story,” I responded, hoping to smile and nod my way to some form of mutual understanding. Looking at me again with the same resolved confusion, she repeated, “qua?”

I had no way of knowing that simple word, “why,” would come to define my work, my daily life and ultimately my entire Fellowship experience. I was raised on historical anecdotes. Stories of people that served to bring life, humor and personality to the past. Whether it was my grandmother’s stories of collecting cans to buy a coke as a child, or Franklin Roosevelt serving hotdogs to the Queen of England, these stories have captivated and comforted me my whole life. As I have grown up I have constantly searched for ways to create my own vignettes, telling them to anyone who will listen with every detail exaggerated, trying to squeeze every laugh and smile from my often-begrudging audience.

As an organizer for the Hillary Clinton campaign, my coworkers and I were tasked with developing our “personal story.” Needless to say, I was thrilled at the opportunity to tell my own story and more importantly, hear the stories of those close to me. I loved sitting down over cups of coffee with every democrat in Keokuk County, Iowa, listening to stories about Iwoa Jima and what it was like growing up in the small town of Delta in the 30s. My experiences have convinced me of one simple truth: that each individual has a valuable story to tell, and these stories inform how we see ourselves, how we hope to see ourselves, and how we hope others will see us. Our own stories merge with the stories of others and these internal and external experiences make up the layers that define us. The stories we make the extra effort to seek out often make all the difference.

At the start of the Fellowship, I was overwhelmed and worried that I would have little to offer my organization. As the first months in Ahmedabad rolled by, as I sat in the homes of community organizers talking to women in the field, small pieces of personalities and remarkable details about these women’s lives began to peek through from behind the language barrier. It was then, in these moments, balancing a boiling plate of chai on my knees,
that I knew I needed to hear these stories in full. Over the next five months, I would sit down with the women I had come to know only by their smiling faces and attempt to hear what they had to say.

"Why?" They would always ask me as we began. My days were filled with this question and I was rarely able to provide a satisfactory response. Of course, I was seeking answers to “why” questions of my own. Why are things like this, why do you do this, why do you feel this way, and why haven’t things changed? The simple preface of “why” pushed me to become a better listener and in turn allowed me to provide a storytelling platform to a caste of women that least often have their stories told. This word compelled me to be more vulnerable and led me to draw connections I never imagined possible. These stories always began with why, and as I prepare to leave India I find myself still repeating this mantra. I never imagined I would leave this fellowship with more questions than answers, but I knew I would leave with some stories. The most important ones will not be my own.
MAURA DEIGNAN

Host Organization
SHAISHAV

Location
BHAVNAGAR, GUJARAT

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION

Impact Assessment, Communications and Development, Technology/Innovation

This was a transformative year of my life because I was presented with a number of challenges and learned that in order to really grow, I have to overcome my fears and jump headfirst into the “sea of chaos.”

PROJECT Summary

Shaishav has an incredible story to tell, with 25 years of knowledge and stories of impact. However, it seemed difficult for outsiders or newcomers to the organization to fully understand exactly what they do and how they do it. Given my interest in writing, I began helping Shaishav shape a new way to share its story with the world.

After assessing the existing communications materials, I developed a new communications policy with new assets: writing content for a new website, new brochures, new concept notes, grant proposals, short films, photographs, case studies, etc. I created guidelines, including a writing style guide on best practices for content creation in the future. I also worked with an ad agency to
develop new communications materials, and provided training on how to take more compelling photographs to document our impact. Ultimately, my project helps Shaishav to gain more attention from potential donors and partner but more importantly, educates people outside the organization to better understand Shaishav’s unique approach to child development and impact on marginalized communities.

PROFESSIONAL Achievement
I’m Proud Of

Empowering girls is important. So is sensitizing boys, and instilling in them empathy and respect. A few days before International Women’s Day, I had the idea to hold a sensitivity training for the boys we work with. They played out different scenarios, role playing some of the everyday instances of gender discrimination – at home, in school, or out in the community. They also learned about menstruation and the associated challenges. It was incredible to watch them come to internalize some of the struggles girls and women go through. Their follow up discussions were amazing – not only did they “get it,” they seemed galvanized to stand up for the girls and women if they saw discrimination or harassment, and some of them realized they needed to make changes in their own behavior towards their female relatives and teachers.

Although I didn’t run the workshop myself, I felt proud that my idea served as the catalyst for attitude change amongst this group of boys. They will hopefully grow into more empathetic men who will pass along a more sensitive and inclusive mindset towards girls and women.

MY Journey

In Gujarat, I learned about Garba, a circular group dance performed to celebrate Navratri. At first glance, it’s a mesmerizing, chaotic whirlwind of sparkling, vibrant colors, propelled by the intoxicating beat of traditional Gujarati folk music. It can be hard to follow, with people moving in every direction, jumping and spinning. I observed from afar, wanting to join but not knowing how. Once I focused on smaller groups, I observed that Garba is not chaotic at all; rather, there are organized, concentric circles, seamlessly flowing in unison.

Staring at chaos (albeit beautiful) from the sidelines and not knowing where to begin also describes my initial work when I first arrived in Bhavnagar. Shaishav is a truly incredible organization with a unique approach to child development, with so many programs and opportunities to contribute to. However, when I first joined, I couldn’t discern when, where, or how I would add value. Lacking Gujarati fluency and a frame of reference for Indian work culture made me afraid of overstepping boundaries and making mistakes. Eventually I realized even though never “jumping into the sea of chaos” meant never making mistakes, it also meant I would never learn how to “swim.”

Like with Garba, I recognized that the locals were following a set of steps that I had yet to learn. Initially I lamented that I didn’t know the “steps” of my first Shaishav project and I felt stuck on where to start. Before coming to Shaishav, I thought I would be applying my already established skillset of program and project management to develop a new monitoring and evaluation framework, but that wasn’t quite what Shaishav needed
from me. What they needed was for someone to help them tell their story. Through other assignments at Shaishav, I also discovered a knack for communications work and saw how critical communications materials are for fundraising. I began by taking time to learn Shaishav’s core values and the underlying philosophy that drives their programs. Shaishav’s approach to child development is unique and difficult to explain, so this gave me a very strong foundation for my ensuing work.

Shaishav strives to empower people, particularly children, to speak up for themselves. They start by telling them that their opinion matters, no matter their background, and that they have a right to share it. Previously afraid of “speaking up” myself, I’m now less afraid of speaking my mind, because unless people speak up, particularly when it comes to social justice issues, things won’t change. I’m in awe of the Shaishav founders, staff, and alumni, all of who speak up for what they believe is right and against injustice when they see it.

A big goal of the Fellowship is to build bridges between the U.S. and India. Having an Indian Fellow to live and work with these past ten months has definitely contributed to my personal and professional development. Thanks to Noel, my bridge to India is so much stronger. We come from completely different backgrounds, and unsurprisingly have a different approach and perspective. It’s good when you work with someone with a different point of view, because if everyone has the same thought process, innovation is limited. We learned how to communicate to each other in a way the other person could understand, and there was a lot of personal growth for both of us in that process. I feel like my understanding of Gujarat is richer because I also had the lens of viewing it from the perspective of someone from Kerala.
NADEEM ALAM

Host Organization
SWAPATH TRUST

Location
DANG DISTRICT, GUJARAT

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION
Research, Community Initiatives

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was provide a platform to immerse myself in the community.

PROJECT Summary

I worked with Swapath Trust for the rehabilitation of some of the most vulnerable children in Gujarat. These children include orphans, street children, child labourers and children of nomadic and migrant families children of families forced to migrate for their livelihoods. I worked on an action-research project to study the migration and poverty of the sugarcane-cutter families of the Dangs in Gujarat. The study is aimed at understanding the details of their migration and how and why is it linked to their poverty. Also, it will aim at finding answers and strategies to alleviate their poverty and improve their living and working conditions. Working with an expert of social science research, we have successfully conducted
our pilot in Dang. Now we are ready to conduct our research in thirty-three villages of Dang. In this research, we will cover 4424 households, 22207 people to know about the causes, effects and solution of sugarcane-cutter families of the Dangs in Gujarat. I assisted them to profile the villages for the study with the help of the local staff and villagers. Conducted various meetings with different people to know more about the target group. I levied within the locality to know about their yearly pattern of migration. It helps to write about the qualitative characteristic of the study. I also worked on a Learning Resource Center (LRC), a community-based support system for encouraging children to continue education using activities, and games. It was our objective to create a place, where children will learn with freedom and love. We have successfully run two LRCs with our objective. I have trained the facilitators of the LRCs to implement activity-based teaching; including sports and origami. I help to conduct an assessment for the LRC’s children to know the intervention’s outcome.

**Professional Achievement I’m Most Proud Of**

To implement a participatory action research project was an achievement for me. We conducted our baseline research, village resource mapping and action plan with the help and engagement of the community. This activity helped to reduce the percentage of school dropouts, and ensures regular attendance of students and parents responsibility. Community action plan based on the research helped the villagers to design activities, and form self-help groups. Now village development committees are working with the local government body- the gram panchayat.

**MY Journey**

I have spent my time on the Fellowship living in Subir Block, in Dang district. This district falls in the tribal belt that spreads Maharashtra, through Gujarat, and into Rajasthan. In many ways, this place is isolated from the mainstream development. My project was to conduct quantitative research to understand the details of their migration and how and why it is linked to their poverty. Also, the aim was to find answers and strategies to alleviate their poverty and improve their living and working conditions. We included component like organising of Koytas (sugarcane-cutters), inculcating a habit of saving to strengthen their financial condition and use credit at appropriate time to overcome financial bottlenecks, and conduct appropriate types of training to build internal capacities to combat the poverty situation. Beyond this, we also provided information and awareness about different government schemes and programs.

This project was heavily field based and allowed me to meet and interact with different people. Till now, I cannot speak Dangi (local tribal language), but I can understand it. In this region, people usually do not speak Hindi but they understand due to Hindi movies and songs. Despite these language barriers, communication happened successfully.

The greatest challenge faced during the Fellowship, was to live without mobile connectivity and shortage of water. The nearest market and ATM was 43 km from my stay. To get a mobile network, I had to go to nearby hilltop and
finish all the work calls of a day. Every day I convinced and motivated myself that people are living their daily lives here, why I should I not be able to, as well?

In the Fellowship I have learned that trust leads to freedom and responsibility. I am grateful to have my mentor’s trust during this whole Fellowship experience. He supported me to implement my ideas in the best possible way. I admired his straightforward professionalism from the start of orientation, and my respect for him grew throughout my time here.

During the Fellowship, I worked with government schools to minimize dropout cases. We were trying to know the main causes behind this, and who and what pushes a student to leave school. We organised meetings at different places; and we found that every person we spoke to was placing the blame on someone else, and not taking any personal responsibility for the issue. To address this we invited all the stakeholders together to discuss their individual roles and responsibilities in a community meeting. After that meeting, people understood their own responsibilities towards the education of children in their community, and how they could effectively work together.

One big takeaway for me is that India has been facing the same development problems for decades. We will have to continue to try the different approaches to work towards the long-term process of social change.
NISHA SAMBAMURTY

Host Organization
EDUCO (Fundación Educación y Cooperación)

Location
MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

Thematic Focus
EDUCATION

Research, Communication and Development

The AIF Clinton Fellowship taught me to fail and learn to get back up.

PROJECT Summary

My work during the Fellowship revolved around working on child protection in the state of Maharashtra. I worked on research projects related to the “unwanted girl child”, education for children of migrant workers, and violence against children in Maharashtra. The research that I did on these topics will be used in the work of my organisation in the future.

PROFESSIONAL Achievement
I’m Proud Of

During my time in this Fellowship, one of the moments I’m proud of is that I was able to be part of writing a concept
note for the European Union on violence against women and children in rural Maharashtra. I learned extensively about child protection and the horrors of gender discrimination in India. The concept of “The Unwanted Girl Child” became such a reality to me after this project. I was so proud to be part of a team that is actively working to combat gender discrimination and violence against children and women.

**My Journey**

“Forge through ambiguity.” These were the words of advice that we were given at the beginning of our journeys as American India Foundation, William J. Clinton Fellows. At the time, I had no idea what this advice meant, and in fact didn’t pay much attention to it. Now, ten months later, I have found those three words ringing in my ears, for I realised that forging through ambiguity was not just advice - it was the ultimate challenge that this Fellowship presented. Ambiguity, I found, seeped into every pore of my life. I found myself navigating waters I had never imagined I would need to navigate. The desperate question of, “what do I do?” popped into my head too many times to count. I asked it when a mob of people on the Mumbai train created a sea of humans, and with their force, pushed me out, breaking my sandal in the process. I asked it when my (wonderful) mentor asked me to find village-level on violence against the girl child in districts where data was scant. And I asked it when a man I met in rural Jamshedpur, Binod, showed me the horrors of a world devoid of compassion as he recounted the harrowing story of his wife’s preventable death during childbirth. I asked this question all those times and more, which often times led to many other questions. Why was there no data on violence against the girl child? It’s important, isn’t it? How is it that compassion failed when all Binod needed was a shred of it? How is it that a group of people can create a force so powerful that it pushes me to a point of breaking? What hurt was that in many of those situations, I never truly found answers. Which then begged the question of, “How will I choose to forge through ambiguity?” Uncertainty is often times constant - at work, in life, wherever. It’s scary and emotional to face and it often unearths your true character - for better or worse. It means working incredibly hard to take one small step forward only to find that you still can’t see what’s in front of you. And so, I met ambiguity. In fact, she engulfed me. In the folds of her cloudy, blue sari hid many realities that I had never seen. I met ambiguity. And I am deeply grateful. I think I will choose to never ignore those realities that she showed me again. I met ambiguity. And I met ambiguity and she engulfed me. In the folds of her cloudy, blue sari hid many realities that I had never seen. I met ambiguity. And I am deeply grateful. I think I will choose to never ignore those realities that she showed me again. I met ambiguity. And she made me question. I met ambiguity and she knocked me down. But she also dared me to swallow my fear, pull myself back up, and go forward into the unknown with grace, knowing that I will probably get knocked down again. I met ambiguity. And she was my enemy. But she was also my teacher. I met ambiguity. And she liked me. For one thing, I could never shake her off; in fact, I think she’s here to stay. For another, every so often she gave me a lamp that showed me a bit of the way. I met ambiguity. I’m still figuring her out.

*Image credit: Nisha Sambamurty*
**NOEL BENNO JOSEPH**

*Host Organization*
SHAISHAV

*Location*
BHAVANGAR, GUJARAT

*Thematic Focus*
EDUCATION

Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Youth Engagement and Mentoring, Technology/Innovation

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was to help catalyse the social entrepreneur in me and grow in my creative confidence.

**PROJECT Summary**

My work with Shaishav was distributed across three areas: forming new strategic partnerships, designing and implementing new programs, and designing communication material for Shaishav, all of them directly and positively impacting the way Shaishav operates on the ground and communicates with external entities and donor agencies.

I initiated and designed strategic partnerships with a handful of organisations, including Google, Quest Alliance and Nasscom. All these partnerships were aligned with the use of technology in furthering the cause of child development and generating better opportunities for youth in the marginalized communities of Khumbarawada in Bhavnagar.
Along the lines of equipping the organisation, I designed two programs for children and youth. The first one is a level two digital literacy program for children to learn computer programming through a graphical user interface. Designed as a two-month long program, Shaishav now implements it in its community resource center. The second one is an integrated youth development program spanned over a year, which secured the India Youth Fund Award and funding from the Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation. This project involves digital literacy modules for youth as well as a six-month fellowship program for enterprising youth of the community.

My other work involved designing a website for Shaishav and training the staff to use computers and related technology more effectively to prepare presentations and reports in their day to day office work.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud of**

Developing and implementing part of an integrated youth development program centred around the community learning centre in Khumbarawada. The process involved discussions with different stakeholders, including children and youth of the community, program coordinators, knowledge partners, and donor agencies.

Part of the process was learning to confidently communicate in the local language, and this I believe has been very crucial in understanding the needs of young people and being able to connect with them at a personal level, too. I thoroughly enjoyed gathering knowledge partners working on similar programs in other parts of the country, devising partnerships, testing and curating resource materials along with the use of Human Centered Design in developing the logical framework. The process has helped me put together my experiences, skills and training to good use.

**My Journey**

It was nearly eight years ago that I saw a white wristband which read “Make Poverty, History”. Growing up in a very progressive state in the southern part of India, I did not come across much poverty, and thus the very idea of poverty remained a distant idea. If someone had asked me then if I’d leave a promising career in software, follow the “white-band” spark to work in a remote town of Gujarat in attempts to find answers to “making poverty, history”, I’d have had a good laugh. Years later, here I am.

My curiosity about the world outside my hometown in Kerala pushed me to travel. Close encounters with faces grappling with poverty, youth who battle unemployment and families who yearn for security gave me a totally new perspective on India. I was not in awe but saw opportunities and possibilities. I had no idea who was going to solve all these issues, but I was and still am optimistic about solutions for a billion problems.

Working at a grassroots organisation like Shaishav, which has a track record of over two decades in the domain of child development, has been a very enriching experience. Over the course of the Fellowship, the work diversified from a single project into capacity building of the larger organisation. This has been of immense value, widening my learning scope with more insights into operational
aspects of a grassroots organisation which would have gone unseen otherwise. However, the biggest benefit has been learning how a high impact community service organisation functions – integrating community, advocacy and research.

The Fellowship has undoubtedly given me the opportunity to learn the ropes of running an organisation, keeping volunteers engaged, designing programs based on past evidence, and even financial planning. These learnings are already bearing fruits in developing frameworks for my enterprise, handholding it towards becoming a more structured and organised entity. I’m positive that the learnings from this period will go a long way into shaping my own social enterprise in the years ahead. My plan is to create platforms for enterprising youngsters to tackle poverty through innovations in the education systems.

During my time in Shaishav, there have been times of tough conversations and moments where I had to take quick decisions, work out intricate details of project implementation, design and deliver trainings, engage skilled professional volunteers, create visual storyboards, and throw myself into environments where I was totally alien. It is these opportunities that have been the most formative during my time as a Fellow. It is the freedom to experiment, make mistakes and progressively learn from them that has made my time very meaningful and profound.
LIVELIHOODS
Abigail Ter Haar

Host Organization
REACHING HAND

Location
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

Thematic Focus
LIVELIHOODS

Community Initiatives, Research, Youth Engagement and Mentoring

This was a transformative year of my life because I narrowed my interests to project management and outreach and gained a deep understanding of the emerging skill development sector in India.

Project Summary

Adding an extra hand to the many already at Reaching Hand, I was able to explore areas of our programming that our staff had not been previously able to because of time, resource, and staff constraints. I delved deeply into the intersection of livelihoods and education. This work has been a nearly perfect fit allowing me to combine my passion for student-centered education and meaningful employment, while building a solid foundation for a future career in program management and international development. This skill gap arises as each year over 15 million Indian youth enter the workforce but over 75% are not job-ready. This will lead to a need for over 700 million skilled workers by 2022 to meet industry needs. While skilling and employment may seem straightforward, there are a host of challenges that arise - from mobilizing
students, to job placement, to effective training methods. Appreciating the freedom that my mentor Akshay gave to experiment with solutions to these problems, I began assessing the programmatic gaps along with the strengths early on. One of my first initiatives was recruiting volunteers and organizing a workshop on interviewing skills. It was a great success, with over 50 attendees, and paved the way for the future workshops—I've now organized eight, with more to come before the completion of the program. Utilizing the AIF Fellowship network has enabled me to build partnerships with Babajob and Mu Sigma, where my program may not have otherwise had easy access. Prior to this initiative, my program, Pratishtha, sparingly utilized volunteers, but now we have a network of over 60 volunteers—many of them who have come multiple times, ready and willing to mentor our students. As the Fellowship has progressed, my work has taken many different forms—including mobilizing the community with our staff and making contacts, creating capacity building trainings, and building partnerships with employers. By developing these relationships, I've sought to leave a legacy that will long transcend my service as an AIF Clinton Fellow, where Reaching Hand will be able to use my workshop curriculum, employer database, volunteers, and contacts to take Pratishtha to new heights in the future.

**My Journey**

Lying smack in the middle of Lavelle Road in central Bangalore, I was exactly three months into my Fellowship. Deloused and hearing a mixture of Kannada and Hindi, I’d just been hit by a motorcycle. Having spent a cumulative 15 months in India, I truly thought I’d gotten the hang of this country and somewhat assimilated. The day before I’d been easily running through Cubbon Park, but that plan was now forced to take a backseat for a few months. As quickly as I was knocked down, I was literally picked back up, by helpful strangers, and soon thereafter by my fellow AIF Fellows. Before coming to India, this moment and the subsequent knee fracture would have been devastating- a multi- month departure from my solace of running and reduced mobility. But the injury challenged me and forced me to look at India from a

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

On a steamy Bangalore spring day, I wandered into Orion East Mall, quickly accosted by the blasting air conditioning. My mission? To meet employers for our students in the Pratishtha program at Reaching Hand. My first stop was Westside, a retail clothing outlet owned by Tata. It was there that I met Mr. Raju, a vibrant and chatty personality and the store manager. While my intention was to simply ask for job openings and requirements, Mr. Raju wanted to lend further support. He was interested in supporting Reaching Hand through CSR funding and volunteering as a way to invest in our students. Now, Mr. Raju has connected us with the Westside outlets throughout Bangalore, given many students avenues for employment, sent volunteers to train our students and we are currently discussing funding opportunities with Tata’s Trent Ltd. While Westside is one of our most salient partners, I’ve been able to reach out to and solidify over 25 other partners for the improvement and stability of our Pratishtha program.
different perspective. Instead of looking at my situation as a pitfall, I felt renewed. I was reminded of the hospitable side of India and it reinforced my decision to work in this country.

It’s been over five months since that day but time and time again these situations lead to a consistent lesson: just when you get comfortable in India, you’ll be faced with a challenge. For everything you think you know there’s certainly a contradiction. Thus, the need for a plan B (and perhaps C and D).

Throughout my time in India, I’ve found the key to thriving to be this integral skill of adaptability, which will transcend my service no matter where the next journey leads me. At Reaching Hand, this adaptability has led to the ability to take on many different roles from persuading employers to hire our students to successfully helping mobilize when I don’t speak much Kannada. Further encouraged to embrace the unknown, I travelled to rural Gujarat and Uttarakhand, where I was further immersed in the work of AIF projects in education and livelihoods. Through these experiences, I was exposed to the rural side of India—an entirely different world than the city life. The time I spent in a student-led LAMP classroom in a Kutchi village and the conversations I had with women weavers of Uttarakhand were some of the most memorable moments of the past ten months. These places were far away from the beaten path, and the journeys were exhausting, but the time spent with incredible people far outlasted the fatigue.

In order to sum up my experience in India, I would say ho jayega— with initiative— meaning it will happen if you take initiative. Things may happen in a vastly different manner than you’ve planned, but eventually it will all work out.
AUDRA BASS

Host Organization
KEYSTONE FOUNDATION/ THE LAST FOREST

Location
KOTAGIRI, TAMIL NADU

Thematic Focus
LIVELIHOODS
Communications and Development, Technology/Innovation

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was enable me to shape my interests and passions in place where I had a great deal of freedom and support.

PROJECT Summary

My main job has been to create a website about the bees, honey, indigenous people, and conservation efforts of the Nilgiris, and that which should eventually incorporate information from other parts of India. In the beginning, my work was a great deal reading and research to find and sift through the content that would be best suited for the website. This project has been two years in the making. After a few months I felt there was something missing, specifically the narratives of the honey hunters who were one of the major focuses of the website. I started collecting the anecdotes of honey hunters across the Nilgiris, Tamil Badu and Orissa to gain simple stories of why they hunt honey, and how they gained these skills. Since then I have done several other forms of creative
writing, from a newsletter for The Last Forest to short stories published on online mediums like The Better India. After I leave, Keystone hopes to take this website and keep expanding it with more information about other parts of India, and ideally as far as Southeast Asia. I feel glad to have contributed whatever I was able to the current making of the website and that a few written pieces have already been published about the work being done.

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement I’M MOST Proud OF**

The stories I have collected and published. I have always loved listening to and collecting stories. By wonderful chance, my work at my host organization has needed me to do a lot of writing. Any chance I have been able to go into the field, meet the honey hunters, and hear their narratives has been wonderful. I have also been able to take various experiences, like attending the fire festival of the Badaga community or helping clean trash from a dam, and turn them into stories for others to know about.

**MY Journey**

In terms of an extrovert, I am the poster child. I take great joy and gain so much energy from being around people, especially if I am kindred spirits with people. The name of my nemesis was none other than Solitude. Some people love to recharge with a bit of time alone and I become agitated, low-energy, and my mind races. This was one of the greatest challenges of my Fellowship. I was placed in a quaint town in Kotagiri, a place lovely and welcoming, yet also among people who greatly value their solitude. It took me months to adapt and embrace “personal time”. This was amplified by not being able to speak Tamil, and coming from a completely different cultural background. I even wrote a poem about how I was trying to fit in.

“I want to fit
I want to squeeze in
to be touched and connected

So I trim
And cut the corners
Remold the rounds and dips
My form has changed
I am trying

But try as I might
I don’t fit
And when I seek to push in
even gently
The shape of the puzzle
And its already placed pieces
Stand firm and hardly budge
Maybe one, here or there
But not enough

Yet, already, I have reshaped
For better or for worse
I have changed”

This last line resonates with me most. My dear friend and mentor Nandan encouraged me to find my niche and embrace my own time with this place. I did my best. I have tried learning the language, I volunteered my time with other tasks or projects that need completing, I have learned to sit quietly at tea time and just listen, and I have learned to be in public spaces alone. Through trying to create me own niche, it actually opened doors for me to better connect with people around me. For example,
with the narratives I have collected of the honey hunters, I also heard the stories of my translator Saravanan and his experiences with growing up in the Nilgiris in the Badaga community. We exchanged stories during our long hikes to various villages in different forests. On my own, I have written more poems and traveled so much. From a five-hour bike ride to the Wayanad rainforest of Kerala to winding along the path adjacent to the Ganga River up to the Himalayan hills of Uttarakhand.

My journey has been an adventure, a lesson, a reflection, and a change. I am still quite the extrovert, maybe a bit less so. Sometimes, I still feel like a stranger to this place, yet against the odds I fell in love. I began building my niche and now I have to leave it soon. There is no doubt I will return because I have built a home and family here.

Home

“Where the heart is?
My heart is in the crevices of mountains
In the gentle concave of the peak
Where I face the wind
And my spirit denies my body
And seeks the Eagles

My heart is in the sinking sand
Where my toes wiggle, then my soles pillar
Then foam spray laps at my ankles

And soaks my unfortunate denim
I can’t hear my thoughts
They are drowned by the pounding waves

My heart is in the footholds
In the knobs and twists
I climb and grab and seek
And find rest in the thick trees branches
I find comfort in the tree bough
The one that takes me in

My heart is in the clink
As smiles widen and laughter ensues
Memories are shared over a basket of snacks
Take another sip
Hope for the night to never end

My heart is in the songs
Hummed on the street, shouted from the pews
Harmonized, Melodized
Individualized
But always with passion!
To the stars, at the moon
In the car, in the wind
Whenever sung
As long as it is sung again

Home?
It moves
Constantly dancing to the beat of my heart
That moves to the rhythm of my feet
Which follows the direction of the wind”
DHARAMJEET KUMAR

Host Organization
NORTH-EAST AFFECTED AREA DEVELOPMENT SOCIETY (NEADS)

Location
JORHAT, ASSAM

Thematic Focus
LIVELIHOODS

Community Initiatives
I was at that stage of life where one wonders about oneself, about his passion and searches for that force which drives him towards the way ahead. Each day of work in my host community is a story which excites me to share with others.

PROJECT Summary

As part of the AIF Clinton Fellowship, I have worked with my host organisation- NEADS on promoting sustainable livelihoods in flood prone villages in Assam. My tenure here has allowed me to develop and implement this project from scratch. I initially spent time on baseline studies and impact evaluation of the organisation’s other projects in the area. In this phase, participatory research methods helped evaluate the risk and consequence that the flooding of the Brahmaputra river had on communities living on the bank. Initial research helped me identify the need for a sustainable livelihood model that would benefit the landless people in the area, too. The avenue for this was identified in making handloom products,
which women from most households engaged in. After needs were assessed, I spent time working on acquiring grants to implement the project. In this phase, I was also involved in some reconnaissance market research for potential distribution and upon receiving the grant, we expanded the project to 60 handloom weavers. The additional training for value addition was also conducted. I’m happy to report that the model has been successful in generating significant income for the weavers. This particular project also happens to be the first one to be designed and implemented solely by NEADS. Encouraged by its success, they are enthusiastic to explore the scalability of the model.

**Professional Achievement**

I’m proud of

I have created a livelihood project from scratch. Given the limited resources, the entire process from need assessment to project design and implementation has been my responsibility. As a result, the project has been tested with pilots and is currently directly impacting the lives of 60 households by increasing their monthly income. The project also has significant scope for scalability and potential for becoming self-sufficient in the longer run. Together we are trying to expand in ten more villages.

**My Journey**

The Fellowship journey introduced me to a wonderful community. I have lived in 14 states of India before coming to Assam and it was the first opportunity to enter the north-east frontiers of the state. Assam is like an entrance to a group of states which possesses a natural heritage which is much different from the rest of the country. Serving an entrance to a new world, Assam welcomes you with all warmth. I was placed with NEADS in Jorhat, Assam. NEADS is involved in multiple domains of development. However, much of its resources are channeled towards natural disaster risk reduction and humanitarian responses. Serving and exploring, my host NGO offered me various project areas in which I could contribute, however, it was up to me to decide where I’d like to start. Using this freedom, I chose the most beautiful work site. My work-site was a river island called Majuli. It’s the world’s biggest human inhabited river island with river Brahmaputra on one side and river Subansiri on the other. The rich diversity of communities here along with dense green surrounding makes it one of the most beautiful places on earth. However, with beauty, nature also brings crisis, and this area is affected by heavy floods almost every year. The flood carries serious consequences on people’s economy and health. Being a flood prone area, and also having a majority of economically deprived population, people sometimes expect receiving things for free. During floods they get some relief material from various organizations and for the whole year they receive some food grains from the state’s public distribution scheme. In such circumstances it’s a challenge to get the people to trust, and to motivate them to improve their livelihoods for themselves. The community with which I was working is very different from those with whom I worked or lived before. It is a tribal population belonging to a tribe called Mishings. Traditionally they have been practicing self-sufficiency and barely interacted with the Market, making their traditional living style difficult to
They have been living on the banks of the river, practicing agriculture on the plani lands around. As the rate of erosion has increased, many of them have lost their lands and have been forced to migrate. In such difficult circumstances, a sustainable livelihood model can only be community based. People who have the experience of working in this community cautioned me with the challenges. Assumptions are that neither they nor I can trust an outsider, further, I being an outsider having zero knowledge of their language, the challenge was even bigger. But there was plenty of things to learn and huge opportunity to test my skills in the process. To overcome the challenges, I started spending as much time in the community as I could. Weaving holds an important place in their lives. Almost all the households do handlooms and only the women are involved in this. Along with the community, we decided to work on developing handicraft traditionally practiced in the villages, towards an entrepreneurial end. In all these months, the experience of working in this community has been the greatest ever. This community celebrates color, dance and rain. While assigned with the task to design a sustainable livelihood project in these flood prone villages, I was very much conscious that an intervention in this part will only succeed if the project appreciates this culture and finds a way to integrate with it. It is also a way to take the entire community on board with the associated community initiative. The organisation I was working with is a grassroots organisation which has been working for two and half decades mostly with volunteers. In the middle of the Fellowship, I found myself in a crucial leadership position here. The intervention ideas were developed and it was time to work it out on field. The director ensured the availability of staff at every step where I needed. The responsibility was huge and required significant groundwork prior to delegating tasks. In the end, with the support that I received from the host NGO and the love that I experienced in the host community, we developed a project which benefits the weavers of the village. The AIF Fellowship journey has been one of the most beautiful phases of my life which will be cherished forever. The self-reflection in this 10-month journey has helped me discover a better self, change of future goals followed with it. A major one is the realisation that working at the grassroots is something which drives me and building movements at this layer is my passion.
LAKSHMEE VINAYAK SHARMA

Host Organization
GENE CAMPAIGN

Location
VILLAGE ORAKHAND, UTTARAKHAND

Thematic Focus
LIVELIHOODS
Research, Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Community Initiatives

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was give me access to witness ground realities in my country.

PROJECT Summary

Gene Campaign is an organisation devoted to promoting sustainable agriculture and conservation of indigenous seeds in Uttarakhand, Jharkhand, and Uttar Pradesh. The organization has been working to popularise millet consumption and millet based food products in the Kumaon region, largely working with local farmers. It’s a widespread practice in these regions for men to cultivate the primary cash crops while women seem to be relegated to growing crops with no cash value. One such crop is millet.

My work with them has involved partaking in this effort by helping to establish a millet value chain with Mahila Kisan Samithis, the women farmers associations of Kumaon. Women in India’s agriculture landscape are
often not recognised as farmers because a farmer’s identity is primarily tied to land ownership. My project for Gene Campaign included strategy planning, community mobilization, market research, innovation, training, organising, and acquiring the resources for Mahila Kisan Samithis to set up a millet value chain which would enable them to have control over production, and autonomy of pricing and sale.

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement I’m Proud of**

Gene Campaign is a small organisation, with few but very committed employees who are passionate about food security. However, it is always good to have more help. I believe that my joining Gene Campaign enabled a more distributed work load, which in turn resulted in effective and timely project implementation. I also believe I brought a new perspective to millet consumption as I am a native of Karnataka where finger millet is widely enjoyed. While finger millet is available in Uttarakhand, people here aren’t accustomed to its taste or texture – it has been mostly used for subsistence farming. Working on creating, testing, and producing new, more appealing millet recipes, drawing from my own cultural context, is definitely one of my key contributions to the Gene Campaign’s livelihoods project.

**MY Journey**

When I chose to apply to the AIF Clinton Fellowship, I had just completed my Master’s program and was due to graduate in a month. Originally, I had chosen to pursue a postgraduate degree immediately after finishing my undergraduate program, with little professional experience. I hoped that this Fellowship – in its capacity to be transformative both professionally and personally – would enable me to clarify what path I wanted to take. It was to be, in a way, an illuminating bridge between academia and practice.

My first reaction when I learnt that I would be working on a livelihoods project in Kumaon, Uttarakhand, was elation, followed rather immediately by panic. While I had spent a considerable amount of time during my youth in rural Karnataka, I had never spent such a lengthy stretch of time in a geographical, cultural, and contextual space that was so alien to me. When I landed in Delhi for Orientation, I couldn’t converse in Hindi as fluently as I do now. I remember the penultimate night of Orientation, when all the Fellows spent dinner overlooking the Qutub Minar, and reflecting on the months ahead. While everyone seemed suitably excited to be off to their field sites, I could only feel the panic inching from my heart to my abdominals, which could only be stoppered with the falafel with which the kind waiters kept plying me.

Now at the close of the Fellowship ten months later, there are three things that I have learnt from my experience so far: 1) the indomitable perseverance of agrarian women, 2) friendship, and 3) the ability to recognize and appreciate resilience where it is due.

My project has allowed me to engage closely with women farmers of Kumaon. The line that will always stick with me is from one of the women, “We’d like the choice of going to the market ourselves”, in reference to the economic autonomy they deserve but isn’t always available to them. This captures the crux of my project and my larger
academic, professional, and personal passions for equity, security, and poverty reduction.

The second important lesson I learned, and one that might appear frivolous but only to the cynical, is the value of finding true friends even in adulthood. I never thought that I’d make lasting friendships past my college years, but this Fellowship cohort came as a lovely and much appreciated surprise.

Finally, and perhaps most “transformative” of all my experiences, is recognizing and appreciating the resilience I have had to show during times that can objectively be termed as miserable. Whether it was crippling isolation, extreme physical conditions, or challenging social relationships, I wouldn’t have recognized the perseverance and resilience that I have without these trying but didactic situations. This, I also extend to the women I have worked with, and I would like to take a second to acknowledge this trait that has been so normalized, especially for women. For some of these women, merely existing every day is defiance of the structures that are built against them. Appreciating this in them, and in myself, is something I’ve learnt through my experiences here, and for this I’m forever grateful.
MD ADIL HUSSAIN

Host Organization
LOK SAHBHAGI SANSTHAN

Location
KUKRELA, JAIPUR, RAJASTHAN

Thematic Focus
PUBLIC HEALTH

Community Initiatives
The AIF Clinton Fellowship provided me the opportunity to work independently and implement my own idea with full support and guidance of an expert mentor.

PROJECT Summary

The organization I was placed at as part of the AIF Clinton Fellowship is Lok Sabhangi Sansthan (LSS) in Rajasthan. LSS is a small organization and has a small, but dedicated staff. My presence gave them an outsider perspective and brought some changes to their work routine. I’ve been interested in Swachh Bharat Abhiyan since the current government launched it. From my part, I have always wanted to contribute to this initiative. So when I came to Lok Sabhaghi Sansthan and visited villages, I decided to make people aware of the importance of sanitation and personal hygiene. So, I started to organize meetings with women groups and through Focused Group Discussion (FGD) and Participatory Rural Appraisals technique (PRA) made them aware of the relation between health and
sanitation. Through these meetings and PRA, it came into notice that people don’t have personal toilets and must go to the field to ease themselves. With my mentor, I decided to work to motivate people to build toilets as part of my Fellowship project. Project *Samman* is aimed at transforming the lives of women SHG members by helping them build their personal toilets. *Samman* is the Hindi word for honor/dignity and therefore it is a suitable name for this project as toilet building will primarily give them dignity and honor. The project seeks to transform and improve the quality of life of the people in rural Jaipur, Rajasthan, and largely, India, by motivating them to build personal toilets and helping them get loans from banks and the encouragement amount from the government under Swachh Bharat Campaign. My project will continue after my Fellowship as I have been training a member of the organisation to take over since April. He has been with me, attending meetings in the villages; hopefully, he will learn each and everything about the project by the end of my term. I was lucky to work with colleagues who have 15 years’ experience in the social sector. They are my torchbearers, without whom I would have had a challenge with this project. I learned leadership skills from them and it will surely help me in future to lead a team.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

The journey of project *Samman* was not easy. It took almost four months to make an SHG open defecation free. There were many hurdles that I came across, such as water unavailability, cash crunch due to demonetization, cultural barriers were all a great challenge for me. In one hamlet, there was a great scarcity of water; people used to fetch water from 200-500 meters distance, in that situation we met with the Sarpanch (the head of the village) and asked him to give a pipeline access there. It took a month, and now almost each house of that hamlet has its own toilet. Project *Samman* doesn’t only focus on toilet building but it also ensures the use of the toilet. In a meeting, I was asking the women and girls about the differences between having their own toilet instead of going to the field, and their responses made me feel proud of my work. One of the adolescent girls said, “I wake up early in the morning before sunrise and go in the field, while going and coming back from the field I used to pass my uncle, cousins etc. and that embarrassed me.” She added that even on Sunday and on Holiday she used to wake up early to go in the field before sunrise but now she sleeps without worries.

**MY Journey**

“We must go beyond textbooks, go out into the bypaths and untrodden depths of the wilderness and travel and explore and tell the world the glories of our journey.”—John Hope Franklin

I believe that now I am in a position to tell the world the glories of my journey. My Fellowship life begins in a green campus of Delhi. I clearly remember the first day of Orientation in a big hut, looking like it was made up of bamboo and clay. We, the Fellows were welcomed by four beautiful ladies in the most humble and warm way. Every Fellow had an upright posture and were keen to get to know each other but I was calm, confused, and bewildered and the reason was: yes I know you may think it as a silly or petty reason but this is the fact, I
was confused with their accent. The name game that we played to get to know the name of each other was the first milestone for me that I successfully cleared without any mistakes. And then the journey began, I can’t thank the people who came to interact with me enough, and later they became my best friends. By the middle of the orientation program, I turned from a nerdy introvert to a person who interestingly participated in all group tasks. A two-day session in the orientation with host organization mentor had already alleviated all the confusions and doubts related to the accommodation, food, local traveling, and field area so I was relaxed when I came in the placement organization. Initially, it took the time to process the local dialect and culture of the people. I had seen many movies based on Rajasthan’s culture and tradition so it had given me some superficial knowledge of how people dress their festivals etc. One thing that I would like to mention is that before coming to Rajasthan one picture that I had in my mind was, a group of women wearing ghagra choli walking along the heap of sand, holding pots filled with water on their heads, but working with them, I realized how difficult it is for them to do house chores and fetch water from a distance. While working with the women on project Samman, I came to the conclusion that any social issue or evil can be tackled easily if women of the community lead the campaign. I give all credit of the success of Project Samman to the school girls and the women who are in their 50’s. It was them who fought with their sons, husbands, and fathers and built their toilets. At times, some men in the village were targeting me for making the women of their houses “rebel”. It was a scary but proud moment for me as women were raising their voices against the men who sometimes curtailed their basic rights. I have a number of stories to share with my family and friends about this Fellowship and I am sure most of them are about the village women who give blessings by placing their hands-full of ornaments-on my head. I am sure I will marry a pretty woman and will spend an easy life as the women of the village have nourished me with these blessings.
TIMOTHY HEFFLINGER

Host Organization
SNOW LEOPARD CONSERVANCY
INDIA TRUST

Location
LEH, JAMMU & KASHMIR

Thematic Focus
LIVELIHOODS

Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Communications and Development

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was to prove that my education and credentials are usable and desirable in real-world contexts.

PROJECT Summary

The project with Snow Leopard Conservancy – India Trust (SCL-IT) has widened from a single program to a more comprehensive involvement with SLC-IT’s operations and strategy. When I started, I focused on helping the Himalayan Homestays program transition to a for-profit business. After some time, however, the implications of cutting loose a program turned out to be unfeasible. When I began asking strategic questions, it became clear that the issues that had prompted my involvement to begin with were larger and systemic. They were not merely isolated to the Homestays program. Given that SLC-IT is a small organization that has had three directors over the past five years, there was a lack of organizational strategy about how to move forward.
This is not surprising, given that things like strategic planning understandably fall by the wayside when a small organization is working hard to maintain existing programs and projects. For the past few years, SLC-IT has been struggling to garner the resources to draft a comprehensive strategic plan.

My project thus helped my host organization plan strategically for the upcoming years. I have been working with a web designer to upgrade the Himalayan Homestays website and integrate it into the SLC-IT website. I’ve also created and curated content for a blog. And lastly, I have begun the process of applying for a trademark for Himalayan Homestays. My project provided the foundation for operationalizing institutional record keeping, monitoring and evaluation of all programs, and building and maintaining strategic plans. This will allow SLC-IT to raise funds and become more competitive in its target areas in the future.

**Professional Achievement**

**I’m Proud Of**

While it couldn’t achieve to fullest the originally-envisioned results, my work on planning the transition of Himalayan Homestays to an independent program was very ambitious and detailed. Due to the results from my research, my host organization decided not to set up the Homestays program as a for-profit enterprise. With the benefit of hindsight, I can see that it may have saved the group considerable costs in resources, time, and effort. If they had proceeded with a transition without completely understanding all the risks of what they were getting into, it may well have resulted in a much messier state of affairs.

**MY Journey**

Putting little bits of my experience in a box that says “project” doesn’t say anything essential about the universe, or India, or Development. I wish I could give a more fulfilling explanation of my Fellowship experience, but I fall short of words. All I can say is that I came to India, tried to do some things, got very confused, learned a lot along the way, and am now on my way home. That plot is simple enough, but it only tells part of the truth.

My project turned out to be a million things, all at once. In theory, I was working on communications, but sometimes that meant that I was painting waste barrels so tourists knew where to put their banana peels. Working on strategic initiatives sometimes meant counting ibex on a hillside. And sometimes the things I had planned to do just never happened at all. I had to realize that my project evolved as time moved on, at times escaping clear definition.

While I am reasonably confident that my work has been of some use to my host organization, I’m not certain that when all is said and done, the low-income Ladakhis who participate in SLC-IT programs will be better off because of anything I’ve done. At best, I think, I may help SLC-IT function a bit better. That may someday trickle down to help the villagers who benefit from its livelihoods programs. And maybe, I’ve been helpful to the Ladakh region which has so graciously hosted me. Some of the things I planned and envisioned during this stay might not have worked out as planned and expected but “how I believe something should go” is a small thing, in the bigger picture, and sometimes we have to let go of it.
Although I must admit, personally I have grown tremendously. I feel almost guilty to say I might have taken more than I have contributed. My involvement here is likely to be far more transformative for me than for my host organization. I am not the same one who arrived here last September.

I now find myself talking more slowly, without any of the hard certainties that used to pepper my speech. That’s because I’ve taken to heart the lesson India has been teaching me, often against my will, since the day I arrived: life is malleable. With the right tools and a lot of patience we can maybe shape it into something we like better, but it’s just as likely it will shape us right back.

Almost nothing is certain. Our plans might not always work the way we envisioned them but in the long run if we can see impacts, no matter how minor, can still carry our messages of change. I believed that by attempting to impose order and rules on the raw material of life I was in some way changing it. I was wrong, and India shows me that every day. All things cannot be immediate and as per plan. And that’s something this Fellowship has helped me cherish. While I don’t know yet what I’ll be doing next, what I can tell you is that whatever I do, I will do with the complete, in-my-bones kind of understanding of all that this Fellowship experience has taught me.
PUBLIC HEALTH
This was a transformative year of my life because through isolation and confusion I developed a sense of self-reliance and a willingness to ask for help.

PROJECT Summary

I began my Fellowship with a general idea that Gramin Shiksha Kendra (GSK) was hoping to expand their work to include a public health component. My mentors expressed that there was a lack of concrete information on the current health status of the children and the health challenges faced by the communities we work with. To collect the data to inform upcoming initiatives, we decided to do a baseline nutrition study that encompassed questions on a wide range of socioeconomic and cultural factors related to food and health to target problem areas and strengths. I also ended up managing another survey on nutrition within government schools in the area as a part of GSK’s partnership with the Ashoka Foundation.
Both of these surveys are the bulk of my Fellowship contribution, and the remainder of my time was spent helping GSK visualize their health program and train their teachers, to begin in the next school year. I have been inspired by the hardiness and drive of some of my coworkers. I have met some people who tirelessly slip into any needed role, work 70 hours a week, and still have a smile and kind word at the end of the day.

I feel that my survey made people feel as though their voices and experiences were valued. I asked people about their experiences and had many people tell me about challenges that they had faced but also the kinds of foods that they grow and cook to sustain their families. Because I conducted every single one of the surveys I was able to make sure that these stories were recorded and affirmed.

**MY Journey**

When my family and friends ask what I do, I usually tell them I spend most of my day talking about food. And it’s true! I do. I ask people what they eat, when they eat it, how many times, where, who cooks it and how. Sometimes it feels invasive, although most people I ask just laugh and tell me about their food, even if they think I am a little strange. The truth is that food feels so intimate to me. It’s not intimate in the same way that asking someone about their reproductive health might be, but it is so deeply ingrained in our daily lives that it feels a bit like peeping into someone’s home and probing around. I felt hesitant starting my research for this reason.

But it turns out that people love to talk about what they eat. Over my six months talking to people about food, I’ve had many children and even more adults tell me about what kinds of meals they cook, how they prefer to eat throughout the day, their favorite foods, etc. Over time, I became much more comfortable entering people’s homes, eating food alongside them, and breaking down that anxiety that I had about becoming too invasive of the people I was working with. They welcomed me. And they did so with food.

Over the last ten months, I have become more comfortable as a researcher and as a community contact. I have recognized that my window of time with people is usually quite small and I have to get to know people quite quickly. I have been fortunate to work with people who are incredibly generous and open to conversing with me about their lives. This change has also been facilitated in part by my increased ability to communicate in Hindi.

**Professional Achievement I’m Most Proud Of**

I am extremely proud of the breadth of my work over the last ten months. I have worked in eight different locations doing a fairly sensitive survey-building rapport with government school teachers, community members, our own staff members—all within a span of about six months. I have had to work quickly but ensure that everyone I worked with, from the school headmaster to the 4th class child that I am measuring, understands why we are doing the work and how important their role is. This required a great deal of both agility and patience. I had to be both efficient and in-depth.
Painstakingly, through many mistakes and hours spent in confusion, my language skills improved enough for me to be able to have conversations without a facilitator. It has removed a significant barrier and allowed me to really connect with the people that I work with. My work has really depended on the willingness of others to engage with me and it is with deep gratitude that I recognize the patience of those who did so while I was still grappling with words.
DEEPA PATIL

Host Organization
REACHING HAND

Location
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

Thematic Focus
PUBLIC HEALTH

Impact Assessment, Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Young Engagement and Mentoring

The AIF Clinton Fellowship provided me the opportunity to balance critical reflection and positive productivity.

PROJECT Summary

Much of my early work at Reaching Hand consisted of implementing a program called Girls Glory to prevent girls from dropping out of school due to menstrual hygiene management (MHM) and other water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) barriers. I conducted puberty and general health and hygiene workshops in under-resourced government schools, helped oversee construction of toilets, hand-washing stations and clean drinking water stations. I also conducted needs assessments of schools and communities and helped report these needs to our corporate social responsibility (CSR) to make sure our projects had necessary financial backing.
Once I became familiar with the process of implementing Girls Glory from start to finish at a given project site, my priorities shifted to growing and evaluating the program. I worked to connect Reaching Hand to other organizations working in MHM and WASH in India and around the world.

My process of evaluating Girls Glory served two purposes. I wanted to make Reaching Hand’s successes and quantifiable impact more visible to current and prospective funders. I also wanted the results I concluded to guide improvements on how the project is implemented right now. By measuring the sustainable behavioral change happening in our partner schools, I was able to identify some gaps and make recommendations on how to make health MHM and WASH practices stick beyond our supervision of Girls Glory at the school, such as forming Girls Glory student committees to take ownership of MHM and WASH at their schools and identifying necessary steps to promote ecological and inclusive sanitation.

**Professional Achievement I’m Most Proud Of**

I have watched my colleagues navigate between and do meaningful work in many urban and rural communities with immense humility and adaptability. In particular, I have learned a lot from one of my “mini-mentors”, Khandappa Sir, who coordinated the Girls Glory program. He is so invested in improving MHM and WASH and educating girl children. He has had a smile on his face and an optimistic spirit through every moment of uncertainty; whether funding, staff conflict, or community resistance. There were a few times when he sensed my disillusionment with work or development in general, and over meals of dosa and filter coffee, he encouraged me to approach all my work with love before all else. Even if I remained somewhat skeptical, I was always motivated to keep trying and understanding after talking to Khandappa Sir. I hope to approach my future work with that same love, positivity and persistence.

**My Journey**

There are few emotions more harmful than shame. It threatens the most fundamental love and respect people have for themselves. It is often accompanied by immeasurable discomfort, isolation and pain. Shame is not to be confused with the humiliation of social fumbles or the guilt of disappointing a loved one - these feelings arise as the consequence of particular actions and can be distanced from one’s self-concept. In fact, in healthy doses, humiliation and guilt may serve as beneficial indicators of what behaviors we accept of ourselves to inform future choices. Shame, on the other hand, is never valuable. Some of us have experienced shame tangentially and transiently by empathizing with literary characters and the people we care about. Others have more intimate relationships with shame, becoming consumed and debilitated by it.

Shame follows many young girls in India relentlessly, like a shadow on a sunny day. I frequently hear phrases like “शर्म कर” or “शर्म करणा” (have shame) directed at young girls by well-intentioned family members, teachers and complete strangers. And while a variety of cultural and religious ceremonies take place in homes all over the country to celebrate an individual’s adolescence, puberty often marks the induction of girls to a lifetime of shame. The
experience of a first period is daunting enough for a young girl - it can do without the burden of stigmatizing messages and alienating taboos. But alas, the notion of menstruation as an impure, blameworthy, disgusting process infiltrates the minds of so many.

I am disheartened time and again when I think of the psychological consequences of hating oneself because of an uncontrollable, biological process. I am, however, becoming increasingly aware of and actively combating the more tangible repercussions of living in environments that are not period-friendly. The stigma of menstruation certainly oppresses girls from all walks of life around the world, but its most detrimental implications manifest in particularly vulnerable communities - places with high poverty and low education levels. Government schools in India are uniquely positioned to empower the children of vulnerable communities through education, a prerequisite of upward social mobility. But this opportunity is inaccessible to girls who miss up to a week of school every month, or worse, drop out entirely because of their periods.

I have confronted this multifaceted issue through my work at Reaching Hand. On the one hand it is an infrastructure problem. Too many government schools lack the private, functional spaces - namely, toilets - needed for girls to engage in proper menstrual hygiene management (MHM). On the other hand there is a troubling information gap.

Girls are often unaware of menstruation until menarche, do not understand it as a normal, biological process and are never taught how to manage their menstrual hygiene. The resulting poor MHM practices lead to individual health concerns in the short term and perpetuate the shame of menstruation in the long term. Reaching Hand’s initiative and my main project for the year, Girls Glory, aims to remove these barriers. We did this by building toilets and teaching puberty and health and hygiene workshops in under-resourced government schools all over India.

It is not a quick solution and requires growth, both in terms of how many girls we reach and how comprehensively we approach the problem of MHM inaccessibility. Even perfect, widespread implementation of Girls Glory will not overturn deeply-ingrained cultural stigmas immediately. And everyday I learned of more challenges that may slow down our efforts or contextual limitations I failed to consider before actually visiting the field. I am motivated by the potential to improve the health and education of girls and accordingly, replace shame with dignity. And girls who go to school become educated mothers who are much more likely to talk to their daughters about MHM and in turn, prevent future cycles of shame. Clearly, it is imperative to prevent girls from dropping out.

One of the simplest ways to do that, I have learned, is to build a toilet.
SARALA KAL

Host Organization
PEOPLE’S ORGANIZATION FOR RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Location
MADANAPALLE, ANDHRA PRADESH

Thematic Focus
PUBLIC HEALTH

Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Community Initiatives, Young Engagement and Mentoring.

The AIF Clinton Fellowship taught me to not only analyze, question, strategize, and implement various schemes with resources that I would have never been able to find anywhere else, but also build friendships that are going to last a lifetime.

PROJECT Summary

My organization is holistic in its work, focusing on various aspects of improving the lifestyle of individuals living in slums, villages, and tribal areas in the Chittoor District. We have four teams each with an area of interest: child rights, water and sanitation hygiene, domestic violence, and women’s farmer’s rights. In the beginning of the Fellowship, I focused on learning about the organization and developing relationships with my coworkers. On my first day, my boss stressed how important it was for me to befriend and gain the trust of my coworkers as that would lay the foundation for the success of my project and Fellowship experience. I worked with each team for 1-2 weeks, shadowing them, helping with documentation, sending reports to donors, and arranging meeting notes.
Once I understood the structure of the organization, I was ready to start building my project and implementing it in the field. My project focused on working in a small village called Vempalli. Along with my coworkers, we surveyed the area by interviewing children, elders, leaders, and parents. Once everyone, including myself, acclimated to the environment, I started conversing with everyone on my own. Eventually, the villagers started recognizing who I was and were comfortable inviting me into their home and answering my questions honestly. I then worked with every team separately to put together a plan to improve each aspect of the village. It was now time for implementation. By the time we started visiting village meetings, Anganwaadi schools, etc. everyone knew who we were and that our intentions were good, and were therefore willing to listen to what we had to say. Though I was too nervous to start speaking at these meetings on my own, within a few weeks, I was holding the mic and standing in front of crowds by myself with no qualms. After working for the last eight months, I can confidently say that Vempalli is on the road to real progress. Parents are more aware of the benefits of keeping their children in school, ten toilets (a whole street) have been built, one child marriage has been stopped, several domestic violence issues have been brought to the attention of the police department, and most importantly the name “PORD” invokes a feeling of trust and safety amongst the villagers.

**My Journey**

My favorite thing to do in the entire world is eat. During breakfast, I think about lunch, and during lunch I think about dinner. In fact, the first thing I thought about when I was accepted to this Fellowship is how great it would be to eat my way through India. So, it is rather fitting that I compare my Fellowship journey to one of the greatest meals in the world: a South Indian thaali. A thaali, depending on the size and grandeur of the restaurant it is being consumed at, consists of 8-12 small dishes. A large helping of rice along with a puri or roti is served with a lentil, curries, sambar, biriyani, pickle, chutney, rasam, yogurt, and a local sweet. My very first time eating a thaali, I was overwhelmed and intimidated. How could I get through all of these amazing dishes? What if I wanted more of one? Or worse, what if I got full before I could try every dish? Similarly, when I first arrived in Madanapalle, I was overwhelmed, anxious, and scared as to how I could possibly get through ten months of working and living in a village. My favorite aspect of the thaali is that it gives you a taste of all the wonderful spices that India has to offer. The unique opportunity to relish a small portion of rich, sweet, spicy, salty, flavorful, and pungent dishes leaves one feeling more satisfied than almost any other meal.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

On January 24th, 2017, Chittoor District celebrated the one-year anniversary of a new program entitled “Community Police Force.” As someone that had personally witnessed the effect this program had in our working area, I was asked to speak at the event by the Superintendent of the Police Force. Though I should never say never, I know I will probably never have the opportunity to make a 7-minute speech in Telugu in front of 5,230 people again. This was especially important and special for me because I had the chance to represent my organization and talk personally about my experiences interacting with the community.
This Fellowship journey has been just that for me. There have been days that have made me feel like I’m on top of the world, wanting to stay in India forever. There have been nights when I’ve cried myself to sleep wondering why I ever agreed to be away from my family and friends, counting down the days till I could fly back home. There have been many moments when looking at toilet paper has made me happier than it probably ever should. And there have been numerous events when I’ve felt humbled, privileged, grateful, and wholeheartedly astonished that I was lucky enough to be one of 30 people receiving the opportunity of a lifetime. At the end of my meal, I sit back in my chair, not because I have time to waste, but because I physically cannot get out of my seat for fear that I will fall over and excrete ingested food. Yes, the chutney will probably burn my stomach lining, the rice will make a dent on the weigh scale, and I’ll be inappropriately burping for the next few hours, but I will leave feeling extremely satisfied. On July 1st, I’m going to board my flight back to Los Angeles, reminiscing my arrival and thinking back on all of the experiences this wonderful country has given me. And I will leave feeling more love and loyalty for India than I ever have before and a thirst to come back for even more.
SUMEDHA GOSWAMI

Host Organization
SALAAM BOMBAY FOUNDATION

Location
MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA

Thematic Focus
PUBLIC HEALTH

Communications and Development, Community Initiatives, Youth Engagement and Mentoring

AIF Fellowship has helped me to make connections for life while pushing me beyond limits professionally.

PROJECT Summary

As an organisation, Salaam Bombay Foundation engages “at risk” children through in-school leadership programs and after-school sports, arts, media and vocational training academies. These programs build their self-esteem and give them the confidence to stay in school. Throughout my Fellowship experience in Salaam Bombay Foundation, I have worked with the Communications team here. Owing to my video making skills, I started my work here at Salaam Bombay Foundation (SBF) with making videos about the success stories of beneficiaries. Over a period of eight months, my work at SBF has remained more or less dedicated to the visual medium. I have made videos, assisted on editing, trained and facilitated kids on photography and shot photos for various purposes.
My work here was never a project-based thing. After the end of my Fellowship here, the organisation will still use the products I created for their fundraising purposes and they might keep producing these visual outputs as their visibility and impact is much more than any other medium.

At SBF, the cause everyone is working for is sensitive. Here the beneficiaries are children and so, sensitivity is an important issue. It is important to document activities with the required sensitivity and I believe, I brought that with me. I always made sure that these products spoke about the matter sensitively. I have always tried to be objective about my approach and thus making the community people comfortable with me. Since video is a powerful medium and comes with an immense responsibility, I succeeded in producing videos and photographs which not only states the fact but states them with sensitivity.

In the past eight months, the communications team has produced 12 videos (includes success stories, “Thank You” video, process and impact video, promotional videos) and done four photo shoots.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

“The art of solving a problem head-on” - The Fellowship taught me a lot of things but professionally, that one quality which I take away from working in SBF will be the way I have learnt to solve problems by approaching it directly. While at first, my initial reaction to a seemingly impossible task would be “no, not possible,” my reaction now is, “sure, why not! Let’s try it.” I have found that this has put a positive spin in my own attitude as well as in those around me and has made a huge difference.

**MY Journey**

I applied for this Fellowship after much self-doubt about whether or not I would ever get through. It was 1:20 am on 30th June, 2016, when I read the mail that said I had been selected as an AIF Fellow. I still remember, I could not sleep that night thinking what if it was a dream and sleeping off might actually mean waking up. Silly! I know, but that was exactly how I felt. Professionally, this Fellowship is the best and most challenging thing that has happened to me till date, and on that night I was overwhelmed with the thought of working with these amazing people from my country and abroad. One of the best parts of this program is that it amalgamates culture, talent and work beautifully. This can be seen and felt in all aspects of this Fellowship program. Above all, this Fellowship has made me believe that when like-minded individuals come together, change is possible and feasible, despite cultural, geographical or political challenges. I hoped that this Fellowship would show me and clarify the path that I would take in future. And from what I learned from the experiences of Alumni, the Fellowship has the potential to be so much more than just professional or personal. Meeting new people and reaching out at grassroots level have been a few of the important reasons as to why I consciously chose the development sector for my professional growth. At SBF, going to the slums for a home visit was something I was looking forward to. As we walked into the house of one of the students, Priyanka, from the Salaam Bombay Arts Academy, it was unexpected to find a family of 5 in a 8×8’ room. It has been eight months and I never thought one could learn so much about themselves in such a short period of time. I want to remember this Fellowship for
two important lessons of my life: We never stop building relationships no matter the age and we often undermine ourselves when it comes to the capacity to recover from difficult situations. In the course of this Fellowship, I have seen sunshine and dark days. To be honest, I was never alone no matter how I felt. I have started appreciating human relationships much more now. I never thought I would value new-found friendships at this age and this point of life. Staying away from family wasn’t a new thing for me, but I least expected to find friends who became family in such a short span of time. The second and most important realization which came because of this Fellowship was that I am stronger than I thought I was. Whether it was difficult professional times, adjusting to a new city (read big city), ill-health or challenging social relationships, I never knew I could get through them without going through them in reality. I found that I need to recognize the resilience I have in me to pull through and finish what I have started. That resilience makes me a better person and professional. I cannot thank the Fellowship enough for pushing me to those limits to realize my actual self.
YASIN KHAN

Host Organization
BROADLEAF HEALTH AND EDUCATION ALLIANCE

Location
DARJEELING, WEST BENGAL

Thematic Focus
PUBLIC HEALTH

Impact Assessment, Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Technology and Innovation

The AIF Clinton Fellowship helped to push me to persevere through challenges and focus my future goals.

PROJECT Summary

This year my circle of colleagues expanded beyond my office. Shopkeepers, domestic helpers, tea farmers and health workers that I have gotten to know have taught me that context is everything. What it means to be healthy and care for your family vary significantly depending on your vantage point. Hearing the stories of people living across various social economic statuses, I’ve struggled with what development actually means and how to deconstruct the privilege imbedded in walking into a community and presuming that I can help them. My first project was to conduct a qualitative impact assessment of Broadleaf’s Community Health and Hygiene Improvement Program (CHHIP).
The program started five years ago and while quantitative data was collected throughout the years, there was a narrative missing. I trained my colleagues on how to conduct qualitative assessment, run focus groups and then transcribe data and analyze the resulting data. Through this process I’ve also worked to capture and collect the stories behind CHHIP’s success. I also conducted needs assessment of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) among tea laborers in Darjeeling. In the next ten years, India is expected to experience more deaths resulting from NCDs than any other country. Although risk factors for NCDs are higher among urban populations, they are increasing at a staggering rate in rural populations. The purpose of our needs assessment is to ensure that we understand the community’s current health situation and can structure the future program around their perceived needs and preferences. I created a survey in Nepali and English for tea laborers about their NCD risk factors (diet, exercise, tobacco and alcohol habits) and their medical history, to capture the current prevalence of diagnosed NCDs. The questions were based on the WHO STEPwise approach to non-communicable disease risk factor surveillance. Along with the survey data, I’ve conducted a literature review of NCDs in this region of India and Nepal and have gathered interested stakeholders all of which will serve as the foundation of a future program.

When I arrived in Darjeeling, I found myself sitting through hours of meetings in Nepali that I could not understand, feeling like an outsider and wondering how I’d be able to contribute if I couldn’t follow the conversation. It quickly became apparent that I should learn Nepali. One of my colleagues connected me to a native Nepali teacher that teaches English and I became her first Nepali student. In December, 2016, I made an impromptu Nepali speech at a small celebratory lunch. Then later, I was able to go to a partner NGO’s paramedic retraining and understand about 70-80% of what was being said. By May, 2017 I was administering the NCD survey that I wrote and then translated with my Nepali teacher and coworkers directly to tea workers! I did not understand everything the tea workers were telling me but I could follow along enough to ask for clarifications. The survey participants were kind to me and waited patiently when I stumbled over my words or struggled to answer an unexpected question. I have a long way to go with my spoken Nepali but being able to use it in a professional context makes me excited and hopeful for where it may lead me.

### My Journey

After completing my Master’s in Public Health, I began learning Urdu through the Critical Language Scholarship (CLS) Urdu program and the American Institute of Indian Studies (AIIS) Urdu Fellowship. Learning Urdu and thus spoken Hindi was an important step towards achieving my professional goal of improving the health of South Asian immigrant communities in the United States. I applied to the AIF Clinton Fellowship, as it seemed like an ideal way for me to apply my language skill directly to public health work in India. I thought that my year of

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**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

My largest professional achievement has been learning Nepali and using it in various professional contexts.
language study in Lucknow would enable me to navigate a professional work environment and that the two years combined would provide some essential insight into how to act as a catalyst for social change within South Asian communities in America. Broadleaf's idea to start a NCD program for tea laborers sounded like the perfect next step for me. Upon arriving in Darjeeling, I realized it challenged many of my ideas about India. Everyone was speaking Nepali, there were no autos to be found, chai referred to black tea rather than the milky masala chai I was accustomed to. The names of people, places and holidays were completely new to me. Also, it was freezing. Where I had expected to build on the know-how that I developed in Lucknow, I found myself at the start of a steep learning curve. I moved in with a Tibetan Buddhist family for a few months and began learning about the history and culture of Darjeeling and Sikkim. We ate thukpa, a noodle soup, and iskus, a local squash whose roots, leaves and fruit are all eaten at different times of the year. Alu dum, momos and chowmein replaced the samosa, chaat and biryani I was used to eating in India.

There is a saying that you can say anything about India but the opposite will also be true. Living in Darjeeling has expanded my vision of India to include this geographically, historically and culturally unique place. It was a challenging feeling like I was starting from scratch in a place that was much more unfamiliar than I had anticipated. Eventually, I started to see “starting over” as an opportunity to gain insight into a community I had no previous connection to. Once I began trying out Nepali phrases, I realized how surprised people were that I was learning the local language rather than deferring to Hindi. This year has been challenging and many things haven’t made sense to me, but I’ve tried to keep this sentiment in mind - to keep asking questions and do my best to interpret the answers I’m given. Eventually the all of the listening will amount to speaking and I’ll be able to more actively participate as well as observe and listen. I’m not sure how the lessons I’ve learned this year will shape what comes next. My ultimate goal of working with South Asian immigrants in the US to improve occupational health and safety has now expanded to include Nepali speakers alongside Hindi and Urdu speakers.
TECHNOLOGY & INNOVATION
AVAN ANTIA

Host Organization
MADRAS CROCODILE BANK TRUST (MCBT)

Location
MAHABALIPURAM, TAMIL NADU

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Research, Strategic Initiatives and Innovations

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was release me from my comfort zone, surround me with incredibly inspiring people, and let me grow.

PROJECT Summary

The Madras Crocodile Bank Trust, lovingly called the “Croc Bank,” is home to over 2,000 reptiles: from snakes, to giant tortoises, to crocodilians. As one may imagine, with so many reptiles, the Croc Bank rakes up loads (literally) of manure! For years, that manure has been mixed with leaf litter in a large compost pile. Unfortunately, the pile has risen to unmanageable levels and continues to grow since there is no current outlet for using the compost.

Additionally, about 22,300 visitors pass through the park per month, disposing of their trash in bins located throughout. Therefore, loads of organic and inorganic waste are generated on-site. As a conservation-based organization, MCBT strives to have as small of a carbon
footprint as possible, which means dealing with all these wastes in a sustainable manner.

My project was to develop an eco-friendly, sustainable, and financially favorable solid waste management (SWM) plan for dealing with both the recyclable and compostable waste generated at the Croc Bank.

SWM is a community-based issue, as it requires the participation and cooperation of every person. Littering has become a norm and as long as there is already litter on the street, adding something to the pile doesn’t seem to matter. If any change is to come about, we must change the mindsets of people on the topic of litter and acceptable waste disposal practices. The education component of the project involves conducting workshops on SWM and environmental science at the rural schools that are part of MCBT’s educational outreach program.

Some of the specific aspects of my work included running plant growth trials to test the efficacy of our “Crocodile Compost,” creating interactive SWM and environmental science activities to use in outreach programs, and forming ties with local organizations that specialize in SWM. Since my SWM project added a new component to the existing work done at the Croc Bank, I was essentially the only person “specializing” on the subject. While I was new to the subject myself, I was somewhat of the “SWM expert” at my organization.

Upon completion of the Fellowship, I will be able to hand over a detailed plan to restructure the current compost pile and introduce a revised, scientifically sound composting method to be used into the future. A database of SWM educational activities will also be made available for the education team to infuse into the existing reptile workshops that are presented at schools.

After all, species conservation goes hand in hand with environmental protection!

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement You Are Most Proud Of**

On Earth Day, we held a public event at the Croc Bank in order to promote environmental literacy. As resident “environmental representative,” I was tasked with planning the event and preparing the materials. Throughout the park, we set up various interactive booths, including a water filtration station, waste sorting game, and “Jeopardy” style quiz games.

Almost every visitor that passed by tried their hand at the games and demonstrations. Teams of visitors battled it out at the Earth Day Jeopardy Game and some were rewarded with potted plants for their efforts.

The success of the event can be summed up in one young visitor’s remark: “Thank you for doing this. We know [environmental protection] is an important topic, but sadly we haven’t had the chance to learn about it anywhere else.”

**MY Journey**

My Fellowship experience has been about the relationships I have made here in Tamil Nadu. My director, my coworkers, and the kind park staff have all impacted me. But it doesn’t stop there. My relationships with the people in the over-crowded public busses, auto-walas, and shopkeepers have also inspired and grounded me. There is a certain feeling of pure exhilaration knowing you can navigate through a crowded city where you do not
speak the language, depending solely on the willing help of the people around you. It’s a feeling of “we are all in this together.”

I entered this Fellowship thinking that it was going to change me. That by some sorcery, living and working in India for ten months would actually alter the person I have been for the past 22 years.

My college career was mainly dedicated to science, specifically molecular and microbiology. I loved it, and still do. But at the end of those four years, I was ready to take on something new. I’d had previous experience working with non-profits and I had always been interested in blending development work with my passion for science. The AIF Clinton Fellowship was perfect for giving me an opportunity to learn the ropes of conducting a long-term development project in a new environment.

I was set on challenging myself in order to attain this personal growth. I genuinely wanted to be culturally shocked and exhausted to the point of some perceived enlightenment. I was prepared to be mentally, physically and emotionally challenged. The day I arrived at the Croc Bank, armed with copious amounts of mosquito repellant, I was ready to rough it. The first few days were smooth. The next few were smooth as well. In fact, as time went on, daily life was pretty simple. I had a nice bed, insanely delicious food, a helpful group of co-workers, a stunning beach in my backyard, and even a friendly dog that kept me company! What was I expecting?

The things that I thought would be challenging were not. Interestingly enough, obstacles arose in tasks that I never imagined were capable of being difficult. But this is exactly what I wanted to experience, right?

When various aspects of my project hit a roadblock and things got tougher, I conveniently forgot my initial desire to be challenged and sought a quick remedy. I sought advice from my coworkers and fellow Fellows to gain perspective on how to approach these roadblocks creatively. The people I spoke to, whether it was in English or in broken Tamil, were the ones who reminded me how lucky I was to be in such a unique position of learning, serving, and leading. In slow but steady steps, I regained control of the reins and learned how to navigate the situation.

However, looking back on my experience, I haven’t fundamentally changed as a person, but rather strengthened the qualities that were always essential to who I am. This Fellowship gave me the space to meet incredible people who brought out the best in me. Just as development work itself often aims to create a support system for communities and individuals, every relationship I have built in Tamil Nadu is part of a network of support that helped me move forward in the Fellowship.
Benjamin Brennan

Host Organization
SAFA

Location
HYDERABAD, TELANGANA

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Young Engagement and Mentoring,
Education

This Fellowship helped me enter a world few have the opportunity to experience and witness, while challenging me personally and professionally.

**Project Summary**

I worked on a project that sponsored children to gain access to higher quality education by enrolling them in a private school. Additionally, the project would have focus groups, trainings, and follow up meetings with teachers, parents, and children to ensure they had adequate support throughout the year. This support would hopefully encourage the children to stay in school, and emphasize the value of their education to families. The ultimate goal, years from now, the project would have groups of young adults advocating for their communities and being role models for younger generations. From the beginning, my mentor emphasized the importance of planning and implementing a strategy for every facet and step of the
Even though the majority of the process was slow, I learned preparation was critical. In the beginning, my work focused on research of youth development and operationalizing program strategy; by the end my work focused on building relationships with teachers, and community leaders, and implementing everything I had researched and planned before. Every new step of the project I learned something new. Thankfully, this is an ongoing project and am proud to have contributed to something that will hopefully last a long time. The donor wanted something that would affect groups of children for years to come, and thus the work we completed had overall goal in mind: reach at least 50 kids, and have them continue with the project until their graduation.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

Obviously, the professional achievement I am most proud of is enrolling nine students into a private school. The opportunities that now lay before them, and considering the backgrounds they were coming from, is something that I will carry with me until I see them again. Seeing how excited and determined they were to start in a new school, challenge themselves, and make new friends was an uplifting experience. I’m proud of what they accomplished, and excited to see how the program progresses in the coming years.

**My Journey**

SAFA, by nature, is an organization that is looking for new ways to become involved and embark on new, exciting projects. As long as the project is feasible and impacts the community for the long term, SAFA will consider taking on, new opportunities. Thus, with so much going on I was given a lot of independence to generally frame the project. My mentor and colleagues provided a lot of feedback, as I was nowhere near the experts they were. My presence, I believe, was a helping hand in a small organization where people had multiple projects going on and needed support.

One moment I’ll always remember is the day the nine children selected for my project enrolled in school and received their books. It was a crowning achievement, for everyone. Everyone involved (the families, the children, the teachers, staff) knew how important this moment was. It was a tremendous opportunity for the beneficiaries and their families and they were excited to take advantage of the opportunity and prove themselves. Seeing the children gleam with pride holding onto their bags of books culminated into a sense of feeling that it was all worth it. All the minor setbacks and challenges disappeared. The moment resuscitated my waning confidence in my work and the development sector in general; and solidified the leap of faith I took when I accepted the Fellowship. It reminded me that positive change is slow and constant.

My Fellowship was sporadically perforated with moments like these. Small breaths of refreshing air before diving back into the vast ocean of doubt and frustration, vacillating between hesitation and action. I tried swimming on my own countless times despite common sense reiterating to me to grab onto a buoy for support. It was at times likes those that I felt I was drowning.

Thankfully, just when I thought I couldn’t hold my breath for much longer there was always a stark moment of...
when I was reminded of why I was here. Whether it came through a new friendship, the signing of a MoU for my project, or a simple kind gesture from a stranger, moments of inspiration would haphazardly occur to help me catch my breath. When I did, it was important to reflect and cherish what I accomplished.

This work experience will guide me on a new career path and work in areas I am excited learning more about: youth development, gender inclusion, and education. I strongly believe that you cannot learn about one without learning about the other. They are deeply intertwined. The research I conducted, and the on-the-ground experience I gained provided me insight into myself, my relationships with coworkers, and the type of organization I would take pride in working for. Most importantly, I learned how valuable it is to listen to other people’s advice and opinions. Many aspects of the project hindered on gathering information, and fortunately I was surrounded by a knowledgeable team that worked hard to see me achieve the best.
DENISE FERNANDES

Host Organization
MANTHAN

Location
VILLAGE KOTRI, AJMER, RAJASTHAN

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Impact Assessment
This was a transformative year of my life because I got to live through the different challenges of life and humanity in difficult social and natural environments while learning to embrace that change and development are long-term processes.

PROJECT Summary

I worked with the staff members and discuss why their current programmes in Education, Watershed and Livelihoods are important for them and the community. Through building a Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) framework, we established the main objectives of these programmes and what do they hope to achieve. I collected all the data they had, brought it to a central place and interviewed some of the stakeholders that had benefitted from it. Using these interviews and inputs from the organisation members on the goals and objectives of the, I designed an M&E framework that the organisation can use when applying for grants or if they plan to conduct further impact assessments.
Besides this, I also worked on setting up a pilot women’s school in a nearby village called Nosal. This school was envisioned for illiterate women who were interested in basic literacy and numeracy, political, economic and environmental literacy, life skills and other changes in society. I helped the organisation on getting funds through crowd funding, on designing the impact assessment surveys and on implementing the project.

Through my project, the organisation has realised the importance of proper project documentation and data keeping and how important “evidence” of project outcome and impact is to showcase for funding. I personally feel that after I have shown some of the programme outcomes to the organisation members, they have gained some confidence that their work on these programmes is indeed helping local communities. I hope that this will enable them to work better for the future projects.

I have learnt how to build strong relationships with communities in order to initiate any sort of development work from my colleagues. The practical side of development and its implementation through different forms, processes and mechanisms is what I have benefitted immensely and this experience will help me bring in new insights to my PhD and future research work in the development and environmental sector.

**Professional Achievement I’m Most Proud Of**

The designing, fund raising and implementation of the women’s school in Nosal will be one of the best profession achievements of the year as it thought me how to interact with different stakeholders in different places to bring about a change. Though it was a challenging task, it was a great learning experience.

**My Journey**

A piece of advice an old nomadic lady shared on one of my field visits is something that defines my Fellowship journey. I had gone with my colleagues on a solar assessment survey to a small hamlet (Bhagrio ki Dhani) in Parbatsar where the oldest lady of the community came up to me. She stated, “Development is something where you listen to a person’s needs and necessities and then act on it”. This one statement challenged me to rethink on how we perceive development and what it actually is for people who live through different development issues.

Interactions with the Bhagrio Community (a nomadic tribe dependent on the forest) in the area made me wonder as to why certain groups of people do not have access to the privileges of modern society and what are the factors and processes that hinder this access. Visions of the hostile landscape in which they settled and this unique community occupied left me with numerous questions on the history of these people and their settlement process in such hostile and unproductive environments with little access to the basic necessities of life. Larger questions on what does this type of existence mean for “development” as a practical concept and an achievable reality if certain communities are neglected and excluded in the development process by modern mainstream society. I started looking at how development and change are two sides of the same coin, but the process to achieve them is slow and culturally different. Uniform and top-down solutions to development might only hinder the process...
to change and thus it becomes necessary to understand history, culture and its relationship to development. A glimpse of these excluded communities has made me introspect deeper on the mirage of development. If “development” is a national agenda then it makes me wonder why has it taken so long for government schemes and facilities to reach these communities or why are they still inaccessible to many. Development is a mirage but with exclusions imbedded in the very structures of societal functioning, it becomes a fissured mirage as many of these communities - especially indigenous and nomadic groups and dalits - do not even feature in the spectrum of development work. Indian society has viewed “development” through the prism of “differences” and not as “human life or existence”. Structural inequalities and societal exclusions in India deeply impact existing levels of poverty and hinder the achievement of development goals. Exclusions define the ways we use, share and govern our resources or formulate and implement our policies.

Thus it becomes essential to understand the factors (environmental, social, economic and political) that lead to development or hamper change especially for excluded groups in Indian society. And until we as a society change the prism of viewing human life, development will only remain a fissured mirage with our ambitious and desired development goals only remaining a distant reality.

I have always had a fascination to understand the inter-relationship between social, cultural and ecological systems along with development challenges. I had applied for the AIF Clinton Fellowship 2016-17 with a hope to understand different development issues, sustainability practices and to enhance, broaden my curiosity, awareness and appreciation for new development perspectives, cultures and innovative solutions for change. Through this journey of ten months, I have understood the inter-relationship between social, cultural and ecological systems and how practical development work is carried out.
ERIN TATZ

Host Organization
JANAAGRAHA

Location
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Strategic Innovation and Initiatives

This was a transformative year of my life because I made an important transition from academia to the workplace.

PROJECT Summary

When I joined Janaagraha, their civic participation campaign was already in full swing. I had to learn quickly, adapt, and observe intently in order to keep up with the fast-paced environment. As the campaign came to an end, my work shifted to being more reflective: I developed a handbook that will act as a guide to successfully carrying out a civic participation campaign for future team members and similar initiatives. I think my biggest impact was keeping precise data on the progress of our online presence and social media platforms. I developed a framework for measuring engagement and impact on social media that can be vital in future years while the
team is developing the most effective communications and marketing strategies.

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement I’m Proud of**

Our “My City My Budget” campaign in Bangalore earned a Social Media for Empowerment Award, and I am immensely proud to say that I was an integral part of developing and implementing the social media strategy for the campaign. I am truly humbled by being part of such an effort, as I previously had little experience with handling social media. I am so grateful for my coworkers, fellow team members, and mentors who provided me with the encouragement to take risks, the space to make mistakes, and the confidence to learn from them. It was in this type of environment that I was able to collaborate with the team and we were able to achieve something worthy of praise.

**My Journey**

I walked into my first day at my host organisation buzzing with nerves and uncertainty. As a recent graduate, I had no formal work experience to draw upon in my new role. This made me anxious, unable to concretely see the months ahead and how I would translate four years of coursework in critical theory into a desk job. I tried to tell myself that I felt the same way when I attended my first college class or handed in my first assignment to a professor; I assured myself that I was competent and capable of learning, adapting, and doing meaningful work.

I can’t say how well this technique succeeded in soothing my worries, but regardless, I dove into the work I was given with a “sink or swim” attitude. As I soon realised, however, the social development sector is not one where sinking or swimming are easily discernible. Sometimes, and certainly in my case, it is difficult to see what impact your work is having on the actual issues you are seeking to take on. I began to understand first-hand what my colleagues meant when they told me that our work can be frustratingly ungratifying at times, and I admired their ability to keep afloat despite.

As the days passed, I began to find a mental balance where I understood that there was no visible link between every email I wrote and the difference it made to the organisation or to the community, but I still pulled all of the inspiration I could out of the vision of my organisation and fellow colleagues. Overall, I developed a much more intimate and grounded understanding of how theory translates into work, and how work translates into change. I developed an understanding of the type of work that people in this sector actually do on a day-to-day basis, and I absorbed the perspectives of those around me to more clearly understand why and how I want to make a difference. As the Fellowship comes to a close, I am struck with the realisation that I have just dipped my toe into the water, and I am energised and eager to utilise the skills, knowledge, and perspective that I have gained over the past ten months to venture deeper into the vast sea of work that is being done in the social development sector in India.

My motivation to work in the social development sector was always anchored in my respect for those who did this type of work. My time as an AIF Clinton Fellow has only strengthened that sentiment, as my colleagues have
provided so much guidance and have stood as powerful examples of how to approach the work that we do. My colleagues are exceptionally passionate, and their dedication and constant excitement towards their work is unbelievably refreshing to me. Their focus and optimism is invaluably uplifting in the many mundane moments where it is easy to feel disconnected from my work, and their pride and encouragement makes our collective achievements even more meaningful to me. Essentially, my colleagues have offered me an approach to work that artfully balances the tension between our lofty goals and the minute tasks that are required to reach them.
JANAN DAVE

Host Organization
BEMPU HEALTH

Location
BANGALORE, KARNATAKA

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Impact Assessment, Research, Strategic Innovation and Initiatives

This was a transformative year of my life because I was pushed out of my comfort zone and empowered to be strong, resilient, and independent.

PROJECT Summary

BEMPU is a social enterprise based in Bangalore that develops and distributes life-saving technologies for newborns in low-resource areas. The first product in our portfolio is a smart bracelet for newborns that detects and alerts in instances of hypothermia, allowing intervention early and preventing severe illness and death.

At BEMPU, I worked on public health initiatives and partnerships management, as well as on initiatives that raised BEMPU’s profile as a thought leader in the global public health community. This involved data collection and analysis for BEMPU’s clinical studies; managing our website, monthly newsletters, and social media accounts; new product ideation and grant writing; presentation and
content creation; representing BEMPU at various events and conferences; developing and maintaining strategic partnerships to expand BEMPU’s reach in the Indian government sector and international markets.

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement I’m Most Proud of**

When I first arrived at BEMPU, we had just been asked by the Rajasthan government to do a pilot of our device in ten district hospitals and Sick Newborn Care Units in rural Rajasthan. The pilot was challenging due to numerous difficulties on the ground. There were many extra hours of data entry and analysis, calls and site visits, but ultimately, the project had a positive outcome. And as a result of the pilot, which showed that babies who received the BEMPU bracelet had better growth rates and lower death rates than babies who did not, the Rajasthan government procured the BEMPU device, so now babies born in certain government facilities in Rajasthan will receive a hypothermia alert bracelet.

**MY Journey**

Being in India for the past ten months has challenged me personally and professionally in ways I could not have predicted. There have been days that have left me feeling overwhelmed, beaten down, and helpless; and, there have been days have uplifted me and given me new insight, direction, and energy. The entirety of this experience has been transformative, but it is the women I have met here who have left the greatest mark. In the process of working with them, learning from them, and listening to their stories, I have been empowered to find depths of inner-strength, resiliency, and independence, along with renewed energy and commitment to working in the service sector.

Melinda Gates has said, “When we invest in women, we invest in the people who invest in everyone else. Women tend to spend their resources on their families—they prioritize things like healthcare, nutritious food, education, and all the building blocks of a thriving society” [1].

Due to the nature of my work I had to work very closely with new mothers at various local hospitals. And the mothers I met there are true examples of above statement. Despite likely being exhausted from new motherhood, along with various other responsibilities they are incredibly attentive in their care for their newborns. It’s been powerful to see over and over again, this commitment to care.

Two site visits in particular stand out for me. In January, I got the chance to spend a few days in rural Jharkand with AIF’s Maternal and Newborn Survival Initiative (MANSI). It was here I met Babita, a Sahiya (trained community health worker). Upon meeting her, I was awestruck by her diligence, resourcefulness and immense knowledge of not only the subject matter, but of her community. She has resolved to improve the health and conditions of women and children in her village. Babita’s strength, quiet confidence, and commitment to her work provided much needed perspective, and brought out my own tenacity and determination to go forward.

In the spring, I was able to visit rural Maharashtra to meet our new partners at the Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Medical Sciences (MGIMS) in Sevagram. At MGIMS,
I met Dr. Shakuntala Chhabra. In addition to serving the women and children in Sevagram, she started a sister hospital in a nearby village that had one of the highest maternal and child mortality rates in the country. I was most struck, however, when I learned that she also started Aakanksha, a residential adoption institution on the MGIMS campus where unwed mothers shunned by society and their babies could be housed and rehabilitated, and the babies were helped to find adopted families throughout India. The doctors I met at MGIMS embody living a life of service, and from their service they seem to derive their resounding strength to work tirelessly in the most emotionally and physically exhausting circumstances.

In the beginning of this Fellowship, there were many days where I would go to bed feeling lost, homesick, and unsure of how much I was contributing to BEMPU, my community, and to India in general. This year in India is my first time being so far away from home and far from the support network on which I typically rely. Now, at the close of the Fellowship, I genuinely feel stronger, more determined, and more independent than I ever have before. I have been encouraged to be stronger myself, as well as more committed to living a life of service. I came to India to be challenged and to grow both personally and professionally; this past year has done that and so much more for me – I feel more inspired and ready to take on whatever lies ahead than ever before.
KEITH SCOTT

Host Organization
AIF DIGITAL EQUALIZER (DE)

Location
BHUBANESWAR, ODISHA

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Impact Assessment, Research

The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was provide me with an experience that helped bring clarity to my future professional goals, and that’s: program strategy.

PROJECT Summary

For the past ten months, I have served at the Odisha office of the AIF’s Digital Equalizer (DE) program to support their efforts in monitoring and evaluation, and to measure program effectiveness. DE focuses on bridging the digital equity divide in India’s public schools. Our aim is to enhance the classroom by training teachers to effectively use technology and implement diverse teaching methods. This work has spanned the entirety of my project and involved the collection and analyzing of data from students and teachers in DE schools. Part of this meant tracking the differences in test scores of students from DE schools and comparing them to non-
DE school students, as well as understanding DE teacher perceptions on technology integration, teaching methods, and DE itself. Initially, my project focused on Odisha, but over the course of the Fellowship, my work and the resulting reports included nine additional states.

During the first half of my project, I also conducted independent qualitative research in the Keonjhar District of Odisha. Spending one month in the field, I visited schools to interview teachers about the challenges they faced on the ground. This experience provided a firsthand look at the context in which DE operates, but also demonstrated the difficulties that institutions – particularly development organizations – maneuver in providing and maintaining quality services to neglected and remote areas.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

Part of my work at DE Odisha was to conduct independent research to understand the context in which the program operates. At the beginning of my project, the focus of this research was still unclear. After some months of learning about the program and seeing it function on the ground, I realized that there was no existing data to demonstrate the unique type of environment that DE Odisha operated in. For example, we had no “hard” numbers demonstrating the average number of computers available per school.

In order to collect this data, I coordinated with 25 field staff across four districts in Odisha. This meant that I needed to design the data collection tool, identify key data points, pilot the tool, and then organize information sessions with staff. Apart from not hitting the initial deadline, I successfully completed my project. Now the DE office has data which can help provide insight on the context in which it operates. Through this work, we can begin the process of re-designing DE Odisha to increase the impact of the program and become more efficient.

**My Journey**

My experience in Keonjhar proved to be a big influence in providing insight on the contextual forces that shape the course of developmental efforts. I went to schools that were grossly understaffed: I saw teachers conduct classrooms with two grades in one room; some teachers handled 50-60 students in one period. With respect to our program, this context impedes possible impact. DE helps schools integrate computers into the curriculum. That means that DE installs the computers and trains the teachers to learn how to use these computers so that they can integrate them to create a more engaging classroom and provide students with the skills needed to excel in an increasingly digitized workforce. The challenge is, in many cases, teachers already feel overwhelmed due to schools being under-staffed. Compound this with the fact that a majority of these teachers have no prior experience with computers, DE’s job to convince teachers to integrate technology is made much more difficult.

After a month of field visits, I came back to Bhubaneswar with an arsenal of criticism, much of which I later would realize were misjudgments about DE Odisha. I returned to the office ready to right the wrongs, and offered up my solutions and suggestions to alleviate the pain points of the program’s implementation. None of them stuck.
In fact, most of these solutions I suggested had already been attempted in the past. Imagine the frustration I felt. What I thought to be negligence, was due to my frame of reference: I joined the Odisha office in its 14th year of operation. I simply was not aware of the historical progressions, and the pivotal moments which would shape the environment that I would come into for ten months of my project. Where I thought DE could course correct, I’d soon find that the context would not allow for it.

Because of the Fellowship, I have learned valuable lessons about myself and things to keep in mind as a young professional in the development sector. From a personal standpoint, I came to the Fellowship wanting to make substantial impact at my host organization. Over the course of the program, I realized I had unrealistic expectations about the amount of impact I could have. I didn’t know all the answers. This was a very sobering thought. I learned a simple truth: to be patient with myself. Where this affected me professionally, is to realize that while I have a skill-set to make an impact, I still have much to learn and need to consider the outside factors as I pursue my work in development. Throughout the course of my fellowship, my co-workers’ positivity reminded me every day of the value of perseverance. The frustration that I encountered due to obstacles I hadn’t anticipated, is unlike anything I’ve experienced before. To see my co-workers remain positive was incredibly energizing, and it’s something that I will continue to lean on in the future.
OLIVIA WARING

Host Organization
PEOPLE’S ARCHIVE OF RURAL INDIA

Location
MUMBAI, MAHARASHTRA/CHENNAI, TAMIL NADU

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Communication and Development

After years of attempts to “find my purpose” in industry and academia, I’ve finally found, in the Indian development sector, a way to weave together all the disparate threads of my experiences and passions.

PROJECT Summary

I had the good fortune of working with India’s foremost rural journalist on his passion project: a website devoted to telling the stories of India’s most marginalized populations. In the words of its founder, P. Sainath, the People’s Archive of Rural India (PARI) endeavors to serve as a “living archive of the past, a journal of the present, and a textbook of the future.” In my role as an apprentice journalist, I’ve travelled from Tamil Nadu to Andhra Pradesh to Gujarat to Odisha to Rajasthan and back again, along the way encountering the astounding and varied people whose stories I sought to tell. I’ve also been able to draw upon my experience and training as
a software engineer to contribute to PARI’s brand new multimedia website, a joint undertaking by dozens of designers and techies.

I also wrote a mobile application that assists in the documentation of endangered Indian languages by non-linguists in the field. The data that this app helps collect and codify is hosted on the PARI website, helping to build a comprehensive repository of India’s linguistic diversity. Furthermore, I’ve played a role in devising PARI’s open source development strategy, ensuring the longevity of their platform by helping to recruit and train some of the best engineers and software developers in the industry.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

Collaborating with AIF Fellow Tali and her colleague Anjali Aggarwal on a story about Mordungri, a village relocated from the Ranthambore Tiger Reserve, was my first foray into the world of investigative reporting, and it was as exhilarating and humbling an experience as any I’ve had in India. Chatting with the people of Girirajpura and hearing their recollections of the forest paradise from which they were forcibly evicted. Visiting the remains of their demolished village, and meeting the two families that remain there, stranded by the Forest Department and stalked nightly by “Tiger 57”. Conversing with parents in Tilak Nagar, also victims of the Mordungri diaspora, who simply want their children to have better prospects than they did. Hearing these people’s repeated pleas that we do something – that these conversations not be in vain, that we somehow make their voices heard – charged me with a sense of mission and determination that I’ve rarely experienced before or since. I’m not sure if our story will make its way to the desks of decision makers, but I hope to be able to say I tried my very best to live up to the unofficial motto of journalism: “speaking truth to power.”

**My Journey**

At PARI you’ll find a motley crew – writers, editors, translators, photographers, videographers, coders – scattered about on an even more motley assortment of window ledges, stools, and orphaned couch cushions. Sainath himself appears at intervals, unannounced and without fanfare, to check up on our progress and chat. A few minutes of conversation with him are more energizing than a shot of strong South Indian coffee from his 100-year-old brass filter. I feel painfully, palpably starstruck in his presence; yet for all his professional renown, and the dozens of awards that adorn the office walls (not to mention the dozens more stashed haphazardly in cupboards), the real-life Sainath is down-to-earth, kind, hilarious, and utterly relatable. That’s what it means to be part of the PARIvar. There’s no place here for hierarchies or ego. “Parivar,” the Hindi word for “family,” conveniently contains our organization’s acronym: a happy linguistic accident, perhaps. But it’s no accident that we’ve chosen this pithy moniker to describe our scrappy band of journalists. And the family ties don’t end at our doorstep. All of India belongs to the PARIvar. The Archive is a truly collective undertaking: of, for, and by the people to whom it owes its existence. A team of volunteer translators renders content in a dozen regional languages. The ongoing “Faces” project, which aims to compile at least three photographs – one man, one woman, and one child – from every rural district in India, now boasts over 540
published entries from 121 districts (out of India’s 687), with scores of contributions directly from the public.

The list of “Reasons Why I Was Never Quite Cut Out for This Gig” could rival the Bhagavad Gita in length. Here are just a few: I’m too inexperienced, I speak nursery school Hindi, I’m too white, I’m a bad software engineer, I’m an amateur journalist etc. There are people who could offer PARI so much more than I ever can. Who would produce effortlessly elegant code, in a fraction of the time. Who would call upon their impeccable command of Indian languages to write probing, incisive articles on highly nuanced issues in rural development, while treating their interlocutors with a tact and sensitivity that I can never hope to achieve in my bumbling Hindi. Indeed, during all the interviews I’ve conducted in rural India so far, I’ve been acutely conscious of my outsider status and the unavoidable fact that, despite my best efforts to immerse myself in the communities I report on, I will always be somewhat guilty of “parachute journalism.” There are people who wouldn’t be overwhelmed by the crush and clamor of Mumbai; who wouldn’t go for days at a time eating raw parathas for dinner, because the honking and the shouting and the staring and the oppressive isolation of the city are just too much to bear. There are people who would be graceful, useful, and impactful, in all the myriad ways in which I’ve fallen short. But I’m the one who’s here. And at least that’s a start. And sometimes – in India, in the development sector, and in life – “not being good enough” is, well, enough.
TRIP EGGERT

Host Organization
CREA

Location
NEW DELHI, DELHI NCR

Thematic Focus
TECHNOLOGY/INNOVATION

Strategic Innovation and Initiatives, Communications and Development

In this Fellowship, I was challenged in ways I never could have imagined, and came through it with some of the greatest friends I have ever met.

PROJECT Summary

At the start of my Fellowship, I was working with a small NGO in rural Rajasthan to develop an accessible communications strategy for their field staff. Now I am working on developing in-house social media campaign strategies for CREA, a feminist human rights organization working to advance the rights of women and girls, and the sexual and reproductive freedoms of all people. In my project, I was looking at best practices for issues such as running a bilingual social media campaign, when and how analytics tools and metrics are useful, and comic series on how to support abortion seekers will actually translate into a safer, more supportive environment. The largest shift over the course of the Fellowship has been from
When a patient comes to me seeking an abortion, I take the pre- and post-counselling seriously. I want them to know what their options are...

We talk about their birth control needs & options...

I'm worried about...

Can you tell me more...

I need help with...

Medical abortion?

Surgical abortion?

They have space to talk and ask questions...

We talk about how to take care of their physical and emotional health after the procedure...

I believe it is my responsibility to provide safe and high quality medical care. That means I take the time to care about the needs and concerns of my patients.

#ABORTTHESTIGMA

for safe abortion access & reproductive justice.

@CREAworld.org
@thinkCREA
think.crea
creaworld.org
approaching work by saying, “Can we do this?” (i.e., do we have the skills and resources?) to saying, “Why are we doing this?” (i.e., is this the best approach to work around destigmatization? Does this translate to change on the ground?).

The #AbortTheStigma campaign I have spent most of my Fellowship working on, is the first campaign run entirely in-house by CREA: all the content has been developed, drafted, and hosted by the organization itself, instead of relying on media partners who often have good intentions, but might skew the message. It is the first time that CREA is running a fully bilingual campaign, and so while we tackle small issues, like whether to post the Hindi and English content in the same post or separately on Facebook, we also navigate larger issues, like how we can navigate the politics and power of two languages with contentious histories in a country that has 21 official languages, and countless more that are spoken on the ground.

**Professional Achievement**

I’m most proud of the #AbortTheStigma campaign that I have worked on since January with some really excellent people. From the development stage where we analyzed common visual tropes around abortion, to the campaign itself, which has some beautiful blog posts on abortion and consent, pleasure, disability, among other topics, as well as some graphics I’m very proud to have worked on. We have done something to be proud of, from process, to content, to measuring its impact.

**MY Journey**

There is nothing as powerful as working with good people, and the kind of people attracted to working at CREA are among the best. I had the chance to spend most of my days surrounded by fiercely intelligent, kind people, who personally and professionally are always fighting to complicate and expand and support gender and sexual rights. From the professional dialogues about how to represent complicated human rights conversations, such as those between abortion rights activists and disability rights activists, to the personal moments connecting with colleagues about what it is to be a woman or queer or an activist in a rapidly changing, sometimes terrifying world, my organization and my coworkers have taught me how to look at myself and my work, ask what can be done better, what can be investigated more, and to translate that critique into powerful action. Coming in and working explicitly in a communications capacity created space in the organization for CREA’s in-house potential to be explored and realized.
At the end of my first month at Medha, I was introduced as UX designer who will work to improve the overall Medha student experience through user research. The mandate was huge – every department in the organization is part of the process which eventually aims to ‘better prepare the youth (Medha students) for life after school.’ I was given a free reign to choose my own methods of enquiry, and design my own project plan. The only challenge that I could foresee, at the time, were the ones that could be put up by own limited professional experience in designing service solution for social sector organization. However, I had joined AIF and Medha with
the express objective of learning exactly this – how to create and execute a complete system design project to create solutions which enhance the overall program efficiency in the social sector. Graphic design as my secondary skillset was put to good use when I offered my support ad-hoc to the department by hiring new recruits and mentoring them. I’ve been lucky to have lovely colleagues who often expressed their admiration and interest in my work, often working together or looking for opportunities for learning the skills themselves. Now, at the end of the fellowship, my project has come to fruition. I’ve been able to develop a system which focuses on enhancing student experience while also offering data support to the organization. This was achieved by creating new product collateral keeping both the trainer and student stakeholders in mind. Currently, the system and collateral is undergoing testing. From the month of August, 2017 onwards, these new collaterals will be used by 500+ students across the state of Uttar Pradesh for the next one year after which they’ll undergo their yearly revision.

**Professional Achievement I’m Proud Of**

This is the first time in my design career that I conceptualized, developed and executed a service solution with minimal assistance from any other designer. I have learnt what it takes to manage a project within the development sector – I have come to appreciate the whole gamut of challenges and learning opportunities when you work with an under-staffed team working in an unstructured environment.

**My Journey**

This year, I stepped away, firmly and far away from the ‘world of designers’. I stepped into the nebulous, the unknown – social sector. It was my firm belief that equipped with design thinking and cognizant of the correct design approach to creating effective service interventions, I will be able to create lasting solutions for my host organization. The only challenges I could foresee were the need to consult senior designers on some gritty problems, and not finding any.

My project started with the generalized aim to improve efficacy of the programs, launching a never-done-before research on primary stakeholders: students. A new toolkit was designed to extract unbiased input, meaningful stories and use those insights for program re-alignment. The next steps include redesign of all tangible artifacts in a student’s journey experience such as to indirectly reinforce a sense of confidence and self-belief for their life after university.

It all started with preliminary stakeholder research – what is Medha’s stakeholder profile and how do they rank in priority? What were their behaviors & attitudes and how were they different from other stakeholders? What was their mindset? What are their dreams & aspirations, what inhibited them and what motivated them take up new challenges? How does this change across socio-economic levels and other demographics? We needed to get unbiased data on these questions before we could even start talking about students’ and their experience during learning.

While I conducted employer interviews to identify market and sat in multiple trainer counselling sessions to understand career needs, there was still the tricky
bit about research. How do I design my research in a manner that I can circumvent the constraints to prevent biases and still get an in-depth data on student profiles? I decided that a new way had to be devised if students were to willingly answer reflective questions without being biased or feeling incapacitated by lack of language skills or misinterpretation of words and phrases. The toolkit was designed and implemented in form a 90 minute activity session. About 300 students across 7 geographies were reached. The activity followed steps 1-5 for each question card, after which the steps are to be repeated for the next question. I used methodologies like affinity mapping where unsuspecting colleagues participated to uncover patterns across a variety of narratives. Micro and Macro themes were identified by extracting key variables from within one geography and comparing them across all for each data set. The research yielded fascinating insights into the daily lives, challenges and aspirations of the students. Their self-perception, anxieties and motivations in narrative form, including the use of images presented an incredibly detailed description of their perspective and the diversity across geographies.

By January, 2017, Medha, through its now wanted to reaffirm the sense of self-worth/esteem in its students. This vision of self-worth which is currently outward looking for most i.e.; acquired by external validation, needed to be steered so as to eventually become more inward looking – to being internally acquired by self-reflection, self-affirmation and self-belief. The project scope now suggested a critical look at all tangible interactions/interfaces. Re-thinking and re-design of these tangibles were undertaken with an overall aim of (directly or indirectly) reinforcing and subconsciously strengthening (internally acquired) sense of self-worth/esteem.

The next two months included working with colleagues across ToT, Impact Evaluation, M&E and most noticeably Program Design and Curriculum to identify how ‘self-confidence’ could be interpreted in a measurable and tangible manner. We also wanted to be able to integrate the working and needs of other associated departments such that the 30 hours delivered in class could feed in relevant data to departments in shape and form that would be truly useful for them throughout the year. We conceptualized a new way of delivering, conducting and documenting the sessions such that while the resources remained same, the opportunities for learning could increase multifold. This resulted in new educational kit for the trainer and students.

It gives me immense happiness and satisfaction to see the new trainers using the manuals and the old ones exclaiming with excitement when they see the new versions. As I prepare for the state-wide roll out for the month of August, I look back at the year which seemed like an unending ordeal and find myself happy to have made it through. I am reminded that challenges would not cease to exist, especially for me now as I leave the country this fall for further studies as would find myself yet again in an unfamiliar space. But this unfamiliarity is good and now I go forward being more optimistic than I was when I started last year.
LAW & ADVOCACY
NOLBERTO ZUBÍA

Host Organization
COMMONWEALTH HUMAN RIGHTS INITIATIVE

Location
NEW DELHI, DELHI NCR

Thematic Focus
LAW AND ADVOCACY

Research, Strategic Innovation and Initiatives
The most powerful thing the AIF Clinton Fellowship did for me was connect to me a network of passionate and dedicated people both in the fellowship and at my host organization.

PROJECT Summary

When I first started at the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI), my program within the Strategic Initiatives Programme (SIP) office was renascent and thus the workflow and thematic focus spanned from writing on the use of violence by State forces in Kashmir, to researching on the proposed Indian citizenship bill (that excluded Muslims), to understanding India’s interaction with the United Nations mechanisms of the Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review, to monitoring the case of an Indian national given the death penalty in Indonesia, to pushing the Commonwealth’s Ministerial Action Group to act on growing authoritarianism in the Maldives.
SIP decided to focus on a project that discerned Commonwealth ideology and analyzed ten years of votes and statements by India and other Commonwealth countries at the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). The project looked at all abstention or against votes by India, and whether there were recurring themes or country-situation resolutions that India opposed. Moreover, our research compared India’s votes at the HRC with India’s diplomatic explanation of their vote, domestic human rights record, and principled commitments to the Commonwealth. Over the course of my project, SIP redefined itself and reoriented its work towards the thematic focus of human rights defenders.

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement**

I’m Proud Of

I am most proud of the grant I wrote to the United Nations Democracy Fund (UNDEF) for the amount of $262,000 with the dual goals of releasing as many pre-trial prisoners as possible and re-shaping the public’s perception and othering of prisoners. The grant aimed to conduct know your rights trainings with pre-trial prisoners, pay the surety bond for people who cannot afford it and would otherwise wait behind bars until their case goes to trial, and partner with the media to humanize pre-trial prisoners and tell their stories. Shortlisted candidates for the grant will be notified in the summer. Regardless of whether UNDEF funds the grant or not, I am grateful for the introduction to grant-writing and for the opportunity to channel my prison abolition dreams in a productive and tangible manner.

**MY Journey**

Three experiences best summarize my personal and professional reflections: first, my research and grant writing on the demographics of the prison population; second, an event I attended by people who had been tortured, wrongfully convicted, and then had their cases exonerated; and third, the rally I attended directly after the Delhi Queer pride parade.

The prison program of my organization collects statistics and reports that of Indian prisoners who are detained and awaiting trial and were either not granted a surety bond or cannot afford to pay it, 70% did not finish high school, approximately 33% are Scheduled Caste/Scheduled Tribe, approximately 32% are what the Government terms “Other Backward Classes,” and more than half of pre-trial detainees are under 30 years old. While none of this information surprised me, I was reminded of the years I worked at a public defender’s office and visited pre-trial clients who were disproportionately Black, Latino, young, poor, and did not finish high school. I understand that the histories and struggles of minority communities in the U.S. and India are different, but I continue to critically engage the system that despite radically different histories can have the same outcome of criminalizing the marginalized. When I start law school in the fall I will continue to ask myself what effective resistance and recourse there is to the institutional discrimination of the police/judicial/prison system – and whether justice is possible within these frameworks.

The next event that helped me understand that some struggles are more global than others, was an event in New Delhi where Indian Muslims shared their stories about how they were charged with carrying out the
7/11 Mumbai terror attacks, were tortured to confess, convicted, and later had their cases exonerated and were let free. I thought back to a client in my former office who was undocumented and Muslim from Central Asia and who was baselessly detained on suspicions of terrorism. I re-read passages from the U.S. Senate Intelligence Committee Report on C.I.A. torture that recounted how the U.S. tortured detainees accused of terrorism after 9/11. The speakers at the New Delhi event reiterated that during their detention they met many men with similar stories of innocence and a failure of due process. I was reminded of Guantanamo. I recognized that India’s 07/11 and the U.S.’s 09/11 not only share the tragedy of a terror attack but they also share the tragedy of the disregard for human rights in the State response to terrorism.

The next event that made my soul smile and gave me tears of solidarity was a rally after the Delhi Queer pride parade. One of the main event organizers and speakers gave a speech on a stage somewhere near Connaught Place that ended with the cheering that “Trans lives matter, queer lives matter, Kashmiri queer and trans lives matter, Dalit queer and trans lives matter, Muslim queer and trans lives matter, Tribal queer and trans lives matter,” and the crowd repeated after him. I was reminded of the time I was with a group of protestors and we shut down Sixth Avenue in Manhattan chanting “Black lives matter.” I reflected on the importance of intersectionality and how U.S. queer spaces or Black Lives Matter protests sometimes fail to recognize converging identities but here on the other side of the planet the crowd seemingly understood, at least verbally if not internally. In a deeply unsettling and comforting way, I felt that the resistance is global and that there are communities and people you will never know in solidarity with you.
PIOUS AHUJA

Host Organization
COUNSEL TO SECURE JUSTICE

Location
NEW DELHI, DELHI NCR

Thematic Focus
LAW AND ADVOCACY

Impact Assessment, Research

This Fellowship helped me to understand that there is more than one way to get justice for victims and empower victims of crimes while providing me confidence to lead projects with big teams and complete them successfully.

PROJECT Summary

I started my fellowship doing research and analyzing common trends. As I have a legal background, I also actively assisted Counsel to Secure Justice (CSJ)’s lawyer in her court cases. CSJ provides lawyers and social workers to victims of child sexual assault. My work with CSJ involved researching the reasons behind adjournments of trials which delay the adjudication of trials within the one-year timeline and violates the Protection of Children against Sexual Offenses Act (POCSO). After looking through the reasons behind the adjournments for cases from the last five years, I compiled a study. My team and I later presented this study to pertinent stakeholders: key judges...
and law enforcement officials. As a result of this study, internal circulars were passed by these stakeholders that prohibited unnecessary adjournments.

I also facilitated a Rape Trial Project with the legal clinic at National Law University (NLU) on analyzing judgments of POCSO cases from the last six years. I created the curriculum, recruited interns and mentors, managed the structure of the program, facilitated training and analyzed final reports. Over the course of my Fellowship, my project expanded into researching pending CSJ cases for chronicled discrepancies among the testimonies of the prosecution witnesses, bail requests and results, and any gaps in the case that the defense could use to further its case and impact assessment of the Domestic Violence Act (DV Act). As I concluded my research I provided a training to the CSJ staff on the DV Act.

**PROFESSIONAL Achievement**

**I’m Proud Of**

I am extremely proud of the legal clinic where I was the primary facilitator. When I became the primary facilitator, I recruited over a dozen legal interns. As this was my first time leading a team as big as this, I utilized different technological methods to maintain an open communication channel where the interns could discuss any issues openly with me or the assigned mentors. I also made myself available to them through either Google hangouts or by holding office hours at NLU. At one point, all of the interns returned to their respective states, so I held virtual meetings with them to stay in touch. The interns not only completed their tasks successfully, but also on a timely manner. In the end of the project, I organized a celebration to provide a forum for the interns to share their experiences working on the rape trial judgements. The interns collectively worked on over 500 different rape trial judgements. Many interns were first-year law students who had never worked on such cases before. They spoke about how different this experience was for them and how much they learned about sexual assault through this project. Though some were frustrated by the judgements as many cases resulted in acquittals for the accused due to the main witness retracting the statement, many were motivated to become public interest lawyers themselves as a result of this project and help to change the system.

**MY Journey**

This year has been truly transformative for me as I have learned to navigate and understand a very different cultural and legal landscape than my own. I am thankful to my colleagues at CSJ – they are like family members for me. The stories that we hear on a daily basis about child assault is not something we can simply leave at work. Moreover, living in Delhi, has its own share of challenges. Delhi is a special place for me. I was born here and lived in Delhi until I was ten and my family moved to Easley, South Carolina. I didn’t return until fourteen years later, for a legal summer internship. After this, I decided to pursue a path that would allow me to return to India for a much longer time to better understand India, my identity, and my biculturalism. When I returned again, this time to work with CSJ for ten months as an AIF Clinton Fellow, I realized how much both my once home and I had changed and evolved.

At lunch, all of my colleagues and I share our own experiences of micro-aggressions that occur on a daily
basis. Since my first day of work, I have found a small family at my job where we not only share food but experiences. This experience of being able to share our experiences openly has made me more confident and helped me greatly in continuing this type of work. Through these, often heavy discussions, we, as progressive feminists, have formed a bond that is everlasting. I have formed a newfound appreciation for these women’s strength who, despite the odds, continue to fight for victims of sexual assault.

Through this Fellowship, I also learned how to facilitate policy changes through impact assessment, advocate for victims using informal mechanisms, and improved greatly my legal research skills. By working with victims of sexual assault for their testimony and conducting their cross prior to their testimonies in court, I gained important interpersonal skills necessary for public interest lawyers who regularly work with vulnerable witnesses. I had never supervised interns before. Due to this Fellowship, I directly supervised sixteen legal interns and successfully completed a project in a timely manner. I am now confident that even if I am inexperienced in something, by using my past experiences and creative solutions, I can master the project successfully.
AIF CLINTON FELLOWSHIP
CLASS OF 2016-17

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ORIENTATION

SEPTEMBER 3RD TO 18TH, 2016
NEW DELHI

The Orientation officially kicked off the 2016-17 AIF Clinton Fellowship, and is designed to be a rigorous two-week engagement that includes professional training, exposure to the development sector, and setting the goals and intentions for the rest of the Fellowship year. Orientation is the formative event of the Fellowship year, as it informs how the Fellows, Mentors, and AIF staff approach the Fellowship year as a collective community.

The Orientation for the class of 2016-17 had a variety of innovations including an official welcome ceremony, a two-day mentor conference, and collaborative
planning conversations with AIF Staff, Fellows, and Host Organization mentors. Other sessions included internal sessions to build trust and community within the Fellowship class, goal-setting, alumni meet, engagement with the larger AIF community, and speakers who helped shape their expectations about the development sector in India. The sessions were also designed to encourage Fellows to be more aware about themselves as well as the environment they would be entering in the ten-month Fellowship.

The highlight of Orientation was a two-day Mentor Conference where the Fellows were officially introduced to their mentors. Their projects with the Host Organization were discussed, which informed the creation of their project plan of goals and deliverables. The Mentor Conference also included a collaboration workshop entitled, “Project Planning for an Enriching Fellowship”, key note speakers who shared their experiences in the development sector, and inter-cultural work training.

The other vital part of the Orientation was a three-day Exposure Visit, which was conducted in Kishangarh, Rajasthan. Fellows visited grassroots organizations like Manthan, Organization for Early Literacy Promotion (OELP), and Barefoot College. Through this they gained contextual understanding of grassroots development including community-based interventions, and how to engage with local institutions and government.

The Orientation received very strong and positive feedback from AIF, the Mentors, and the Fellowship class as it helped bring together all of the communities who are working together to make the Fellowship year a success.
The Midpoint Conference is an integral part of the AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India experience, and as the Fellows convene from across India in one location, Midpoint intends to offer a space of meaningful connection, engaged reflection, exchange and capacity-building, as well as personal and professional development for the Fellowship class.

The conference marked the completion of half of the Fellowship, as well as the second time that the Fellowship class came together as a whole. As Fellows were deep into the Fellowship experience, Midpoint was an opportunity to resurface and reconnect as a Fellowship class, and to forge new relationships with the Clinton Fellowship Program (CFP) Team, and also gain additional insight on strategies to move forward with the Fellowship experience.
At Midpoint, the Fellows shared the progress of their projects so far in collaborative groups focused on the themes of Impact Assessment, Strategic Initiatives, Youth Engagement and Mentoring, Community Initiatives, Innovation, Research, and Communications.

Other sessions included advice from Alumnus Michael Matergia (founder of Broadleaf Health and Educational Alliance), an interactive workshop called the “Yes And Way...” with Playspace Founder Madhu Shukla, and “Reflecting on the Fellowship Journey So Far” with Learning, Evaluation and Impact Director Varna Sri Raman.
The Thematic Conferences are designed to expose Fellows to a wider perspective of the development sector outside of their placement, therein gaining new perspectives and insights on how to implement their ongoing work at their host site. Additionally, the Thematic Conferences are a space for Fellows to collaborate and practice generating innovative solutions in the context of the development space.

This year, the Thematic Conferences were framed around AIF’s main thematic areas of Education, Public Health and Livelihoods, and are all intentionally planned to be in a rural geography.
THE Education CONFERENCE

The Education conference was hosted by LAMP (Learning and Migration Program) in Kutch, Gujarat. Based at the Unnati campus in Bachau, participants were able to visit LRCs (Learning Resource Centers), as well observe a migrant labor worksite at the salt pans. Participants were asked to reflect on their own school experiences, and also discussed ongoing interventions and issues in the education sector. Fellows worked to also develop a curriculum mind map around two topics—conservation and life skills. They additionally developed several games and lesson plans that will be implemented in the LAMP LRCs.

“I believe, understanding and feeling an environment and ecosystem is a key aspect in making education relevant to a community. The AIF Education Thematic Conference opened the doors to innovation in the education sector, especially for environmental education…”, Denise Fernandes, AIF Clinton Fellow, 2016-17.

“Although just a few days long, the thematic conference was truly a turning point. Spending time discussing education with the other fellows helped me better understand my own project. Education to me is quite possibly the single most important gift that one can give to any person. It is what gives life its eclectic flavor and leaves one craving for more. I am incredibly thankful to have the opportunity to work in a field where I can share my enthusiasm for knowledge with others and hopefully inspire them to do the same…”, Avan Antia, AIF Clinton Fellow, 2016-17.
The Public Health Conference

The Public Health conference was hosted by MANSI (Maternal and Neo-Natal Survival Initiative) in Jamshedpur, Jharkhand. Participants began by having an overview of public health, focusing on maternal and neo-natal health. By going out into the field, and directly interacting with the communities several case studies were documented and collected over the conference. The first day was focused on visiting the area in which MANSI has been working for the past five years, and Fellows collected several case studies on success stories. The second day was in the scale-up area of the MANSI program, and Fellows collected case studies of maternal and neo-natal deaths.

These case studies have been shared with MANSI, and the case studies of the scale-up area will play a role in the ongoing approach to engaging with those communities.

“Babita has been serving the Bhalukpahari Village since 2010. Upon meeting her, I was taken aback by her elegance and warmth....”, Janan Dave, AIF Clinton Fellow, 2016-17.

“During the public health thematic conference in Jharkand and work-related travel in Odissa thereafter, I had the unexpected privilege to interact with women, face to face, that blew me away. Such heroines can be found throughout history and present day news (albeit, not nearly enough); their stories revealing the great strength, audacity, and ambition of women. Once more, I was
incredibly fortunate to meet them and hear their stories…”
Audra Bass, AIF Clinton Fellow, 2016-17.

THE Livelihoods CONFERENCE

The Livelihoods conference was hosted in collaboration with the Livelihoods team and SRIJAN (Self-Reliant Initiative through Joint Action Network) in Bundi, Rajasthan. Fellows were able to visit a variety of local production units including the Maitree dairy, and a women’s farmer producer organization that is producing soy products. They were exposed to SRIJAN’s work in forming women only Self Help Groups (SHGs) and their income generating activities. Fellows also attended a rally which signified the formation of a cluster level federation of all women led SHGs in the district. Fellows were then asked to develop business and marketing plans for both of these ventures.

“The field visits from the thematic conference offered the opportunity to meet some of those people who worked tirelessly from behind the stage….”
Dharamjeet Kumar, AIF Clinton Fellow, 2016-17.

“Earlier, no one in their village dreamt that illiterate women could run an organization. Now, many are functionally literate and run their organizations in a way that makes Srijan proud. It is not easy work and many other groups in other districts failed, but their SHGs and federation continue to thrive. They are confident that they can lead the way and empower more women to fight for their rights and improve their livelihoods…..”
Cal Brackin, AIF Clinton Fellow, 2016-17.
Through the work at your host organizations, our travels and conferences across Rajasthan, Karnataka, Jharkhand, Gujarat, and Uttarakhand I have personally seen each and everyone of you invest deeply in getting to know each other, yourselves, and your host communities. Thank you for inviting me into your journeys so open-heartedly, and in being so committed to this experience throughout. I've enjoyed diving into the “sea of chaos” with you; whether it was trundling across the Ranchi-Jamshedpur highway, singing Green Day songs at 10,000 feet, getting my shoes stuck in salt-pans, joining the Sunday Maratha Mandir crowd “Ruk Ja O Dil Dewaane” or playing improv games amidst wild boars and monkeys. This yearbook marks the closure of our Fellowship experience as a community together in India, and now we look forward to this community continuing and strengthening across borders and time zones for many years to come.

Katja Kurz
Program Officer, CFP Program

Since joining AIF a year ago, I’ve been greeted so warmly by our team in NY and Delhi that I feel like I’ve become part of a family. I’ve greatly enjoyed working with all of you over the course of your Fellowship. Growing up in Germany but moving to the U.S. after college, I’ve experienced multiple border crossings myself and have seen that change can sometimes happen subtly, one encounter at a time. I’m deeply inspired by your passion, your dedication to development, your moments of success as well as doubt, your growth, and all the things that you’ve achieved over the course of your service. I’ve hungrily followed your journey on your blogs throughout the year, and I look forward to staying a part of your path as you’re transitioning into Alumnihood.

Arpita Saxena
Program Manager, CFP Program

I joined the Fellowship team after my stint in the corporate world and met these amazing bunch of Fellows who are passionate, full of energy and dedicated to their work and the development sector, which made my transition so much easier! I learned a lot through all of your projects and your 10-month Fellowship journey. I take away so many new things learned from all of you. Your work inspired me and your energy is contagious. It was a great time that I shared with all of you for these ten months and I wish all the very best.

Garima Gautam
Program Associate, CFP Program

Working with the CFP Team and Fellowship classes over the years have been a rich experience. I am glad how each one of you is connected so passionately with the community and development sector. I hope all the learning during the Program will benefit you all someday in future. I look forward to learning more about each one you experiences in coming years. My best wishes to the outgoing Class.
MENTOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Rohitash Kumar
Lok Sahbhagi Sansthan

Derek Vigil-Fowler
Lok Sahbhagi Sansthan

Sachin Sachdeva
Gramin Shiksha Kendra

Jyotsna Lall
Gramin Shiksha Kendra

Pavan Chandra
Gramin Shiksha Kendra

Tejaram
Manthan

Arjun Sanyal
Learning and Migration Program, AIF

James Dhabi
St. Xavier’s Non-Formal Education Society and Human Development Research Center
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<tr>
<td>Rajesh Bhat</td>
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<td>Michael Matergia</td>
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<td>Subrat Sarkar</td>
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<td>Jonathan Derby</td>
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The Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation (NSF) enables non-profit organizations and social enterprises to make a positive, lasting and sustainable impact on society. Inspired by the vision of a socially, culturally and economically vibrant India, NSF supports civil society initiatives in sectors such as health, education, and livelihoods. It was established in 2002 with an endowment from philanthropist Narotam Sekhsaria. Similar to AIF, NSF supports individuals and organizations striving towards actions which accelerate change.

To support the AIF Clinton Fellowship, NSF is funding eighteen Indian nationals over the next three years (six Fellows per year). These Fellows are placed at organizations throughout India that focus on cross-sectoral social development projects.

Narotam Sekhsaria Foundation Fellows

Denise Fernandes  
Dharamjeet Kumar  
Lakshmee Sharma  
Nadeem Alam  
Noel Joseph  
Sumedha Goswami

The Infosys Foundation USA strives to inspire children, young adults, and educators to become creators of technology. Committed to bridging the digital divide in the U.S., the Infosys Foundation USA partners with like-minded advocates to increase awareness, foster thought leadership, boost hands-on learning in computer science for historically under-represented schools and communities, and expand professional development for educators.

To bridge this gap, the Infosys Foundation USA has partnered with the AIF Clinton Fellowship to support young professionals to work and develop leadership skills in the area of technology and innovation. In 2016-17, nine U.S. Technology & Innovation Fellows were matched with NGOs in the field of technology, as well as in projects focusing on technology, such as e-learning modules. The partnership aims to empower emerging leaders in applying their technological skills in a challenging new environment and returning to the U.S. as socially engaged change-makers.

Infosys Foundation Innovation And Technology Fellows

Audra Bass  
Avan Antia
To support the AIF Clinton Fellowship, the Stuyvie Comfort Grant supported two Fellows working in the field of Education in 2016-17, and will support two incoming Fellows in 2017-18. The grant has been made in honor of AIF Chairman Emeritus Victor Menezes for his dedication to AIF and his accomplishments as a leader in philanthropy. The grant will be used towards orientation and training of the Fellows, Fellow costs, Program monitoring, and Capacity building & research.

**STUYVIE COMFORT**

To support the AIF Clinton Fellowship, the Stuyvie Comfort Grant supported two Fellows working in the

**Stuyvie Comfort Fellows**

Avital Datskovsky
Timothy Hefflinger