People-Powered Partnerships: U.S. and India Collaboration towards the Sustainable Development Goals

Senior Fellow Dossier 2017-18, William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India
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June 2018, New Delhi

Designed and Developed by StratComm Consulting

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We are delighted to present this year’s inaugural Senior Fellow publication, People-Powered Partnerships. Written from the perspective of development practitioners with expertise in education, livelihoods, and public health, there are multiple tangible examples of how the 2017-18 AIF Clinton Fellowship has forged participatory partnerships to promote inclusive solutions across 15 states of India.

At AIF, we are committed to ending poverty in India by catalyzing social and economic change. The AIF Clinton Fellowship plays a vital role in this mission, as it provides models of how sustainable change can be developed across borders, and links the U.S. and India together towards a common commitment to build an equitable society.

In the AIF Clinton Fellowship for Service in India, we invest in young leaders from the U.S. and India to serve the Indian development sector for a period of 10 months. The partnership between the Fellow and the Host Organization expands the capacities of the Host Organization, as well as the leadership potential of the Fellow. In this year’s batch, there are 27 Fellows, who are serving in 26 organizations across 15 states of India. The AIF Senior Fellow program has brought together three Indian development practitioners to provide technical sector expertise to the Fellows as they work with their Host Organizations.

In culmination of this mentorship, this publication encapsulates the diverse journeys and work products of the 2017-18 AIF Clinton Fellowship class, and provides powerful insight on how inclusive partnerships and solutions are built from the nuances of person-to-person interactions. Through site visits, interviews, and also data gathered from the field, People-Powered Partnerships aims to provide an in-depth view about how the local context of this work connects to global goals. This is a compilation of the lessons learned while mentoring a cohort of U.S. and Indian Fellows working in cross-cultural partnerships with grassroots organizations across India to help foster sustainable development through concrete, local innovations. It also speaks to the power of cultivating service for social impact through intercultural exchange.

People-Powered Partnerships provides inspiring examples of how young leaders are tackling the development challenges of today, and are poised to become the innovative leaders of tomorrow. For readers, we hope this publication inspires you to join us in our journey to ‘Serve, Learn, Lead’ and collaboratively catalyze social and economic changes in India.

Nishant Pandey
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AIF is committed to catalyzing social and economic change in India, and joins the global call to action to end poverty by working towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Since 2001, our Fellowship, has been a strong model of SDG 17: Partnerships for the Goals. In the following pages, we have outlined how the individual contributions of the Fellows have aligned with a variety of Sustainable Development Goals. As we collectively strive for a more equitable society in our globalizing world, the importance of strong and respectful cross-cultural collaboration grows every day.

**Figure 1: Sustainable Development Goals (1)**
In today’s age of interconnectedness, cross-cultural collaboration and partnerships have never been more important. According to a McKinsey study (2) the amount of digital communication across borders has grown 45 times larger since 2005. As we grow more aware and connected to each other as a global society, we become more informed of the conditions and realities of diverse individuals, societies, and countries than we ever have before. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) serve as powerful means to forge connection and partnership towards the uplifting and empowerment of global society as a whole.

Since 2001, the AIF Clinton Fellowship has been at the forefront of building a strong civil society connection between the world’s two greatest democracies – the United States and India – by facilitating partnerships between U.S. and Indian young professionals to serve in the Indian development sector for 10 months. Within the history of the program, AIF has enabled over 452 individuals to work in over 202 partner organizations across 23 states of India. In line with AIF’s goals to catalyze social and economic change in India, the Fellows work with organizations at a crucial moment of scalability in the fields of livelihoods, public health, and education. These 452 individuals are a living example of building cross-cultural partnerships towards sustainable development, which is encapsulated in SDG 17 – Partnerships for the Goals.

As everyone globally works towards the Sustainable Development Goals with the aim to achieve them by 2030, People-Powered Partnerships: U.S. and India Collaborations towards the Sustainable Development Goals captures the AIF Clinton Fellowship Class of 2017-18 and their work across India in driving person-to-person development through micro-innovations, community engagement, and leadership development. Over the course of this year’s Fellowship, the AIF Senior Fellows, who are experienced professionals from the Indian development sector, have mentored and observed the work of the Fellows. The following three essays written by the Senior Fellows encapsulate the work of the AIF Clinton Fellows along with evidence of how these projects work towards the Sustainable Development Goals.

In the first essay, ‘Livelihood Assets at Work towards Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals’, Senior AIF Fellow, Molly Pathak documents how multiple Fellows are working towards inclusive ‘Decent Work and Economic
Growth’ (SDG 8) through implementing solutions that empower women, youth, and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). In the essay, ‘Building an Understanding around Women’s Empowerment? Take off your shoes’, Senior AIF Fellow, Roshni Subhash investigates how the Fellowship promotes cross-cultural understanding and awareness in relation to ‘Gender Equality’ (SDG 5). In the final essay, ‘Developing Micro Innovations towards Quality Education and Empowerment’, Senior AIF Fellow, Razesh Kumar looks at how various Fellows are contextualizing education and life skills education in relation to ‘Quality Education’ (SDG 4) and how to build education inclusive of marginalized communities and voices.

Across all essays, a common thread visible is that to promote an inclusive approach to the Sustainable Development Goals, there is a need to contextualize solutions as per the needs of individuals and communities. As the AIF Clinton Fellows conduct their work directly with the community they serve, their experiences and work act as powerful reminders of how to engage communities with an inclusive mindset, and build solutions and partnerships that are powered by people. As we continue forward in this age of growing interconnection and collaboration, the work of the AIF Clinton Fellowship acts as a compelling model of how to build inclusive solutions, develop sensitive leaders, and build sustainable partnerships for global development.
2 Zero Hunger

3 Good Health and Well-being
Livelihood Assets at Work towards Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals

Molly Pathak
AIF Senior Fellow

In an average household, most part of a person’s life is centered on attaining competency and thereafter practicing livelihoods. Income, expenditure, employment and risk are the four main outcomes of livelihood. These outcomes satisfy basic human needs, starting from self-expression to self-actualization. The Sustainable Development Goal 8 ‘Decent Work and Economic Growth’ recognizes the importance of livelihood generation as an integral element to an individual’s well-being, and that the process of ensuring livelihoods for all must be done with a commitment to equity and dignity. There is a specific commitment to ensure that all men and women are employed and remunerated for their work, and that livelihood development is inclusive of Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). Through the engagement of the AIF Clinton Fellowship Class of 2017-18, there are multiple examples of how the work of the AIF Clinton Fellows, in collaboration with organizations, is promoting a commitment to equity, inclusion, and dignity in the development of livelihood assets across multiple states of India.

A variety of factors influence an individual’s livelihood choices – geography, culture, caste, family origin, education, exposure to other parts of the world, knowledge, skills, experience, attitude, socio-economic and ecological conditions of the household. Poverty, affluence or simple well-being is an outcome of the interplay of these factors and availability of livelihood assets like natural, physical, human, social, financial and spiritual resources.

Approaching United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (3) for the Livelihoods Perspective

‘Livelihood creation’ is a highly acknowledged and fruitful trajectory towards poverty eradication – SDG 1 states ‘End poverty in all its forms everywhere’. The first question that confronts us is: What is that one single intervention which will help end poverty to a great extent? Sustainable livelihoods would be one definite answer to this question. The second question that arises is: How to create sustainable livelihoods? A part of the answer to this question lies in SDG 4 that states ‘Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all.’ Education here would also mean vocational training and skill development. This brings us to the third question: Are there any groups to be prioritized towards gaining sustainable livelihoods? The answer to this is very simple – the planet is home for all human beings; every hand that works should earn, irrespective of culture, religion, caste, creed, and gender. Over the years many organizations across India have empowered women with sustainable livelihoods, thereby leaving a positive impact on the Human Development Index (HDI) of India. To name a few, Lijjat Papad, Kudumbashree, Jayashree Industries, Barefoot Engineers, Khamir, etc. started at the grassroots level and are successful social enterprises today that are promoted by women.
Figure 2: Varieties of capital as they relate to livelihoods generation

- Specific quest present in human beings that makes them seek a better living than the present and a spirit to fight in the face of adversity
- In no way related to religion
- Refers to the drive or eagerness in a human being to excel in a particular task/work/activity

- Encompasses all things that occur naturally
- Becomes a resource only when it is put to use
- Categorization is geographical example, forests, coastal regions, hilly areas, mountains, river beds, wetlands, etc.
- Availability in quantity and quality differs from place to place and has significant bearing on the lives and livelihoods of people

- Financial resources that people use to achieve their livelihood objectives
- Sources include available stocks – cash, bank deposits, liquid assets such as livestock, jewellery and resources obtained through credit providing institutions, earned income, pensions, transfers from safety net schemes and remittances

- All man-made things that have the potential to add financial, social and cultural value to its beneficiaries
- Examples include infrastructure like schools, hospitals, houses, public spaces, buses, dams, etc.
- Some like house, well, tractor, etc. are examples of personal physical capital

- Support that a person/family receives due to the ties that exist between families in a community
- Defined as those features of social organizations, such as trust, norms and networks that can improve the efficiency of society by facilitating co-ordinated actions
- Also defined as the social resources upon which people draw in pursuit of their livelihood objectives

- Availability of human beings with relevant physical/bodily ability, skills, knowledge, attributes and aptitude for work
- These are instrumental in contributing to the livelihoods of the individuals and also drive the progress of countries
- Make human beings into ‘human capital’
- Attributes also include personal character and networks forged
and are doing brisk business with commendable profits. We have these and many other Self-Help Group (SHG) based livelihood interventions to work towards SDG 5 ‘Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls’. Further, SDG 8 ‘Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all’ has a straight connection to livelihoods. Thus, SDGs 1, 4, 5, and 8 are attainable to a large extent through livelihood creation alone!

AIF is directly working towards realization of SDG 17 ‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development’ through its signature program, The AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India. The Fellowship brings together a class of Fellows who serve in community-based organizations in India for ten months. Some of these organizations work on livelihood. The Fellowship, thus, takes forward a key inference of SDG 17 ‘hand holding and capacity building of grassroots level organizations for implementation of successful development models.’

AIF Clinton Fellow, Naveen Kori, placed at Lok Sahbhagi Sansthan (4) had an opportunity to implement the classic model of livelihood empowerment, i.e. women SHG formation followed by setting up of local federation, cluster federation and block level federations. Naveen has been deeply involved in the capacity building of field level institutions, defying challenges of language, geography, and culture. The purpose of Naveen’s project was to collectivize farmers, especially small producers, at various levels across several stages in order to foster technology penetration, improve productivity, enable better access to inputs and services, and increase farmer incomes, thereby strengthening their sustainable agriculture-based livelihoods. The primary objective of mobilizing farmers first into small Farmer Interest Groups (FIGs) and then into a member-owned producer organization or Farmer Producer Organization/Company (FPO) was to enhance production, productivity and profitability in agriculture. The participant farmers were given scientific know-how to identify appropriate crops for their region. They were provided access to modern technology through community-based processes, including farmer field schools and were supported to access forward linkages for enhanced productivity, value addition of feasible products and market tie-ups. A majority of participants in this project were women engaged in agriculture. In fact, this was only the second women-led, women-run FPO legally registered in Rajasthan, and one among a few in India.

AIF Clinton Fellow, Priya Charry, was placed with an NGO named Youth4Jobs, which has a new initiative called ‘Not Just Art’ (6). She had an opportunity to work for livelihood creation for Persons with Disabilities (PwDs). ‘Not Just Art’ is an online platform and is designed to promote the work of individuals with disabilities.

“I have learnt many new skills and have met many new people during the Fellowship. This has helped expand my network and knowledge about rural issues and solutions. Staying in a remote rural village has been both challenging and exciting for me in terms of gaining new learning experiences. I was not clear about my career goals earlier but now as I complete my Fellowship, I have decided to work in the social sector for as long as possible. Overall this Fellowship has been a life changing experience for me.”

- Naveen Kumar Samuel Kori (5)
of artists with disabilities in India to a global audience. It provides a formal channel for PwDs to present their work and engage with a supportive community, while working to legitimize the role of arts as a viable livelihood option. Priya’s role in ‘Not Just Art’ was to build the foundation of the initiative for its long-term success. Her work included research, graphic designing, and artist correspondence, among other tasks. According to Priya, she had some of the most memorable experiences from her Fellowship outside the office, while working in NJA’s partner school and training centers, visiting art galleries, and meeting PwD artists. Priya reflects on one of these visits, where she met with a younger artist – an autistic painter – who had an exhibit in a community art space: “I met his father, who manages his art career and assists his painting practice. Though this artist has achieved some degree of recognition in Chennai, his father was extremely grateful for the national exposure and well-organized social media attention we provide. He expressed his gratitude as a parent and art lover.” Priya concludes that, “The more we bring these artists and artwork into the public eye, the more the artists will receive well-deserved recognition and feel confident in their abilities” (7). These moments took her beyond the limits of her desk to interact with the community in the field, and learn from people in their own spaces. Priya’s project was a reflection of what can be gained by utilizing the ‘spiritual capital’ present in a human being. The artists she had been working with might have a physical or cognitive disability, but their spirit to fight and survive in adversity has been the key foundation of this particular livelihood intervention. To a great extent, Priya’s work at NJA, during the AIF Clinton Fellowship period is a step towards actualization of SDG 8.

AIF Clinton Fellow, Tod Etheredge was placed with an NGO named TYCIA Foundation (Turn Your Concern into Action) (8). His Fellowship assignment was working for functional literacy and life skill development of first time offenders in the Tihar Jail of India through TYCIA. Tod speaks with great passion about his project with TYCIA that involved the creation of a manual that would support the former inmates after their release from the prison. The manual, to be handed to each inmate upon release, would contain a list of organizations, which would provide them with access to assistance for de-addiction, health care, legal aid, mental health support, shelter, food, clothing assistance, employability and advanced life skills. It would be available in English and Hindi, and would have a pictorial guide for those who are illiterate. Towards the end of the Fellowship, Tod informs through his project wrap-up report (9), that he has completed the content compilation work for the manual in English. Further proof-reading, translation, editing and final release are tasks that his mentors at TYCIA will take up in due course of time. Tod’s project helped him focus on re-building ‘human capital’ for livelihoods by creating supplementing tools for a second chance to life. Tod’s Fellowship experience was deeply connected to SDG 4.

Figure 3: Website for Not Just Art developed by AIF Fellow Priya Charry
Collectively put, one can observe interconnections between the contribution of the AIF Clinton Fellows at their respective placement locations with ‘livelihood assets’ and SDGs detailed earlier. A single livelihood intervention connects with the SDGs in multiple ways, and while a particular livelihood intervention may have a larger leaning to any one or two of the six resources, no livelihood intervention can be devoid of any resources. The Fellows’ work during their Fellowship period indicate that interventions do not end in ten months alone. On the contrary, multiple interventions are required to bring a household out of poverty and towards steady livelihood opportunities. All livelihood interventions depend upon the social, political, economic and ecological contexts in which the community exists, hence understanding this context is very critical while planning for livelihood interventions. In the course of their Fellowship, the AIF Clinton Fellows also experienced that the communities should be involved in designing livelihood programs, as that leads to them owning the program and taking it ahead. The interventions designed with community participation need to be based on the community’s reality to ensure a greater scope for success and sustainability.

Through the work and commitment of the AIF Clinton Fellows, new dreams and aspirations have taken birth. A part of the dreams belongs to the young women and men who embarked upon the Fellowship journey defying challenges set by language and geography, and the other part of the dreams belong to individuals, NGOs and other stakeholders who have partnered with the Fellows in their journeys to serve, learn and lead!
**Figure. 4: Interventions related to the SDGs**

1. **Improved nutrition by promoting sustainable agriculture**

2. **Improved nutrition by promoting sustainable agriculture**

3. **Decision-making power to women farmers**

4. **1. Reduction in migration**
   2. Increase in per hectare production
   3. Gain in financial capital for women farmers

5. **1. Work and market opportunities to artists with disabilities**
   2. Life skills and positive education to inmates from Tihar jail
Building an Understanding around Women's Empowerment?
Take off your shoes.

Roshni Subhash
AIF Senior Fellow

The AIF Clinton Fellowship aims to shape the next generation of leaders who are committed to social change. This year’s cohort has many examples of young leaders working with people and organizations that provide momentum to India’s journey to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The Fellowship, in its commitment to strengthen civil society in the United States and India, is directly aligned to SDG 17 (Building Partnerships) and the host partners of the Fellowship this year contribute to several SDGs ranging from No Poverty (SDG 1), Good Health and Well Being (SDG 3), Quality Education (SDG 4), Gender Equality (SDG 5), Decent Work and Economic Growth (SDG 8), Reduced Inequalities (SDG 10) to Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG 12).

While SDGs put forward a common agenda, countries and communities devise their strategies and road maps for achieving these goals. As young leaders who will lead development agenda in their future roles, an important experience for the AIF Fellows is to be able to understand what some of these journeys look like for different communities and cultures.

Tsering Lhamo, a 2017-18 AIF Clinton Fellow, was born in Tibet and was raised in a Tibetan Refugee school in India before immigrating to the United States. She studied international relations at the American University and interned with an international NGO. Her host organization for the Fellowship, AIF’s MANSI (Maternal and Newborn Survival Initiative), works on neonatal and the maternal health of marginalized communities in the state of Uttarakhand by empowering community health workers and local communities (11).

Through her Fellowship, Tsering travelled through three districts in Uttarakhand collecting information on menstrual hygiene from approximately 900 adolescent girls and their communities. The process of conceptualizing and navigating the field research process has helped Tsering understand the nuances of observing and dealing with gender and patriarchy related insights while working in contexts very different from her own.

An experience which opened up Tsering’s view of empowerment was linked to roles performed by the field team members. The field teams were a mix of women and men and while the women actively mobilized respondents for the study and conducted interviews, their male peers didn’t participate in these processes. This initially seemed unfair to Tsering, but on closer observation it was evident that the women were well aware that they had taken on a larger chunk of the survey because of the sensitivity of the topic being studied. Men excused themselves from the mobilization process and interviewing, not as a manner of shirking responsibility, but to ensure the comfort of the respondents and the community in the survey process.
Figure 5: The Gender Equality Continuum (14)

Adapted from http://www.igwg.org/igwg_media/Training/FG_GendrIntegrContinuum.pdf
Salt Lake City, UT, United States

While initiatives that address gender through their work on health or education etc. might desire or aim for equality, they may consciously adopt more gender accommodating approaches to achieve priority outcomes in the short term (13). However, within these seemingly accommodating interventions are stories of transformation and empowerment. For Tsering, while the initial days of the survey threw up questions on work distribution and gender, as the survey progressed she was able to arrive at a deeper understanding of some of the journeys her team members may have had to take to get to where they were. Many of the women on the field team were from communities and households like those of the respondents. Tsering observes that many were also the first women in their communities to work outside the home and provide for their families. While some women navigated familial censure around sexual and reproductive health, others led studies in their own communities around these issues. Today, thanks to their networks, connections and jobs, they are leading a survey which empowered women like themselves and facilitated discussions on topics considered taboo, contributing in their own ways to the journey towards the sustainable development goals of good health, well-being and gender equality.

Mujeebu Rahman is from Malappuram, Kerala. He has a Masters in Development from Azim Premji University and has interned with various non-governmental organizations and civil society movements. Mujeebu’s host organization for the Fellowship, Srijan Foundation, works on gender justice, child rights, livelihoods and safe migration in Jharkhand. Srijan Foundation also leads the Jharkhand Anti Trafficking Network (JATN) (15).

At Srijan, Mujeebu explored the interrelationship between migration, anti-trafficking initiatives, and human rights, and supported communications and knowledge management for their programs. He traveled to different parts of Jharkhand and met with JATN partners and the communities, to develop content for Srijan’s website, reports and other communication products and platforms.

Discourse around migration from states like Jharkhand often focuses on forced migration, trafficking of children and women. Mujeebu’s experience with communities and stakeholders working on migration and trafficking has helped him observe aspects of women’s lives which are not acknowledged enough in conversations around migration and trafficking. These stories of atrocities and exploitation ignore the agency and desire of people who are more than just victims. Migration for many is a way of building better lives and for some also about temporary respite from their own contexts (16). For Mujeebu an interaction which challenged the popular narrative of exploitation, vulnerability and poverty especially around women, was a meeting with seventeen year-old Sarita (name changed). When Mujeebu met Sarita, she had been working in Mumbai for a few years. Prior to Mumbai, she was trapped in a violent and exploitative household as a domestic worker, in another city. She

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To work effectively on gender was to understand the rural context of gender dynamics and how slow progress is. Although it might not seem fair to me, it is in fact a huge development within the context of the villages.

- Tsering Lhamo (12)
Being interested in law, human rights and public policy this year has been truly transformative for me, as I have learned to navigate and understand how the policy-making in India is being carried out. [...] JATN’s initiatives to engage trafficking victims, villagers, local leaders, caseworkers, NGOs, lawyers, researchers and their network members with the draft bill to make sure the public engagement in the drafting was a key learning. [...] I developed much more intimate and grounded understanding of how theories learned in classrooms translate into the ground realities and make sense out of it.

- Mujeebu Rahman K.C. (18)

Significant for Mujeebu, is this experience of seeing aspiration, agency and independence even in circumstances which are unjust and exploitative. Contrary to his expectations, he met women who were mobile, could choose life-partners independently and were confident about their ability to contribute to their communities and families. Young girls and women he observed, were fierce in their determination for building better lives. They may have been cheated or exploited in the process, but many recover, rebuild their confidence and move on once again, working in less than ideal circumstances, but wiser and better informed, cautious yet motivated.

Mujeebu now finds himself looking beyond the more easily accessible evidence to appreciate agency, mobility, decision making regarding choice of partner, working in cities outside their own, being acknowledged as productive and contributing members etc. as markers of empowerment too. In the context of migration and trafficking he is beginning to understand the many layers that influence and fuel the desire, need and decisions around migration of women. Some of these layers speak to strengths and others to vulnerability and to be effective in engaging with migration related concerns both need to be acknowledged and built on.

The journey of understanding contexts and influencing practice is visible in the reflections of many other AIF Clinton Fellows too. Camille Parker came into the Fellowship, trying to shake off images of the oppressed, vulnerable, and voiceless Indian woman and found herself confronted by the laughter of confident vibrant women everywhere she went (19); Esmeralda Herrera cultivated within herself an awareness of privilege and power translating that into sensitivity while discussing marriage aspirations with women in rural Bihar (20); Janelle Funtanilla revisited her notions of privacy and space while taking up research on menstrual hygiene in a slum community (21); Kara Morgan worked on the
importance of opening up herself with the people she interviewed and filmed for her project (22); Maitreyi Nandhakumar discovered challenges of facilitating a discussion on body image among boys (23); Shruti Rajan has been learning from female adivasi community health workers about their lives and health (24); and Subha Shanmugavel had the opportunity to delve into strategies adopted to unpack gender while working with children (25). While it is commonly acknowledged that to be able to understand contexts of specific communities one seeks to work in, it helps to walk in their shoes. For that, the first step would be stepping out of your own.
Figure 6: Interventions related to the SDGs

3. Good Health and Well-Being
- Research with girls on menstrual hygiene

5. Gender Equality
- Conversations about gender and menstrual hygiene in multiple generations in a rural social structure
- Autonomy of women and girls to determine their life choices

8. Decent Work and Economic Growth
- End trafficking and migration
- Identify dignified work

10. Reduced Inequalities
- Baseline to offer solutions for young girls in Uttarakhand to have safe and reliable access to menstrual hygiene
As far as we can foresee the future, we sense that the world our coming generations are going to inherit from us will be marred with many uncertainties. We want our children to inherit a beautiful, peaceful and prosperous world to live in. Thus, we are striving to build a ‘sustainable future’, which needs the ‘human society to undergo a transformation’ (26). The countries of the world have joined hands to change the world. This is the need of the hour and well-articulated in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) through Goal 17 – ‘Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.’

Education, in the broadest sense, is considered to be the most important lever for social, economic and political transformation and a well-educated population, equipped with the relevant knowledge, attitudes and skills is essential for sustainable development in the twenty-first century. The new Indian Education Policy (27) and Sustainable Development Goal 4 share the goals of universal quality education and lifelong learning. The Sustainable Development targets for 2030 call for ensuring the completion of primary and secondary education by all boys and girls, and guaranteeing equal opportunities for access to quality technical and vocational education for everyone. The mandate of AIF’s William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India is helping to deliver practical, sustainable solutions, while shaping the next generation of leaders committed to social and economic development. In 2017-18, out of thirty, at least six AIF Clinton Fellows worked on the theme of education and vocational skills and were placed with different host NGOs such as Bhasha Sanshodhan Prakashan Kendra (Vadodara, Gujarat), Indus Action Initiatives (Bangalore, Karnataka), Kattaikkuttu Sangam, (Kanchipuram, Tamil Nadu), Medha (Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh), Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Program-Aga Khan Foundation India (New Delhi), and Snow Leopard Conservancy-India Trust (Leh, Jammu & Kashmir). It is interesting to understand and analyze a few education related projects to see how the AIF Clinton Fellows developed micro-innovations in diverse communities working towards the SDGs. Micro-innovations are low-cost, community or stakeholder-led practices that have the potential to make a significant positive impact on the lives of target communities and their social environment.

Jamsheena Abdul Jabbar, 23 years old, is from Palakkad, Kerala and has a Postgraduate in English language and literature from the University of Kerala. She was placed at Kattaikkuttu Gurukulam, a social mission driven performing arts organization that uses the integration of liberal education and the performing arts to promote and contemporize Kattaikkuttu (a theatre form) and to ensure sustainable careers for its professional performers. The Gurukulam is the residential theatre school where students learn the Kattaikkuttu theatre without having to give up their formal education (28).
In brief, I can say that from my experience in KKG, education in performing arts, music and theatre creates social, political, humanistic and empathetic impact upon each individual and the community at large.

- Jamsheena Abdul Jabbar (30)

While the organization has been operating with great success as far as art education is concerned, it is now focusing on strengthening their formal basic education component – the teaching and learning of English. Without much exposure to English at home or in their previous schools, the students find English a difficult subject. The preparation of a simplified English curriculum at the Gurukulam was initiated by two European volunteer English teachers. They emphasized the importance of teaching young students phonics and came up with a draft curriculum document (29). Jamsheena’s project was to contextualize, modify, refine, and devise appropriate pedagogical strategies and supporting resource materials to implement such a curriculum.

During the Fellowship period, Jamsheena adopted a comprehensive methodology to refine the given curriculum. She regularly conducted classes to test the additional resources and the pedagogy she was creating, and based upon classroom feedback, she further refined it. Being a Tamil speaker, it was easy for her to bond with the children and work with them. The immediate positive impact of her work is clearly visible. During a visit to Kattaikkuttu, the younger children (7-8 years) tried to communicate with the guests in English. On enquiry, they proudly credited their confidence on the language to the ‘new ma’am’. The Head teacher of the Gurukulam also lauded the efforts of Jamsheena in revisiting the English Curriculum, working with the children as well as building the capacity of the current English teacher.

Jamsheena’s work is a powerful micro-innovation because once completed; it would not only cater to the needs of the Gurukulam children, but will also be scalable to a larger geography of students from similar backgrounds. To this end, a small micro-innovation is being created in a village in Kanchipuram, which relates to SDG 4 and target 4.1 ‘ensuring all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.’

Minahil Khan, 23 years old, from Buffalo, New York, has a Bachelors Degree in Advocacy and Argumentation from the University of Buffalo. She has been interested in working on issues of equity at the intersection of gender, race and class. She was placed with the Nizamuddin Urban Renewal Initiative, a non-profit, public-private partnership with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (31). The goal of the project is to improve the quality of life for the Hazrat Nizamuddin Basti community and improve the visitor experience for both tourists and pilgrims.

Minahil’s micro-innovations focused in the area of women empowerment through skill-building, more specifically, setting the foundation for the women’s enterprise programs to become independent entities. Minahil was involved in strengthening two women enterprises, namely Insha-e-Noor (IeN) and Zaika-e-Nizamuddin (ZeN). The primary objective for Insha-e-Noor, an eighty women handicrafts enterprise, and Zaika-e-Nizamuddin, an eleven-member catering company that specializes in Mughlai cuisine, is
to provide a source of dignified labor to the women of Nizamuddin Basti (settlement).

Given that Minahil was working with two groups on structural components, her project had a series of tasks as opposed to being one independent project. All her work can be thematically organized into three categories: Creation of Market Linkages, Member Engagement and Capacity Building, and Policies and Procedures (32). Through concerted efforts of the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) staff, women members and Minahil, a pop-up restaurant for Zaika-e-Nizamuddin came into existence. In Insha-e-Noor, members were trained, new members were recruited and a leadership structure from within the members was formed. Minahil was helpful in expanding the client base for both the enterprises. She co-created systems to help both groups function more efficiently with less supervision.

The project resonates with SDG 4, target 4.4 ‘substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship.’

My Fellowship experience has confirmed that I want to ultimately work as a gender advocate, and it helped me realize that I need more field exposure. Gaining a better sense of the members’ family dynamics allowed me to understand that working on women’s livelihood is only one perspective on the difficulty that disadvantaged women face. If I want to be a gender advocate, I should gain as much exposure to as many aspects of community work as I can.

- Minahil Khan (34)

The anecdotal accounts from the members of these enterprises are heart-warming! They clearly show the positive changes that the enterprises bring to the lives of the women, and in turn, to the families and the whole community. The learning and models from this powerful project can be replicated elsewhere with some contextualization. This project, once again, establishes the importance of skill-training in adults and young people to empower them and take control of their lives.

Andrew Kerr, 27 years-old, is from Johnson City, Tennessee and a postgraduate in Religious Studies from the University of Chicago. He has also studied Urdu in Lucknow, India. Through his Fellowship, he was placed with Snow Leopard
Conservancy-India Trust (SLC-IT). Since the late Director, Rinchen Wangchuk spearheaded the creation of community-based conservation and development programs in Ladakh and Zanskar, current Director Dr. Tsewang Namgail has led the award-winning Himalayan Homestays program and a highly successful conservation education program in these regions (35).

Andrew’s project was to support in formalizing, and subsequently expanding, ongoing organizational efforts to deliver workshops and environmental education modules to the monastic community. Research has revealed a two-fold motivation for the focus on educating monks and nuns in the region – firstly, they can play a crucial role in monitoring their surroundings to protect natural habitats and maintain conditions conducive to biodiversity survival, and secondly, they can teach the local community about conservation practices as they are held in high esteem by the local communities. This project is an excellent example of contributing towards SDG 13, target 13.3 ‘improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning.’

The specific aim of the project was to develop a protocol for environmental education of the monastic community in Ladakh. This protocol contains information for a facilitator to conduct a workshop in a monastic setting and design an associated curriculum that complements the protocol, including tools that workshop attendants can use to pass this information to local communities (36).

Andrew participated in and carried out a number of workshops for monks and nuns. The immediate impact of these workshops is heart-warming with the participants enthusiastically adopting what was discussed and expressing their intention to take forward the message to nearby villages. The other example of the impact points to a deeper change in the participants. Testimonies from Padum revealed that in 2015, some monks in the area encouraged snow leopard killing. This stemmed from a particular interpretation of the Buddhist teachings about protecting the highest number of sentient beings – if one snow leopard was killed, then all the livestock it could potentially kill would be saved. Without the requisite understanding of the delicate ecology of the habitat of the snow leopard – the natural interplay between snow leopards and the balance of biodiversity in their range areas – the monks and villagers believed killing to be the best course of action. However, through the trainings conducted by SLC-IT the monks were taught about biodiversity and ecological interdependence, leading to the monks instructing the villagers against killing any wildlife. This should be seen as a remarkable achievement that the training programs brought out.

These three projects show how small micro-innovations, if designed carefully, contribute to the larger development agendas of the world, which are unified under the Sustainable Development Goals. These projects are excellent examples of micro-innovations, impacting positively the lives of the target beneficiaries and their social surroundings, and they have strong potential for replication and scalability too.

“The fellowship has, significantly, propelled my career and upcoming prospects in positively surprising ways that I’m sure will only become evident as the future unfolds.”

- Andrew Kerr, AIF Fellow (37)
Figure 7: Interventions related to the SDGs

1. Contextualization of English language curriculum for young, rural artists, scalable for dissemination
2. Skilling as education in terms of how to manage a small business, and also market products
3. Technical vocational skills for youth
4. Education modules that promote environmental awareness

1. Education that is inclusive of girls
2. Livelihood opportunities for women

Improved awareness and human capacity to respond to climate change, and become educated stewards of the environment
References

Linkage to Sustainable Development Goals


Introduction


Livelihood Assets at Work towards Realizing the Sustainable Development Goals


10. Ibid. Page 5.

Building an Understanding around Women’s Empowerment? Take off your shoes


14. Ibid.


Developing Micro Innovations towards Quality Education and Empowerment


37. Ibid. Page 7.
Molly Pathak is a freelancer and works for vocational education and livelihoods. Her professional inclinations are program implementation, monitoring, impact evaluation, research and documentation. She likes to compare and contrast present-day development issues with classical theories of development through case studies and reflective observations, which she pens down as blogs, essays, articles, and stories. Molly believes that her principles define her. While professional goals are specific locations on a career map where she would like to reach, integrity is the compass that she follows.

Molly volunteered for different organizations before moving to work full-time in the development sector. It was through her first assignment at the Azim Premji Foundation that she developed a deep allegiance towards the development sector and since then has been working towards the advocacy of quality education which would lead to sustainable livelihoods.

Roshni Subhash has been associated with women’s rights, gender and public health for the past fifteen years. She has worked in partnership with stakeholders drawn from NGOs, CBOs, national and state governments, and domestic and international donors.

Roshni believes that communication plays a significant role in furthering the sustainable development agenda; especially when it is grounded in context and backed by evidence and principles. This belief is key to her work as she partners with organizations to design communication that is geared for impact and developed through a process of participation and immersion. As the Founder and Director of StratComm, she designs and manages strategic communication initiatives.

Razesh Kumar is the Co-Founder and Director of ‘Revisiting Schooling’, an education start-up based out of Alwar, Rajasthan. The start-up specializes in content development, teachers’ training, program design, research and evaluation.

Razesh has worked in the development sector for more than 14 years in the education domain, in various capacities such as a teacher, teachers’ trainer, researcher, program head, and consultant. He has worked with eminent organizations in the domain including Bodh Shiksha Samiti, Azim Premji Foundation, Tata Steel Ltd-CSR, STIR Education, and Aide-et-Action South Asia. Razesh’s areas of expertise are program implementation, research, teachers’ training, pedagogy of language, early literacy, assessment tool development, and philosophy of education. He has published various research papers and articles at the national and international level.
AIF’s William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India is shaping the next generation of leaders committed to impactful change, while strengthening the pillars of civil society through cross-cultural partnerships to meet India’s Sustainable Development Goals. The Fellowship pairs a select number of young professionals with NGOs and social enterprises in India. AIF Clinton Fellows support host organizations at a crucial moment of scalability by meeting their human resource and organizational needs through skills-sharing, training, and capacity-building. Together AIF, AIF Clinton Fellows and host organizations form dynamic cross-cultural partnerships to exchange knowledge and skills, foster cross-cultural learning and collaboration, and fulfill the commitment to improve the lives of India’s most marginalized communities. Through ten months of service and fieldwork, AIF Clinton Fellows gain knowledge of inclusive leadership in development in the fields of education, livelihoods, and public health.

The Fellowship has parlayed the power of international exchange and combined it with pursuit of service and social impact. Since inception in 2001, AIF William J. Clinton Fellowship for Service in India has sent 452 AIF Clinton Fellows to 202 partner organizations in 23 states of India. The 2017-18 Fellowship class is composed of 27 Fellows, 8 of whom are Indian citizens, placed at 26 host organizations. The projects that Fellows work on during their Fellowship year are closely linked to Sustainable Development Goals. They have worked to advance health, education, and economic opportunity for the most marginalized communities across India. This year, AIF hosted three experienced development practitioners as Senior AIF Fellows to support Fellows thematically on their projects.

The Senior Fellows combined the expertise of seasoned Indian development practitioners to enrich the Fellowship program. It also offered these practitioners the opportunity to cultivate mentorship and coaching skills – a necessary building block for experts to groom the next generation of leaders and amplify their impact as influencers of civil society.
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