

"Who would have thought that our lives would change in just three weeks spread over the six-month programme?"

#16
APRIL 2012

Dasra Social Impact Cohort-6

By Kusum Mohapatra, State Head, Magic Bus

People say that some things change your life. No one who signed up for the Dasra Social Impact, Cohort-6 programme in July/ August 2011 thought this would be one of them.

We were, correction, we are, a crazy variety of people, with one common denominator: craziness and passion. Let me not get started on the variety of participants but it should suffice that the oldest in the group was three times older than the youngest. Some participants were coming from a corporate background, some were totally new in the development sector and some were veterans and pioneers of change. Some participants were doing Sports for Development and some were working in core service delivery. Some participants were working in the non-profit sector and some from for-profit social enterprises. The reasons people had signed up was also very varied. Some had signed up out of compulsion, some with

interest, some with curiosity, some with desperation and some just for the heck of it. Who would have thought that our lives would change in just three weeks spread over the six-month programme?

The first workshop in October at the Fountainhead in Alibaug (an exotic location, by the way) brought us together with some hilarious team building exercises: jumping over each other, running around, laughing our heads off and in the process overcoming barriers and forming a close bond. We started by sharing what we thought about our organizations and sharing our work. We were introduced to the concept of an elevator pitch and like giggly school children, put on timers to time our pitches, which we were told had to be done in 30 seconds. We did it in 30 seconds alright, but we just didn't say anything that we were supposed to say.



Eldred and other participants playing a trust game at DSL.

As the days went by, we were introduced the concepts of business plans and pitches; required to think long term; and asked to consider scalability, fundraising, and communication skills. We were helped by the ever smiling superwoman Neera, the knowledgeable Deval, the calm Vikas, the always energetic Tushar, the super backhand Aakif and everyone else at Dasra. Beyond these leaders were the amazing interns and a great peer-group. Even though we were told we would learn more from our peers than in the classroom, we probably didn't realize how much our peers would teach us by the time we ended the programme.

The next two workshops went by so fast. I seriously cannot believe that six months passed. We met with our peer groups in the interim, prepared our business plans, and did our mock pitches in the January Workshop. (This is the space for a thank you to the office people and the families who helped us even when we were being absolutely annoying creatures, trying to get everything together.) At the finale in March, we were all so confident, each doing our "perfect" 30 second pitches in front of the huge crowd in the Taj in Mumbai, smiling and receiving our graduation certification. (I wish we had gotten to throw our graduation caps though ☺.)

That doesn't tell you, however, the revolution that has gone on in the background of each pitch. Some have started a process of change in their organization, some have created amazing business plans, some have gone from just an idea (Ketto) to being an online platform, and some have collaborated with each other. Earthy Goods and AICA have come together to form the "Artizen." Each organization has received at least one award and recognition of some kind. Some have started the process of realigning their mission and vision statements. Some have

redesigned their "theory of change." Some have unlearned their organisation's habits and re-learned new ones. Maybe all of us have done each of these in different measures. And thanks to Dasra, we all have undergone a transformation.

Beyond this, though, are the relationships built and friendships established. In our peer group itself, when Dr. Anand goes on a trip to Mussorie with her friends, Avinash comes to meet her at the train station even though the train stops barely for 3 minutes. The passionate Eldred doesn't kill us when we all get stuck in meetings and cannot make the appointment at the last minute. (Eldred spearheads an amazing organization called Sankalp that is a leader in its domain nationally, providing HIV prevention and rehabilitative services to drug users. His energy and passion is a motivation for all of us.) Ketto gives us the first priority for free on his website. Ankit treats us to great dinners when we visit Pune. Dr. Anand gives us the most amazing hugs. Eldred sends us all pictures of the cutest puppies in the world, one of them named "Chikni Chameli." Avinash has extended an open invitation for the group to make a trip to Meerut. Dhun is our woman Friday with her calmness. Narender gives us amazing insight into his life and inspires us with his story. And Louis and Renganayiki are torchbearers who teach you that at the end of one life is the beginning of another journey.

We all know for sure, in this world where finding true friends and inspiration is so rare, we have been able to forge strong friendships and have been inspired by this great group of people. In the process we've gotten to learn a lot about setting up an organisation, managing it and creating models that can produce impacts on a much



The proud DSI participants on graduation night.

Suleman's Story



Suleman helping out in the kitchen at the Good Shepherd Recovery Home.

Suleman, a young man of 29, began using drugs at the age of fourteen when his father passed away and his family's financial situation took a turn for the worse. After years of injecting brown sugar and two unsuccessful attempts to stop using drugs on his own, Suleman found Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust. He began by visiting Sankalp's Drop-In Centre located at Sion, just north of Mumbai. Suleman soon decided that he was ready to quit drugs for good and headed to Sankalp's Detoxification Centre funded by ALF. Suleman first arrived at the Detoxification Centre firmly believing that in order to overcome his drug use he would just need to address the physical aspects of addiction. The centre provided him with the support necessary to address his physical health – he had a session with the counsellor to help prepare him for the withdrawal symptoms he would experience; he was given thorough and compassionate medical care from the staff doctor; and when he suffered from hallucinations as part of the withdrawal process, a psychiatrist was on hand to talk with him and prescribe the necessary medication.

But beyond the support he received to combat his physical addiction, his time at the detoxification centre made him realize that his addiction was much more complex than he had believed. Through individual and group sessions with the centre's counselor, Suleman was able to see that although tackling the physical aspects of addiction was necessary, this would only scratch the surface of his drug

use. There were many other issues that must be addressed as well in order to maintain sobriety. Group counselling sessions and Narcotics Anonymous Meetings served to uncover many of the other issues, including family problems, anger and self-pity, that Suleman also needed to face head on in order to truly combat his addiction.

In the centre, Suleman felt the atmosphere, comfortable and homey, helped with the process of dealing with his drug use. The staff members gave personal attention to each of the clients, showing kindness and compassion. Here, Suleman learned valuable skills such as patience and discipline. He learned to think before reacting and not to make impulsive decisions. Perhaps most importantly, Suleman became motivated to continue working towards recovery. He became motivated to move from the detoxification centre to a longer-term rehabilitation centre where he could more adequately address the multitude of factors underlying his drug use. And finally, Suleman learned to live just for today.

Suleman successfully completed both the detoxification and rehabilitation programmes. Now, taking another important step toward long-term recovery, he sits in the centre housing Project Hunar, Sankalp's livelihood training programme, of which he is a participant. He says that he is still living just for today and he thinks that through living one day at a time he will be able to stay sober.

Hands-On Learning in Bangalore

By Rebecca Stern, AJWS Volunteer

After having joined Sankalp as a volunteer only weeks before, I headed south to Bangalore with Rajani Mhaske, the new counselor cum coordinator of Project Hunar. The trip was designed to give us the opportunity to visit one of Sankalp's partner NGOs, AMBA CEEIC. Knowing only the basics about Sankalp and Project Hunar, I was eager to learn and spent my time in Bangalore soaking up as much information as possible. Under the guidance of Sugandha Sukrutaraj, founder and director of AMBA CEEIC, this wasn't difficult – we were exposed to all aspects of the innovative sustainable livelihood training programme Sugandha had pioneered, a programme which had subsequently been adopted by Project Hunar.

Working with intellectually challenged young adults, AMBA CEEIC, led by Sugandha, developed a novel approach to teaching English-language data entry. Using a model of visual recognition which treats each letter in the English alphabet as a symbol, illiterate participants memorize these "pictures" and then learn to associate each "picture," or letter, with its name. This peer-led training is accomplished through a combination of matching activities, interactive projects and learning games that serve to teach the alphabet while simultaneously encouraging critical thinking and increasing self-esteem. Then, once participants become comfortable with the English alphabet, they learn to operate the computer through both non-computer and computer-based activities. Soon, without ever learning how to read or write in English, participants are able to perform English-language data entry work for telecommunications companies!

In 2009 this model was adopted by Sankalp and implemented in Project Hunar, the sustainable livelihood training programme for recovering drug users. Sankalp's

clients, the vast majority of whom are English-illiterate if not completely illiterate, and many of whom are situationally intellectually disabled from years of drug use, learned quickly with visual recognition. The peer-training aspect of the model complemented Sankalp's larger peer-based approach and helped foster a sense of empowerment, responsibility, and teamwork.

Now Rajani and I had the chance to observe the work at AMBA CEEIC first hand. The ability of the clients was amazing, but perhaps more inspiring was their obvious leadership skills and the self-respect and pride that each of them displayed. Rajani and I were both taught how to perform the data entry work by AMBA CEEIC clients who possessed expert knowledge and displayed obvious peer-training skills. Additionally, we were able to sit and talk with Sugandha, exploring how the curriculum could be further tailored to meet the needs of Sankalp's clients in particular. The trip was a true learning experience – to understand how the visual recognition model worked, to see the success of AMBA CEEIC clients, to learn data entry ourselves, and to understand how Sankalp's clients can benefit the most.

As the months have passed at Sankalp, I've come to appreciate the centrality of Project Hunar in the organization's larger mission. I have seen how any effort to rehabilitate drug users is incomplete without proper attention paid to the process of reintegrating drug users back into society. And I've seen how the process of reintegration is incomplete without opportunities for gainful employment. This is where AMBA CEEIC and Sugandha Sukrutaraj come in – an amazing way for Sankalp's clients to learn a marketable skill in an environment of peer-support and empowerment!



AMBA CEEIC clients hard at work on their computers!

Reintegration Training: Applications for Targeted Interventions

By Leena Pardhe, Project Coordinator, Sankalp Kiran

As project coordinator of Sankalp Kiran, I attended a three day training on the reintegration of drug users, held from the 27th-29th of February. The training was led by Eldred Tellis and organized by Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, Mumbai, on behalf of Sharan, New Delhi. Held at Aksa Beach, 18 participants from different organizations attended the training. This included staff from Sankalp, Positive People in Goa, the Mukdisadan Foundation in Mumbai, Sahara in Pune and the Centre for Social Research and Development in Kerala.

The training was extremely beneficial for me. First of all, I learned important information about reintegration for drug users and how to utilize and facilitate the process of reintegration at Ulhasnagar Drop-in Centre (DIC), where I am the project coordinator. The training showed how reintegration is an important process for both the staff of the DIC, many of whom are former drug users themselves (Peer Educators, Outreach Workers, Counsellors), as well as the clients who are visiting the DIC for a variety of services. Because of the training I was introduced to the importance of providing counseling for this. Also, I learned how to identify the client population, how to observe each client and how to motivate them for their next step.

Before the training I did not know about the different kinds of reintegration or the different steps of reintegration. At the training, for example, I learned that reintegration begins with the chaotic phase, then moves through the ambivalent phase, action phase, control phase and ends with the orientation and success phase. Each of

these steps is incredibly important and useful in the Targeted Intervention (TI) for injecting drug users and for the staff working in these programmes.

Another important lesson was about profiling the client. This knowledge – how to profile and categorize clients based on their duration on Opioid Substitution Therapy, their different living conditions and their needs – is very useful for our work at the DIC. It is necessary to work with each individual separately in the process of reintegration as everyone will have different needs and requires different kinds of support. This has led to changes in the DIC in order to address reintegration with our clients. We now take sessions – group and individual – covering reintegration in the DIC and focus on this important step in recovery.



Participants at the training conduct a role play activity.

Counsellor Training At Good Shepherd Recovery Home

By Rajani Mhaske, Counsellor cum Project Coordinator, Project Hunar

Located in the rolling hills outside of Pune, on the 738-acre property of The Lord's Ranch Trust, lies the Good Shepherd Recovery Home (GSRH). GSRH, a networking partner of Sankalp's, provides the perfect setting for a rehabilitation centre as well as a counselor-training retreat. The centre offers a four-month rehabilitation programme run by Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, occupying one end of the spectrum of services our organisation offers. As such, the centre has much to teach us all!

The three days at the centre were full of opportunities to learn, share and spend time with clients and fellow staff members. Observing morning meetings was a great opportunity for experiential learning. It was important to see how these meetings were used to maintain discipline among the clients. In the morning meeting, clients used pull-up sessions and confrontations with their peers to address any issues that had come up in the previous day.



Visitors to GSRH help prepare gajar halwa for lunch.

For example, when an area of the campus was not clean or if anything was not in its place, this would be addressed through a confrontation. In such an instance a counsellor might ask "why didn't any peers do anything about this problem if they saw it and were made aware?" Clients also led sharing sessions. In such sessions a client would share his experiences at the rehab centre. He might share things such as the kinds of changes he observed in himself or how he is able to identify with his peers. The morning meetings also included other regular activities. Clients were encouraged to come up to the front of the room and sing or tell a joke.

Besides morning meetings, we also got to observe a case load session. During these sessions the clients divided into

groups with their respective counselors. The group members went over the strengths and weaknesses of each other group member. Each person had to tell about every other person. Such an exercise is useful because it allows each client to gain knowledge about himself and hopefully work to improve his weaknesses.

As visitors we weren't just there to learn. We also became part of the centre during our short stay – a testament to the strong sense of community among the clients. While there, we cooked, participated in physical activities and games, and even put on a short drama for the clients. Overall, the three days spent at the centre were enriching, engaging and full of learning.

Novartis! Drop the Case against Pharmacy of the Developing World

By *Shailly Gupta, Policy Advocacy Officer, Medecins Sans Frontieres, Access Campaign*



Sankalp clients and staff attend the protest against Novartis!

period of 20 years in order to fulfill its obligations as a member of the World Trade Organization. As part of this section, India decided to grant patents only to the drugs that show an improved therapeutic effect over existing compounds. It intends to prevent companies from continually extending their 20-year drug patents by making minor changes or improvements – a process called 'evergreening'.

Along these lines, in 2006, the Indian patent examiner rejected the patent that Novartis sought for its anti-cancer drug Gleevac (imatinibmesylate), as it was based on a compound that already existed. Novartis then took the Indian Government to court in 2006 to challenge the constitutionality of section 3(d). However, the company lost the case at the High Court. But Novartis did not give up on its attempt to weaken Indian patent law and appealed to the Supreme Court in 2009, challenging the decision of the High Court. The next and final hearings on this case between the giant pharmaceutical company and the Indian government are scheduled to start on 10 July, 2012.

This Supreme Court case is the final act in a legal battle that stretches back six years over India's future capacity to produce low cost generic medicines for its people, and for patients across developing countries. If Novartis succeeds in winning this case it will not just mean that a patent will be granted to this anti-cancer drug. **It will also have major implications for future access to other drugs including antiretrovirals which treat HIV.** India is known as "the pharmacy of the developing world" due to its capacity to provide affordable generic medicines. Many developing countries rely on affordable medicines produced in India, and such medicines constitute over 80% of the AIDS drugs used in the developing world. Weakening of section 3(d) may lead to more and more patents granted in India even to those drugs which are merely a minor improvement of the existing drugs. Such drugs do not deserve a patent and would unnecessarily block the entrance of affordable generic medicines into the market.

Given the huge ramifications for generic production and the availability of affordable medicines from India, Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, positive networks, MSF and several other health organisations, patient groups and affected communities continue to protest against the giant drug company with a demand to keep away from our medicines and drop the case against the Indian Government.

In December 2011, on World AIDS Day, Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, The Network of People Living with HIV, Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) and other HIV organisations held a protest against the Swiss pharmaceutical company Novartis. The demonstration in front of the company's office in Mumbai was organised to condemn the legal campaign Novartis is pursuing to undermine section 3(d) of India's patent law with the intention of blocking the future production of affordable generic medicines in India. About 200 people (more than 50 from Sankalp) gathered in front of the Novartis office at Sandoz House carrying placards and banners with message: Novartis! Drop the case against Indian Government.

Section 3(d) is one of the key public health safeguards in Indian patent law which was incorporated in 2005 when India had to start granting patents on medicines for a term

SANKALP REHABILITATION TRUST

Administrative Office: 1st Floor, S S Bengali Municipal School, Thakurdwar Road, Charni Road (E),
Mumbai - 400 002. Tel: (+91) 022 6525 2685

E-mail : sankalp.trust@gmail.com Website : www.sankalptrust.org For Private Circulation only