

"I was also deeply moved by how much was being achieved with so few resources" - Greg Jefferys

#23
July 2018

SANKALP 10000 CLUB

Hopes broken but not demolished

Sankalp Chhaya has no shade for our IDUs. Our Drop-in Center at Bodyguard Lane almost went 'underground' four years ago. This was done due to the fact that a new sewage line had been laid at Mumbai Central and our road had been raised by three feet. We were therefore, three feet below the road level and had innumerable problems. Our efforts to have the structure raised took more than two years and the permission came with a condition that it could be broken anytime soon. As a result, no donor wanted to put money that would be wasted at the 'whim' of a BMC official. It is really sad that in today's world hard earned resources have no value for those in power who get things too easy.

Further efforts were made and we were grateful to the then BMC (A to E wards) Mr. S. Karvande who looked for us to relocate, not far from our present structure. Of course, this was to be at our own cost and therefore we asked for time up till the monsoon so that we could collect some funds for the same. We then planned a concert titled 'Country Road' which took place on 20th April, with India's top country artist Bobby Cash and a couple of our local talents. It was a truly memorable experience and had everyone asking for more.

Although we were unable to get the funds we needed, managed to have a company build for us from their CSR funds. So we were fortunate to have our prayers answered.

The twist was, that knowing we had another contractor, our center was suddenly demolished and we had to scramble for cover. Then, the 'run around' to get the very permissions we had been promised earlier which were delayed so much that we couldn't build before the rains. So we adjusted with our office premises at Charni Road and had to manage to serve fewer clients, as there were dropouts. Our earnest hope is that this has not caused a spurt in the HIV incidence and we want to get back to the new Drop-in center at the earliest. Of course, that will be subject to the electric and water permission being given.

Your prayers have taken us through the journey over the years and we are sure they will continue to help us keep going.



Client Story: Aijaz Ansari

Aijaz Ansari was born and brought up in Mumbai in a family of 5. He is the youngest among two brothers, and a sister. The eldest brother is currently married and has four kids. Since childhood, Aijaz has witnessed the conflicting relationship of his parents and constant fights. He explained that his father had been addicted to gambling and used to stay away from home often; resulting in giving very little attention to his family, especially his mother.

At the age of fourteen, he was introduced to brown sugar by his friends who told him it was a magic potion that would get rid of all the problems in his life. He described his first experience as ecstatic; it felt like everything was warm and fuzzy; somehow everything felt better; nothing mattered. He wanted to do nothing else but feel that way. He decided almost immediately that this was going to be his life. He described the drug as being unbearably wonderful for suppressing pain and generating a false sense of well-being; but when it wore off, you're in a hole so big it's impossible to climb out.

At first everything seemed fine, everything seemed perfect; he was on top of the world. He didn't know when it happened but soon he began needing it first thing in the morning, stashing drugs around the home, stealing just to get that fix. It became a compulsion. He noticed the increase in urges as he would experience a sensation of fits; regular headaches and would not be able to sleep, focus or concentrate without the substance. He had developed a sense of fear when he did not take brown sugar. Eventually, he needed brown sugar to be able to do anything.

It became difficult for him to stick to a single job. As his addiction grew he felt it more and more difficult to hide his habit, resulting in him having to change jobs frequently. The consistent use of brown sugar also began hindering his relationship with his family. Looking back he could see the slow change in his personality over the years as he became aggressive, indifferent and did not respect anyone or care about anything.

After noticing a change in his behavior, Aijaz's mother and brother introduced him to Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, where he underwent detoxification and was suggested to go through a 4 month rehabilitation programme. Due to the cunningness of the disease of addiction and his lack of motivation to give up, he ran away from the rehab after three months. While he was certain in his head that he would not go to use again, as

soon as he got out he had an unbearable urge to consume brown sugar again.

In no time, he was back to his usual pattern of using. In fact it got worse. Initially, he used to consume the drug by burning it on foil and inhaling the fumes (called chasing). Soon his body developed a tolerance to the drug and he needed more of the drug to get the same effects. He soon switched from chasing to injecting as injecting gave him a greater and more immediate effect for the least amount of drug. Luckily for him, after spending three months at Sankalp's Rehabilitation Centre, he had gained knowledge about the risks and dangers of sharing syringes. Hence, while testing for HIV and Hepatitis C, all the results came negative.

His addiction got progressively worse. For a period of about two years, Aijaz continuously used the drug and by the end of it was living on the streets. Due to his rising hostility and disrespect for the ones who were trying to help him, he lost all support from his family and close friends. He did small jobs on the streets to finance his addiction. According to him, the worst thing he did was to steal from his own family who at the time were facing financial trouble. That's what addiction does. It makes you hurt the ones that love you the most. Another incident which Aijaz recalls was picking up a huge stone in rage to threaten his mother because she wasn't giving him the money he needed to get his fix.

Within these few years, Aijaz had become a completely different person. He found himself alone and lonely. He realized that the drug was just worsening his way of life. After this realization, he made a firm decision to stop using drugs. With this new found determination, he revisited Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust and asked for help. He was given another chance and was put on Opioid



Substitution Therapy for a brief period and then to Rehabilitation.

When he arrived for treatment at Good Shepherd Recovery Home, he recalls being full of fear, shame and remorse. He did not want to be there but knew that he had to finally stop running and face his problems. He stopped using his own philosophy and put his trust and faith into the program, the counselors and to Mr. Eldred Tellis the Director of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust. Because he had completely surrendered, he felt that this time he really embraced the programme and hence learnt a lot from it. In rehab, he was introduced to several coping mechanisms to deal with his feelings and emotions. He was taught accountability and responsibility; he came to understand the depths of his addiction; he learned how his actions—or inactions—have consequences and how they affected those around him. He mentions that one of the most helpful aspects in the rehab was regular counseling, where he was able to open up and truly look inside himself and face his inner demons.

Although the rehabilitation programme is 4 months, Aijaz volunteered to stay longer at the centre as a cook and cleaner in exchange for a fee. This gave him chances to not only earn for himself, but to strengthen his recovery as well. Overall Aijaz spent 7 months in rehab. He then was provided with the opportunity to stay at Sankalp's half-way home and work with Sankalp as a counselor at the Detoxification Centre and a Peer Educator in one of their projects with Maharashtra Districts AIDS Control Society.

During his time with Sankalp he also got the opportunity to learn and develop new skills, such as driving. He also found joy in other activities such as cooking. When asked what he enjoys the most about being sober, he says that today, he can see the difference he is making in the lives of many people. Furthermore, he is proud of being able to do something meaningful with his life and is pleased to send money to his family for the celebration of Eid for the first time in many years. Today, the song in his heart is one of gratitude and beauty.

“Event Highlights”



Tata Mumbai Marathon_Sankalp group



Ashoka Fellows retreat at Pondy



Awareness through DHL

A Thousand Thanks

**SANKALP
1000
CLUB**

You joined the Sankalp One Thousand Club and pledged One Thousand rupees a year to put more bite into Sankalp's effort to reach out to marginalised street drug users who are desperately in need of help.

It is time to repeat your generous act. We need every rupee and are counting on a thousand from you gain. We look forward to your renewal of your membership and bringing in new members as well.

A Thousand Thanks in advance.

Discovering Sankalp's Inspiring Work -Greg Jefferys



A couple of months ago, I visited Mumbai to film part of a documentary produced by a Paris based news and current affairs company and is funded by one of the world's largest television and news networks. The documentary is on the difficulties associated with the high prices of drugs for treating Hepatitis C and how Big Pharma works to create and protect artificially high prices using the patent system and other methods. In the process we've met doctors, patients and health care activists in five countries, and are appalled by how these drugs have been denied to the neediest. Provisionally called "The Buyers Club," the documentary aims to show how patients unite in the face of corporate greed.

While this visit was partly to meet some of the people who supply generic Indian Hepatitis C drugs at a fraction of price of the expensive "brand" medications, it was also to meet individuals in India who are involved in making medicines accessible to people who have no money.

High amongst these was a meeting with Eldred Tellis the Director and Founder of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust. This meeting was suggested by the documentary team because Mr. Tellis has reputation for standing up against the malpractices of the big international pharmaceutical companies and was and is involved in assisting Hepatitis C infected people of Mumbai to access treatment.

The meeting was arranged in Sankalp's Admin office, where I was treated to a lovely cup of Chai while the documentary team filmed Eldred and I discussing various aspects of the international pharmaceutical cartel that is known as Big Pharma.

I was truly fascinated by Eldred's story, how he had stood up against, and defeated the massive global pharmaceutical giant ROCHE, over their improper patenting and price gouging practices around their Hepatitis C medication Peginterferon.

After the formal interview stage, Eldred invited me to visit his Drop-in-Centre where people battling with intravenous drug addiction come to seek help with the very difficult job of beating their addiction. As it happened, we arrived just prior to a group sharing meeting of people battling drug addiction and I was invited to speak to them about my own experiences. As I had been addicted to heroin when I was in my late teens, more than 40 years ago, I was able to empathise with the difficulties they faced overcoming their addiction.

After the meeting, we all came together to share a meal and I was profoundly impressed by the Sankalp team, mostly ex-addicts, who worked so selflessly to help others beat this terrible affliction.

I was also deeply moved by how much was being achieved with so few resources.

On that day, I met more than thirty people who were being helped by the work of Sankalp. People who now had hope where previously there had been no hope. People who now had the chance of a promising future, where before there had been no future.

The work of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust is truly an inspiration for me and it should remind all of us of how much can be achieved when a small group of people unite to do good work for the greater benefit of their fellow humans.

Long overdue visit of Inspirasia Foundation

After almost 5 years, the Inspirasia Foundation team flew down to Mumbai to visit the staff of Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust and understand the operation of the Detoxification Centre and the organization as a whole. Inspirasia Foundation is the agency that has been and is currently funding our detoxification centre at Vasai. Our history with Inspirasia Foundation dates back to 2011 when they started supporting us to open a residential Detoxification Centre in Vithalwadi which later shifted to a larger premise at Vasai in 2013 to better serve our clients and expand our continuum of care. Since 2011, Inspirasia Foundation has been kind enough to fund and support our Detoxification Centre.

Since Inspirasia Foundation is based out of Bali, Indonesia and Malta in Europe, most of our communication and reporting have been through telephone calls and emails. We have been requesting Inspirasia Foundation to visit our centre so that they too could get a better understanding of the work we do and help improve the organizational dynamics.

Mr. Phil Bergman, president of Inspirasia Foundation, Ms. Meda Arifin, director of Annika Linden Centre and Ms. Louisa Attard, Assistant Director, Inspirasia Foundation were among the team members that flew down for the visit. It was a short but extremely useful visit with them spending 2 full days with Sankalp Staff.

On Saturday 7th April the team visited the Detoxification Centre in Vasai. On arrival, our Nurse and Family Counselor gave them the traditional welcome with a garland of flowers. They were then shown around the premises and briefed about the

workings of the centre. We had invited a few of our past clients who had benefited from the detoxification program and treatment with us and were now living responsible, productive and meaningful lives. An interactive session took place where Mr. Bergman, Ms. Meda, and Ms. Attard spoke to the staff, some ex-clients as well as the current patients undergoing treatment. The session helped them understand our strengths, weaknesses and challenges being faced and how to work together to try to mitigate those challenges and help facilitate growth. Furthermore, the visit to the centre gave them a firsthand understanding of the results of what their funding has actually achieved.

On Tuesday 10th April, Ms. Meda, and Ms. Attard were escorted to our Drop-in-Centre in Mumbai Central where they got to understand our project with MDACS. After discussion with our Drop-in-Centre staff a small session was organized with those accessing our services. During the group discussion, our clients opened up about their stories of substance abuse and their harsh experiences with addiction.

Later, they were accompanied to our Administration Office at Charni Rd, where they sat down with our accountant to discuss financial management to understand our financial systems and procedures.

Overall, the team from Inspirasia was content with Sankalp's work on the ground, the challenges and possibilities for improvement. Mr. Bergman, Ms. Meda, and Ms. Attard all gave extremely positive feedback of their visit and thanked all staff for their efforts and services.



Goodbye and Welcoming of Trustees

The Board of Trustees said goodbye to Dr. Saroj S. Jha & Mr. B.N. Bhagwat at a meeting on Tuesday, 05th June 2018 as both had resigned. Both had contributed immensely and wholeheartedly since the past 15 years and 18 years respectively. Simultaneously, the board welcomed two new members, Ms. Geeta Sethi (retd. UNAIDS) and Mr. Ravi Budhiraja (retd. I.A.S Officer).

Stay off Drugs, be Healthy & Happy, says Mark Waugh

In the month of October, Former Australian opening batsman Mark Waugh visited Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust, to lend his support and encourage the drug users seeking treatment there. Mark spent some valuable time by listening to the stories of the drug users who were trying to get their lives back on track and urged them to lead healthy, responsible and a drugs-free life.

Speaking to Sankalp clients, Mark stated "It's nice to see everybody doing great here and recovering and I hope for your positive future. Taking drugs is not a good lifestyle, so try to be healthy and fit. Be happy and stay off drugs."

Through his interaction with the Director and those seeking help and treatment there, Mark was able to gain a clearer understanding of addiction, HIV, Hepatitis C and the workings of the organization. Mark's visit highlighted the need to bring public attention to the issue of addiction, along with informing, educating, bringing awareness about the possible impact of sharing syringes that could result in HIV or Hepatitis C.

Through his interaction Mark understood the need for change in social attitudes and public perception towards people who use drugs. A great deal of effort is required to reduce the stigma attached to people who use drugs and an alternative understanding that addiction is a treatable illness needs to be conveyed to the public. Sankalp Rehabilitation Trust follows the motto, "Never, never, give up" reflecting a similar idea that anyone struggling with addiction can be helped and treated.

Speaking about his visit, Mark Waugh said "I am glad that I visited the organisation that works with this difficult group of people so dedicatedly although often it is thankless and not seen as a worthy cause. Many from this group are also infected with Hepatitis C virus for which the cost of the treatment is exorbitant. I am sure Maharashtra will also take a cue from States like Haryana and Punjab who are making treatment available for free."

Presently, Mumbai is one of the 14 cities worldwide which have signed on the targets of achieving 90-90-90 by 2020. Former Mayor Snehal Ambekar, pledged her support to accelerating the response to HIV in the city over the next five years, by signing the Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities. She made the commitment during a global meeting in Mumbai on "Fast-Track Cities- ending the AIDS Epidemic Cities: Achieving 90-90-90 Targets by 2020."

The term 90-90-90 refers to a target set by UNAIDS program which is: By 2020, 90 per cent of all people living with HIV will know their HIV status; 90 per cent of all people with diagnosed HIV infection will receive sustained anti-retroviral therapy and 90 per cent of all people receiving anti-retroviral therapy will have viral suppression.

Mark Waugh appealed to all the Indian cricketers to do their bit by supporting these causes. "Like in India, in Australia, we support a lot of underprivileged people. It would be great if Indian cricketers come forward to support these charities."



SANKALP REHABILITATION TRUST

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