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A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF SELF

PRAVAH COMMUNITY **VOLUNTEERING FOR CHANGE**

JUNE-JULY 2018





Pravah is a not for profit organisation which is based in Delhi and works all across India to build leadership for social change in young people. Started in the backdrop of demolition of a 16th Century old mosque in 1992, and the subsequent communal polarisation in the country, a group of young people set up Pravah to empower young people to be active citizens!

In the last 25 years, it has developed a deep understanding and a unique perspective of youth development. The expertise is based on its rich experience of designing and implementing a range of programs which promote the values of peace, justice, equality and inclusion with different groups of adolescents and youth in the country.



Australian Volunteers International (AVI) connects people and organisations internationally to learn from each other and achieve shared goals within our strategic priorities. Their work in people-centred development, particularly through volunteering, is central to this. AVI works with individuals, organisations and communities in response to locally identified priorities. Australian Volunteers International is a significant contributor to a peaceful, just and sustainable world; a world of respectful global relationships where all people have access to the resources they need, the opportunity to achieve their potential, the right to make decisions about the kind of development they want and to participate in the future of their communities. Australian Volunteers International is guided by principles of equity and social justice, integrity, diversity and inclusion, partnership and respect for human rights.



Manthan, based in Kotri, Rajasthan, was initially a field centre for the Barefoot College's Social Work and Research Centre (SWRC). Manthan was established as an independent organisation in 1998. Manthan works on diverse issues related to the sustainable development of the area. It is currently working in 60 villages in Ajmer and Nagaur districts; both water scarce areas where communities face severe social, economic, political and environmental challenges. Manthan addresses problems of drinking water, girl education, health & sanitation, rural unemployment, income generation, as well as social awareness and the conservation of ecological systems in rural communities. It has been actively working on diverse issues; with the conviction that solutions to rural problems lie within the community. The team at Manthan, are mostly local young people, some of whom have been associated with Manthan or SWRC since their younger days.

ABOUT CVC GLOBAL

Community Volunteering for Change Global is a course offered by University of Melbourne to undergraduate students to provide them with an understanding of the community sector and community development through a substantial volunteer experience in the developing countries. The goal of the program is for the students to gain a better understanding of the structure, culture and policy environment of community development. University of Melbourne in partnership with Australian Volunteers International places organizations and communities across the developing world in response to locally identified priorities. Pravah is the partner of AVI in India and has been holding this program since 2014. Pravah's local partner organisations are conducting social inclusion programs in their community addressing the needs of excluded people groups including those excluded because of caste, tribe, religion, gender, disability, geography, employment, sexuality and age. Our goal for this program is for the volunteers to undertake Action Research Projects focussing on building awareness and advocacy for a social inclusion issue faced by an excluded group in Indian society.



PRAVAH CVC GLOBAL OVER THE YEARS

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JOURNEY MAP

ORIENTATION

The program started in Delhi with a 3-day long orientation workshop where the volunteers had gone through a series of sessions for expectation setting, intercultural relations, deeper self understanding, team building and problem solving.



MANTHAN ORIENTATION

After the workshop, the volunteers set out to Manthan with equal amount of apprehension and enthusiasm. Upon reaching there, there was an orientation for Manthan, the work that they do and the values they hold.



BAREFOOT COLLEGE

On one of the days, the volunteers got to visit Barefoot College in Tilonia and had a very intense and powerful experience there meeting all the wonderful people who are working towards sustainable development.



COMMUNITY VISITS

As a part of their projects, the volunteers met with different members of the community and spoke with them about the impact of development initiatives taken by Manthan. And of course, drinking lots of chai during every visit to the community.



MPR

On the 7th and 8th of July, the volunteers had their Mid-phase review in Jaipur. They designed the sessions themselves. The MPR allowed them to contemplate upon the challenges they were facing and coming up with solutions to overcome them.



PUPPETRY WORKSHOP

Manthan organized a puppetry workshop for the volunteers on one of the days in the following week, it was beautiful, artsy and carried a lot of meaning, therefore making it a brilliant experience for the volunteers.



MANTHAN FAREWELL

On the last evening at Rajasthan, they planned a lovely farewell for Manthan where they shared the project outcomes in detail with the organization and other stakeholders.



DEBRIEF

After coming back to Delhi, they had their debrief where they relived all the beautiful and funny moments they had over the past one month. We celebrated the volunteers for their resilience, commitment and for just being a part of the larger change that we all envision.



THE SOUL OF THE PRAVAH CVC GLOBAL

THE PEOPLE

JUNE-JULY 2018





NINA MCLEAN

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

“

I have discovered, through Pravah CVC Global, that I am a lot more open to unfamiliar surroundings than I thought I would be. When I told my family and friends back home that I was interested in this kind of program, they all laughed at me and said I wouldn't be able to do it because I am so used to city life. I'd like to think that I've been able to prove them wrong. I've also discovered that I am able to take time for myself and not be worried about missing out or what other people think.



YAN ZHOU LING
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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Contributions from development can be small but it is contribution nonetheless and that will affect the lives of the communities to some extent and PravaH CVC Global helped me reinstate that development is something I'm passionate about even though the physical environment can be challenging at times



PIA CHIARA COLE

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

“

I have been surrounded by many people, both volunteers and in the community, who I wouldn't normally be around and have discovered I am not as open-minded as I had thought. Our opinions and outlook are clouded by the culture and experiences we have, so being outside of my normal life challenged preconceptions I wasn't even aware I had. I feel more self-aware in realising my own flaws, and I feel more confident in knowing I can overcome these. I have realised the importance of the relationships forged cross-culturally in international relations. The exposure to other cultures can benefit one's own self, challenging views and giving a better, more nuanced understanding of the world.

BEN STAISSNY

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

21

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This program taught me to be tolerant and understanding of others and their culture. I now know that everything I see and interact with is deeper than I first thought.

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KAITLYN WELSH

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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Through this experience, I have learnt that volunteering cannot be reduced down to a simple definition. It is so subjective and special. Daily life at Manthan and the surrounding villages has really taught me that the most important aspect of life is the connections you make with others. I now understand that you can never make a judgment on someone else's experience. There are so many factors that contribute to why someone acts or is a certain way. I now take time when drawing any conclusions because I know that I only have part of the story and must keep an open and positive mind-set. I would say I am also very accepting and up for any challenge.



CHELSEA ROBERTS

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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One experience that stands out is the visit to Barefoot College in Tilonia. It was very powerful but it was also very confronting to see a developing country trying to develop such amazing sustainable models.



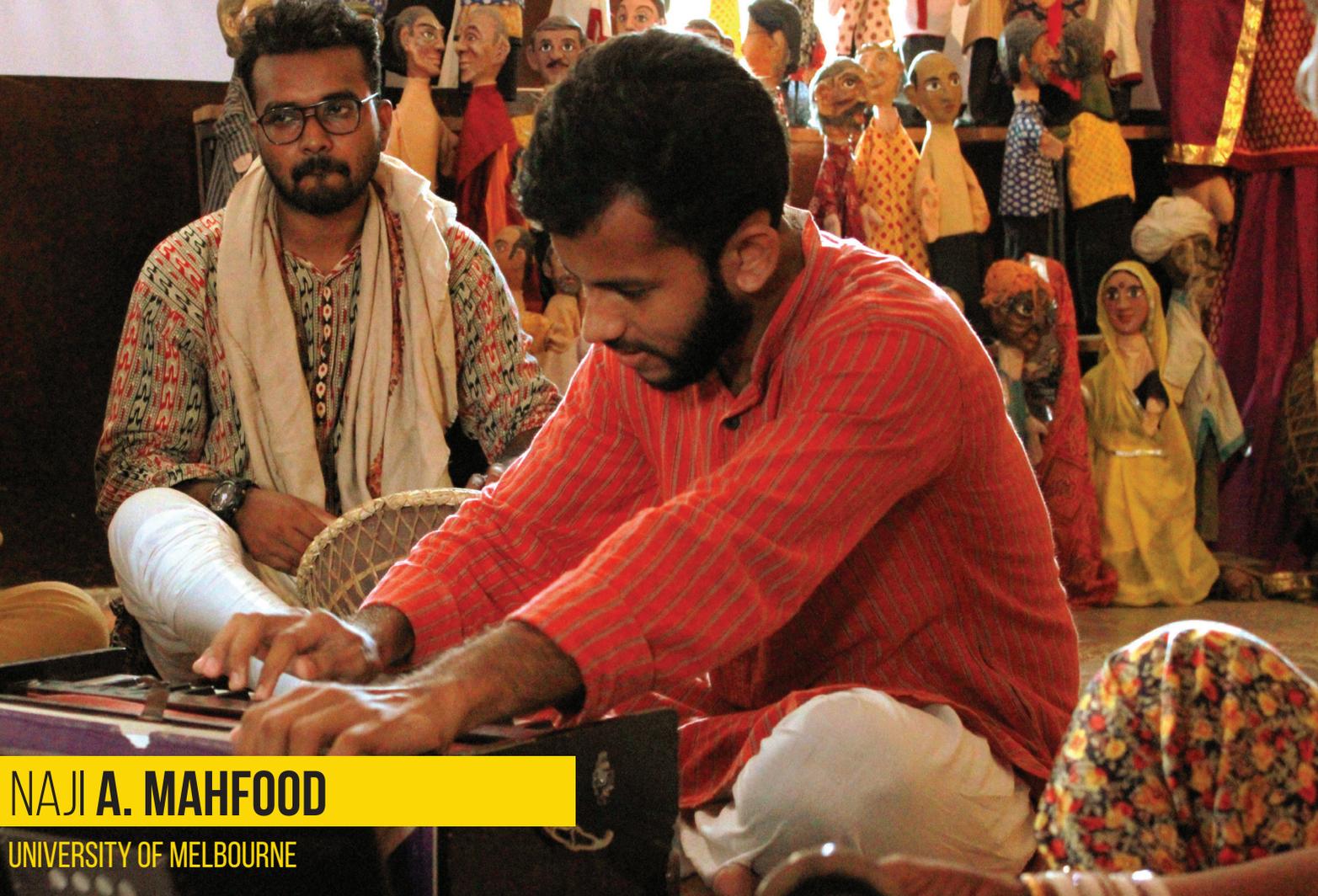
ELLA DU VE

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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I think I've gained a deeper understanding of my own resilience and capabilities. I've gained stronger self-assurance and confidence in myself. I've learned the value of constant critical self-reflection of my own participation in various roles and cultural contexts, and this has helped me to grow and more deeply understand where I stand in the world, within the programme and also within a team.

I've also learned to communicate across language barriers. Living with tejaram ji's daughter in law meant that everyday I was learning to share things about myself and chat across a significant language barrier. This was a beautiful experience, because I found myself sharing a friendship with a woman close to my age, where although we couldn't chat as both of us are used to, we could share laughter and experiences together. Her friendship, her incredible skills as a mother, as a tailor and as the heart of her family have taught me so much about the importance of women as the backbone of community's in the local area. She's also taught me how it's possible for a woman to be full of fire, strength, humour and personal empowerment whilst still upholding cultural traditions



NAJI A. MAHFOOD
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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This program helped me understand the dynamics of working with cross-cultural teams. I have been able to gain basic knowledge about the people and culture of Australia, Vietnam, Singapore and New Zealand. I could also build a good relation with each person at Manthan. The way they live here as a family, helping the villages was an inspiration for me to design my life in such a way.



EMILY SEIF

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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I have learnt so much about what is specifically going on within rural villages and the mentalities and perspectives that cause certain things to happen, whether its cultural and social norms to issues villages are facing, such as access to clean water or education and what we can do about it. Being around all these people in rural India all the time also gave me a sense of friendship and equality with them. I always believed that but now I feel I have a true sense of it – I am able to view everyone we have met and engaged with as a fellow friend opposed to a statistic or a work project. I have also learnt that things are not always done according to plan or according to certain time schedules and I have learnt how to be open and adapt to ways I am not familiar with.



GEORGIA W. LENTON

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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After Pravah CVC Global, I have more awareness of how culture and tradition affect the lives of individuals. Seeing how differently people live in Jakholai village gave me a real appreciation of the variation in human life globally. I have also developed a better understanding of global development and my place in the world. It has taught me the true meaning of sustainable development and how we can help these communities while maintaining the utmost level of respect for them.



DEBOSHREE DAS

PRAVAH IN-COUNTRY VOLUNTEER

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Opening up to people was always quite challenging for me, but over the course of this one month, I have been able to overcome it and build beautiful relationships with the rest of the volunteers.



ANNA RITCHIE
UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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The whole program helped me to reflect upon myself and my feelings a lot. I haven't been in touch with my feelings for a while now. So the entire process was quite challenging but also extremely beneficial as I feel closer to myself now.

YANIA NADA

PRAVAH IN-COUNTRY VOLUNTEER

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Being me with the entire group throughout the program has been challenging especially because everyone has been trying to mold themselves to fit the group. But I have been able to discover the leadership potential within me and I aim to work on strengthening it.

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FREDDIE

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

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I have experienced a cultural setting completely different to my own. Mostly what I have learnt has been different cultural and lifestyle practices. It was interesting noticing the differences and surprising similarities between rural Indian lifestyle and my own. I have made many positive relationships as a result of the program. I have learnt many things from all of them, and they have taught me things about myself. These relationships have encouraged me to approach the way I interact with people back home differently.



NASEEH A.

PRAVAH IN-COUNTRY VOLUNTEER

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I learned how to lead a team and I built a different perspective of development because the program allowed us do impact analysis of the work that PravaH ICS and Manthan have done with the community



TEJARAM JI

COORDINATOR—MANTHAN

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It was an absolute pleasure having these wonderful volunteers here. They added a new perspective to viewing our projects and implementation. Their inputs add a lot of value to the organization because sometimes, the external point of view helps us understand the impact of our organization on the community clearly.



LOGANATHAN J.
PROGRAMME SUPERVISOR

“

I have been the Program Supervisor of this program before, but this time it was different because I had stayed with the volunteers throughout the placement at Manthan. As a result, I was able to connect with the volunteers and build relationships beyond that of a Program Supervisor- Volunteer. This program enabled these young people to engage and understand development at a deeper level and to analyse the 'why' of the issues faced by the community.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

The volunteers have undertaken an impact research of the projects that were/ are being run by our partner organization, MANTHAN in Rajasthan. Manthan along with the volunteers of Pravah International Citizen Service have been able to create sustainable and deep impact in several villages of Ajmer district through their projects. The volunteers of CVC Global researched about the nature of the projects, the process, the approach and the impact of these projects at length by interacting with the target communities and with Manthan. They have created beautiful resources in the form of Impact Reports, brochures, photo booklets, infographics and posters. One of the teams designed a Yearbook for the students of a school run by Manthan to showcase the kind of activities the kids do at school to their parents and to the world. The volunteers created an Instagram handle and a website for Manthan to help the organization to increase its visibility and outreach. All of the projects taken up by the volunteers have helped Manthan to develop a sustainable Advocacy strategy.



